

People Matters

Issue 44 October 2008

PD News

Welcome to the start of a new month! It is getting towards the end of the year already and I know some clients are thinking of Christmas parties and end of Year Functions. The topic of this month's newsletter is therefore timely as many issues occur at such functions.

Skills Checks

As part of our long term association with The Rogers Group, we are delighted to be able to provide all of our clients with the further ability to check for skills as part of the recruitment process. Tests range from just \$25 and cover many occupations including Accounting, Sales, Call Centre and Administration amongst others.



Sexual Harassment

This is an area we find businesses are still not fully aware of, especially in relation to the risks involved and in taking appropriate measures to address issues. Although most of us are broadly aware of the term, sexual harassment is defined as "any unwanted, unwelcome behaviour of a sexual nature that makes someone feel humiliated and / or intimidated and creates a sexually hostile working environment". Whilst some employees report the incidents to their Managers, most Managers are not equipped as to how to handle cases, especially when the employee does not want to make a formal complaint.



Court cases in the past have shown that even if the employee does not wish to make a formal complaint, complaints of any nature must be investigated, and all reasonable steps taken.



To reduce your risk employers should, as a minimum, have robust Harassment (including sexual harassment), Equal Employment Opportunity, Discrimination and Bullying clauses and verbally educate employees as to what constitutes acceptable and unacceptable behaviour in the workplace.

Training on these areas should be done at induction, as well as at regular training sessions for all staff (conducted at least annually). Supervisors and managers need to be given coaching and training as to what to do in these situations as well.

Failure to act accordingly can result in large fines, both for the company as well as the individual involved. Acting in accordance with guidelines and having the right documentation and measures in place however can result in a company not having a case to answer.

Legal Update

Last month Julia Gillard announced changes to Unfair Dismissal Cases involving companies with less than 15 employees. It will see the qualifying period double from 6 to 12 months. This means that only employees who have worked for the business for more than 12 months can claim for unfair dismissal. The laws will come into effect on 1 July 2009.

We have a fact sheet available, so please contact us for more information.

People Dynamics

Do you have a question you would like answered? Let us know - your suggestions for topics are welcome.

If you know someone who would be interested in People Matters let us know and we will forward a copy to them.

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Previous editions of People Matters are available on the downloads page of our website.