

Case Study - Developing an employee handbook

After leaving university Jeffrey had trained as a personnel officer with a large retail organization. Now in his early 30s, he had become bored with the routine nature of much of his work over the past few years and had developed a wish to become a self-employed personnel specialist. His general plan was to try and build up a client list of small companies that could not afford to employ personnel specialists themselves, but who would be prepared to buy his expertise for about one day each month. His sales approach was to be that he would act as an advisor to the line managers on handling personnel issues, run any training courses that might be identified as necessary, draft any employment policies that might be required and act as the company representative in any employment-based legal cases.

Having developed the business plan Jeffrey was finding it difficult to actually identify a client base of enough substance to make it possible for him to resign from his present position. However one day he received a telephone call from Charles Brown, whom he had not met, but who said that he was the managing director of a small engineering company. Charles explained that he had been speaking to a mutual friend about a personnel problem that the company had recently faced and this friend had suggested that Jeffrey might be able to help. Essentially the company had dismissed one of their engineers who had then gone to court to seek compensation. Management had lost the case and had been heavily criticized for not having clear employment policies and not effectively communicating what policies they did have to employees.

Charles wanted help in reviewing a number of company policies and practice with regard to issues such as:

- Communication and consultation
- Team work
- Corporate culture
- Promotion to supervisor and management positions
- Flexibility
- Resolving problems and conflicts
- Employee participation
- Performance management
- Training and development
- Stress management
- Organizational structure and management responsibilities
- The introduction and use of new technology

Charles asked if Jeffrey could help them and how he would go about the exercise. Jeffrey said that he would need to think about it and would ring him back a couple of days later. He then rang his mother Valerie, herself the personnel director of a large engineering company, for advice. He explained that he was worried that he would not be able to tackle this job effectively, as all of his experience had been in the retail

sector and he knew almost nothing about engineering, which was also predominantly male dominated. His mother said that in her view the underlying principles of effective personnel management were universal and that he should begin by thinking about how he would tackle such a review within his current organization. Valerie also suggested that he note down his first draft proposals in order that they could discuss them over dinner that evening.

Feeling much happier, Jeffrey put the phone down and began to think about the possibilities.

Task

In a group of four or five identify how you would go about undertaking such a review and how might your study of organizational behaviour inform your analysis. Based on your study of the topics included in your course on organizational behaviour what might you seek to include as a basis for good practice in the areas identified above and how might you effectively communicate policies in these areas to employees?

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