

Eight spring cleaning tips for your business

Although the snow didn't fall as we had hoped, spring has sprung a bit early in northern Nevada. While we might be feverishly cleaning our homes, preparing the soil for our gardens or fighting insects that jeopardize our blooming trees and plants, this might also be an opportunity for business owners, HR and payroll professionals to do a little spring cleaning in the office in preparation for possible growth, compliance ... or just because you didn't do it last year!

Employee files

Review your I-9 file to ensure that you have an I-9 for each current employee. Keeping your I-9s separate from the employee's file is essential for compliance. Store I-9s in a three ring binder separated by an alphabetical divider that will allow you to find them quickly and ensure that each I-9 is filled out properly. Shred any terminated employee's I-9s that are beyond the required retention date.

Make sure that the employee's employment documents are kept in separate files depending on who is allowed to see the information. Audit your system by spot checking several employee files to ensure that you are not comingling information that if reviewed by supervisors could be considered discriminatory. Clean out old files, whether this means scanning them into a green paperless system or boxing them up and shipping them to storage to make room for the year ahead.

Check the security on the files, too. Develop a process or protocol that clearly articulates who can see what information and how access to the information is recorded. Did someone in HR leave during the year and they still have the keys to the filing cabinet? Review who has keys or access to such files and ensure that the locks or access has changed so that this is not a security risk.

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

“Preach not to others what they should eat, but eat as becomes you, and be silent.”

Epictetus



Sarah Sommers

Posters

Update any federal or state labor law postings in the company's break room(s) and employee common areas. A new wage bulletin was published April 11, 2014, for Nevada that needs to be posted even though there were no changes to the minimum wage or daily overtime wages. If you do not have the required posters posted in a common area that all employees have access to, be sure to start here. You can find such postings online through federal and state agencies or you can purchase posters from various vendors.

Annual trainings and certifications

Update annual trainings that may be required for employees working with equipment like forklifts or hazardous materials, restock first aid kits, update MSDS binder with any new chemicals on site, check eye wash stations to be sure they are functioning and properly supplied and get fire extinguishers checked and recharged if necessary. Have a fire drill! Fire season is around the corner and such disaster plans or measures should be documented, implemented and communicated through testing. You don't want to be in a situation on which you are making such choices in an emergency.

Handbook review

Review your company's employee handbook to make sure that it is in compliance with federal and state laws. You will want to make sure those areas that are subject to judicial or other regulatory agencies like the EEOC or NLRB have been reviewed and if necessary changes in verbiage are made to ensure that the company is in compliance and it cannot be considered discriminatory in implementing their company's policies. Some of these areas may include but are not limited to social media, Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA), employee wage discussions or Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). You will also want to add or remove any policies that the company is or is no longer following to eliminate conflicting policy implementation.

Conduct employee performance reviews

Reviews don't mean a raise, so don't let that hold you up. I know this is

time-consuming and it gets pushed off, so jump in and start the employee performance review process. Employees really want to know how they are doing and that what they have done over the last year has been recognized. This is the time to ensure that everyone is on the same page and creates the goals to ensure that they are met for the year.

Audit job descriptions

Now is the time to reevaluate what everyone is doing in their respective positions. How has the company fared? Are we growing? What human capital do we need for the year? Do we need to reorganize what everyone is doing? Once you have answered these questions you can begin revising the job descriptions.

Salary survey

Hopefully you have provided a total compensation statement to your employees showing them not only their cash earnings but the high cost of their benefits, taxes, retirement contributions and other employer contributions so they truly understand their cost to the company. Salary surveys are a great way for the company to analyze how well they are compensating their employees compared to other companies.

Payroll and benefit audit

Consider if your company has hired or reduced staff over the last year and if you are now subject to new regulations based on your total employee count or if policies could be removed based on the fact that you had some layoffs. If you audited the list of items above, you may also consider how to streamline your processes even further by automating it or implementing new technology. More and more companies are considering how they will be electronically tracking healthcare reform changes, benefit changes, offering employee self service portals and how that is integrated with time keeping and payroll systems.

Admit it. All business owners procrastinate on a few things. However, you might want to reconsider pushing-off the aforementioned list any further. Sharpen your pencil and get your "spring into action to-do" list ready, execute a plan to get it done and follow up to ensure that it is completed. Completed before next spring, that is...

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