

From the desk of Jeanne M. Kerkstra, Esq., CPA

Viewpoint
An Ounce of Prevention is Worth a Pound of Cure

Picture this as an example in your client's Employee Handbook as to what not to do at work:
[This is a real-life situation actually playing out at the World Bank.]

The new President of the company gets elected because he pledges to rid the company of corruption and to foster sound governance. Once elected, he dates a staff member [Violation #1 of Employee Handbook]. Once the relationship is discovered, the President directly negotiates a transfer of his girlfriend to a different company which includes a significant pay increase [Violation #2 of Employee Handbook]. Girlfriend says she was a victim and always was against the transfer. Result: Company's image now has a black eye, staff morale is deteriorating and the company has possibly opened itself up to lawsuits (e.g., victim seeking vindication that she did nothing wrong).

The important lesson to be learned here is that employee handbooks should not be archaic documents gathering dust. They need to be dynamic documents that are distributed and on which the employees are trained. Follow-up is crucial. Furthermore, if there has been an infraction, it is far better to have it resolved by the procedures set out in the handbook. To do otherwise is just compounding the damage already done.

It is an easier and less damaging process to get your ducks in a row behind the scenes and not when you are forced to by a regulatory agency or other outside forces.

Our employment lawyers work with our clients to take proactive steps to ensure that our clients are in compliance. For those that have either actually or at least in a perceived manner violated these handbooks, our employment lawyers have represented our clients before the regulatory agencies including the EEOC.

If your client has not taken a look recently at its employee handbook or is unable to locate it, give us a call. We'll work to keep your client's name out of the headlines and its staff productive.

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