Rolling Out Your Employee Manual

The 'I's have been dotted and the 't's crossed on your employee orientation manual and now it is time to roll it out. What is the best way to expose your employees to your employee manual?

Regardless of whether you are creating a new the first manual or updating an existing one the goal of your manual is to be read and followed, not placed on a shelf or stored on a hard-drive. During onboarding and when updating information there are important reasons you create an employee manual in the first place. Within your employee manual there are not only interesting and nice to know information like your organizational chart and vacation request process but also important, legislatively required information.

Components of your employee manual are not often earth shattering information and can make for dull reading. However, they can be vitally important to not only inform your employees but also protect your organization from litigation. In many cases such as with reference to Ontario's AODA and workplace health and safety legislation you need to demonstrate you have taken steps to ensure your employees have been informed about key policies and procedures.

Usually people remember a fraction of what they read and what they remember is what is relevant to their needs as opposed what you want them to remember. If you want to roll out your Employee Manual and have the information stick it is probably best not to hand someone a binder or send them an e-file and tell them to get reading.

Rolling Out the Employee Manual With Style

Having a variety of options in your employee manual roll out toolkit is going to increase the odds that all the hard work that goes into the manual has a chance to pay off. Keeping in mind some fairly simple techniques could go a long way in the process of success. Here are a few ideas to get you started.

- **Variety in Learning Matters:** You cannot get everyone's attention with the

same information, methods or in the same context. Creating and providing information in a variety of formats just makes sense. Here is a quick list of content delivery methods.

1. Traditional binders and e-documents (you can still have them but to not rely on them)
2. Internal webpages including Wiki like pages (great if you keep them updated)
3. Training sessions including in-person and Webinars
4. Recordings including videos and slideshows
5. Interactive Internal online discussion forums

It may seem like a lot of additional work to create a variety of deliver methods but often the extra work is far less than you think and it pays off in the end with saved time and fewer hassles. Holding one webinar on a specific topic and recording that for the future can be used to supplement a training session, future webinar or independent learning.

- **Timing Counts:** If you want people to pay attention and retain learning you cannot hit them with a stack of documents on the first day. Roll out training over time as is important and needed. Many employee manuals begin with the organization chart and CEO message, which makes logical sense as an introduction but not as a method of training.
    1. Set up a roll out schedule that includes drawing attention to the most important pieces of information first.
    2. Make a list of what you need employees to learn and when and prioritize.
    3. Provide employees with a priority check list and ask them to complete it as they review each priority.
- **Create Need**: People are going to seek out and are more likely to retain information that is important to them. The good news about that is that your employees will naturally gravitate to some information. The not so good news is that what may be relevant to them may not be the information you most want them to learn.
    1. Provide your employees with tasks and assignments that require them to think and gather information prior to when you ask them to learn important information.
    2. Ask questions at the beginning of a section and task employees with finding the answers to the questions as they go forward. Do not make the questions tricky for the purpose of being complicated – focus on what they need to know not just asking questions to demonstrate they have read the information
    3. Gamily and offer rewards such as badges that people earn for completion of sections and passing quizzes.
- **Make it Tangible:** Making it real and tangible to a person can involve creating scenarios and stories to bring information to life. In Nobel Laureate Daniel Kahnaman's book 'Thinking Fast and Slow' he shares research that demonstrates the value of storytelling and surprise to learning.
    1. When you want someone to remember information place it into a story with a context that could be relevant to them or the business. Providing a real life business scenario to demonstrate how to proceed or why a policy is in place can help life information of the page.
    2. Create opportunities to discuss policies or other information included in every day interactions, often called 'Teabchable moments'. Train facilitators, managers or senior staff to look for or create teachable

moments.

When you need someone to learn keep in mind that learning should be engaging and obviously useful if you want the information to be retained.