

February 2014 Essential Update

Contents

This month's update is an encouragement to improve key staff retention by being more open to employee's working hour needs - Flexibility. But this is not about relinquishing authority – just making things work better for all parties.

Included in this month's update:

- **Helpful Hint/Essentials** – Flexible Work Practises
- **Did You Know?** – Employing people with disabilities
- **Legal Latest** – Importance of consultation/multiple misconducts
- **Courtesy of The Business Factory (TBF)** – Recruitment for the long-term as an SME

Helpful Hint

Flexible Work Practices

Providing flexibility at work can really improve business outcomes for employers: it increases employee retention; builds employee commitment and satisfaction with their work; and can be a real draw card for attracting new talent. In fact, flexibility is consistently rated higher than compensation levels and speed of promotion at work when considering job attractiveness. But what is it? In essence it is allowing working hours or practices that are more understanding of an employee with other (generally family) commitments. It is not allowing employees to work hours as and when they feel like it.

So should you consider more flexibility? Absolutely, in the right circumstances.

- Legally, Employers *must* consider a request for flexible working arrangements for employees who have been employed longer than three months, and while they do not have to be granted, the employer must act in good faith when considering them.
- Flexibility doesn't work in a situation where a team needs to be together to perform a task. Neither does it work so easily where the individual mans a station that needs to be physically occupied during standard hours.
- But if your business needs can be met while allowing an employee to adapt to life as it happens, the better the outcome for both employees and better business outcomes overall. This is what flexibility is about.

What level of flexibility you provide will depend largely on the nature of your work and workplace. But as an Employer you don't have to be constrained to the way things have "always been done", particularly in this day and age where the workplace, technology and people you hire are changing fairly rapidly. It's an area for thinking outside the box – and it can be driven by good suggestions from staff – you just need to listen and be prepared to adapt.

If you want help making this happen just give me a call.

For more information

Regarding a newsletter item or for HR Consulting Services

Email: mike@essentialhr.co.nz

Phone: 03 9436310

Web: www.essentialhr.co.nz

PO Box 7213, Sydenham, 8240

Essential HR News

Follow our weekly updates

At least once per week we will post a short informative post on the website. You may subscribe to our weekly blogs using the "Subscribe" button on the "Keeping you posted" page, <http://www.essentialhr.co.nz/news/>.

This month I have posted on:

- **Duty to act in Good Faith**
- **Fair Process where Employee admits wrongdoing**
- **74% of Employees have Conflict at Work**
- **Salaries and CPI**

Mike's Whereabouts

Ashburton: March 6th, 13th, 19/20th, 26th

Westport: March 11/12th?

Wellington: March 17th

Client Survey

On the 11th February, 2014 we invited past and current clients to participate in a survey to provide feedback on where our services can be improved. A number of you have completed this already – and I want to genuinely thank you for doing so.

The survey will remain open until 9th March, 2014. If you haven't yet participated, please do so. We really appreciate your input!

Essential Essentials

Flexible Work Practice Options

I have said under Helpful Hints that flexibility, if properly applied, is clearly a valuable factor for staff and the business – so what are some simple, practical things you can do as an employer to provide flexibility in your workplace?

- Flexitime, whereby employees are allowed some lee-way to decide on their work schedule, as long as the number of hours expected to be worked by the employer are met. This is an excellent way to avoid heavy traffic at peak times, or be available for school pick-ups/drop-offs. Companies sometimes insist on presence between core hours of, say 9 and 3, but allow early or late starts/finishes
- One of my clients allows employees to work from home every so often. This is particularly useful for employees working on an intense project as it avoids disruption and helps meet their needs where they have a long commute.
- Compressing work time into a shorter number of days. For example, if an employee wishes to leave at lunchtime on Friday, allow them to work late Monday – Thursday to make up the time.
- Allow two employees to job-share. I had one client who allowed a husband/wife combination to do this – which allowed them both to keep their “hand in” and yet allowed them to raise a young child.

Just remember – you are still the boss; flexibility is a privilege, and actual hours/arrangements should still be agreed. Flexibility should still be formally agreed so that both parties know where they stand.

Legal Updates

Lack of consultation proves costly.

A recent case highlighted the importance of negotiating changes to employment agreements and ensuring the Employee understands and agrees to variations. In this case the court found that the Employer had fundamentally and seriously breached the employment agreement by unilaterally reducing an Employee’s work hours and attempting to force agreement. The resulting PG for constructive dismissal was upheld and the employee was awarded almost \$20,000 in lost wages and hurt and humiliation!

Multiple acts of misconduct

All too often I find an employee has a list of potential misconducts, which collectively can amount to serious misconduct. But beware, the Court has indicated that if you choose to dismiss based on a collection of issues, all of those you rely on must be justifiable. So after conducting a disciplinary meeting be very clear about which issues you are dismissing for and which were not relied upon – in writing.

Did you Know?

Around 20% of New Zealanders have a disability of some kind. Of those, 60% are unemployed and yet three quarters of them don’t require any extra support to work. In today’s tight labour market, these people represent a massively under-used resource. Organisations such as Workbridge match talented, motivated people to suitable jobs. If you are struggling to find workers through traditional means, why not think outside the square? You might be surprised at the benefits it may bring.

Courtesy of TBF

The Business Factory is a group of business consultants I work with from time to time. I am indebted to them for these thoughts:

Recruiting for the long-term as an SME

US data shows 46% of recruits failing within 18 months – mostly because of their attitude (open to training; motivation; values).

Larger companies can afford to train staff – SMEs generally need to find staff with skill and attitude and this means looking hard and long. So consider:

- Evaluate current and past high and low performers – what characterises each? How can you identify these at an interview stage?
- Specifically look for people who share your core values
- Ask how they handle frustration in their job
- Watch as they interact with others in and out of interview

Remember – it costs much less to spend time on a hire than it costs on a fire! (John Maxwell, Success Jan 2014)

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