

## Restaurant Employee Handbooks: Why every restaurant should have one

Employee handbooks are like a good sunscreen, one generally does not realize the importance of protection until they get burned.

Employment claims are on the rise and can be detrimental to a restaurateur's company culture and business success. With the intense nature of the restaurant industry, including high employee turnover, minimal profit margin and cutthroat competition, restaurateurs cannot afford employee lawsuits. The good news is that the risk of employee lawsuits is easily mitigated if restaurants simply implement and refine particular practices.

This is where an employee handbook comes in. In addition to defining servers, food runners, chefs, or hostess employment expectations, implementing an employee handbook will protect restaurateurs against claims that employees may bring both during and after employment. A good employee handbook provides protection against wage and hour claims, meal and rest break claims, and harassment claims.

The first step, is to develop a well-formulated handbook that addresses employment demands specific to restaurants, which should address cash handling policies, tip-reporting procedures, reporting methods to quickly and easily address any issue that may arise, paid sick leave, and proper format for paychecks. Once a comprehensive handbook is created, the restaurant should provide a copy to each employee at the time of hire. The handbook should both welcome the employee to the restaurant family and lay ground rules and expectations of employment. Employees should acknowledge they reviewed the policies and procedures and provide a written copy of the acknowledgment to the restaurant manager. The restaurant manager should ensure safekeeping in employee files. By following these simple steps, restaurateurs will have a first line of defense if any employee claims arise in the future.

Whether you have an employee handbook that is in need of updating or lack employee files in general, the small investment of a proper and up-to-date employee handbook will shield restaurant owners against potential future issues. When all of the bases are covered with an employee handbook, restaurateurs can focus on what they do best.



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