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Vital Business Solutions Newsletter

Annual Employee Training

Have you planned and begun your annual compliance training for 2013? Some employers require the training as part of employee orientation, then on a periodic basis during the year. Other employers have a specific time of the year when all employees are required to complete annual training. You must select the time that is best for your business, but make sure the various training sessions are completed. In addition, it is a good idea to track training completion, since proof of training may be required, especially for government contractors.

Below is a list of mandatory training for government contractors:

Workplace Harassment. This is wider than sexual harassment training and should be required of ALL employees at the beginning of employment.

Workplace Discrimination for Supervisors. This training is important for supervisory employees who hire, develop, evaluate, and fire employees. Training should cover laws regarding discrimination, for example, Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex and national origin.

Code of Ethics. Under the Sarbanes Oxley Act (SOX), publicly traded companies are expected to provide proof that they have a Code of Conduct policy for Senior Leaders. This training typically covers financial practices and accounting controls. It's highly recommended for small businesses as well.

Code of Conduct. This training encompasses the organization's legal obligations and the employees' accountability regarding proper methods of behavior or practices that support the business' values. Topics typically include occupational health and safety, conflict of interest, equal employment opportunity, substance abuse policies, etc. Generally, a clear description of what constitutes misconduct, why certain behaviors are prohibited, and the employer's right to take corrective action/discipline.

It is not enough to only provide written policies. All employees - individual contributors and managers - should be trained on these policies.

Employers can select from various methods to track training. Depending on the number of employees, tracking tools range from a simple Excel spreadsheet up to acquiring a Learning Management System (LMS). Failure to train and to show proof of training exposes the business to increased risks. Vital Business Solutions is ready to provide assistance to implement and maintain training programs in small organizations that need to comply with training requirements.

Is Tuition Reimbursement Still Valuable Today?

In the previous article, we addressed required training for all staff, but what about professional development? Do you have suggested or required training topics per job title or per department denoted for staff to review? Do you provide career-pathing charts for all staff to review? Is training a part of the company culture? Do you provide and encourage the usage of tuition reimbursement to your employees?

According to a recent survey administered by CompDataSurveys.com, the *Benefits USA 2011/2012* survey results found that the rate at which companies are offering tuition reimbursement to all of their employees is rapidly increasing. For example in 2009, only 34.9 percent of employers offered tuition reimbursement to all employees. This increased to 45.3 percent in 2010 and in 2011 to 51.7 percent.

Clearly, many employers still find the tuition reimbursement benefit invaluable to their workforce. Under Publication 970 of the IRS tax code, employers can offer up to \$5,250 per individual each year in tax-free educational assistance. Generally, as long as the course does not pertain to sports, games, or hobbies, reimbursements for tuition and certain related expenses are not taxable to the employee. However, assistance provided above the stated limit will be subject to tax. Tuition reimbursement should not be a replacement for an internal training and development program, but it adds to a rich culture of rewarding continued professional development. Employers offering tax-free educational assistance are required to have a written plan describing the benefit and the terms under which it is available.

Hennrietta Smith, President

Vital Business Solutions, Inc.

202-832-1388

www.vitalbusinesssolution.com

hsmith@vitalbusinesssolution.com

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Vital Business Solutions is an one-stop shop human resources and organizational development company that provides simplistic systems to your complex business needs. Our goal is to provide solutions to your human resources and organizational development challenges. www.vitalbusinesssolution.com

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Is your Employee Handbook updated for 2013?

We can help you with your Policies & Procedures Manuals!

VBS can update your Employee Handbook and HR forms. An Employee Handbook identifies management's objectives, outlines company rules and regulations, and identifies the company's expectations.

Let us know if you need the following documents:

- Employee Handbook
- Policies & Procedures Manual
- Human Resources Forms
- Job Descriptions
- HR Audit/Assessment
- Federal Compliance Review

Get everyone on the same page!