



## **Ensuring Your Team, and your HR practices, are Refreshed and 2025-Ready**

As we approach the new year, it's the perfect time to review and refresh your HR practices to set up for success in 2025. Ensuring that your HR processes, agreements, and policies are up to date can significantly impact the productivity, compliance, and wellbeing of your workplace. By taking the time to assess and update your HR practices, you can minimise risks, promote a positive workplace culture, and prepare your team to achieve your organisation's goals. Here are key areas to review for a positive and productive start to the new year.

### **1. Employment Agreements – A foundation document for the Employment Relationship**

Employment agreements are fundamental documents in the employment relationship and should be reviewed periodically. These agreements set the expectations and terms for both employer and employee and are often relied upon if employment relationship issues arise. Having agreements that are clear, up to date with employment legislation, and aligned with your organisation's goals is essential.

#### **Risks of Outdated Employment Agreements:**

- **Compliance Issues:** Changes in employment law and new case law mean that agreements need regular checks to ensure

legal compliance. Without these updates, businesses risk breaching legislation, which could lead to costly disputes or penalties.

- **Inconsistencies:** Outdated agreements may contain terms or conditions that no longer reflect current business practices or policies, creating confusion or even legal vulnerabilities.
- **Clarity and Understanding:** Employment agreements that are complex or unclear can lead to misunderstandings. Clear, straightforward language helps employees understand their rights and obligations, fostering transparency and trust.

It's also important to propose changes to employment agreements for current staff correctly, utilising a genuine consultation process. However, by ensuring your employment agreements are accurate, compliant, and easy to understand, you set the foundation for a fair and strong working relationship.

## **2. Recruitment Practices – Attracting the Right Talent**

The new year often brings a fresh pool of candidates looking for opportunities, or new projects that the business wants to get underway. Recruitment activity, particularly in terms of people applying for vacancies, often doesn't pick up again until late January/early February. If you're wanting to recruit effectively its ideal timing to ensure you've got everything ready before then. Reviewing your recruitment practices over what is often a quieter period for many, can ensure that you're then in a strong position to attract the best talent. Key areas to consider include updating job descriptions, reviewing your hiring processes, and planning the timing of job advertisements.

## **Some of the Benefits of Updated Recruitment Practices:**

- **Legal Compliance:** There are a number of legal requirements when it comes to the steps of the recruitment process e.g. meeting Privacy Act obligations, ensuring that selection processes are communicated at the correct time and do not result in you having entered into an employment relationship before you realised etc.
- **Clear and Current Job Descriptions:** Job descriptions should accurately reflect the responsibilities and expectations of each role. Outdated descriptions can lead to hiring mismatches and misaligned expectations.
- **Efficient Hiring Process:** Reviewing your recruitment processes for efficiency and effectiveness can reduce the time taken to fill vacancies, ensuring you don't miss out on top candidates.
- **Strategic Timing:** Consider the best time to advertise roles. Advertising in late January/February, when candidates may be evaluating their next career move, can lead to higher engagement with job postings and potentially also a larger pool of suitable candidates.

Effective recruitment practices support a productive workplace by ensuring the right people are in the right roles, aligned with your organisation's goals and culture.

## **3. Policies and Procedures – Building a Fair and Consistent Workplace**

Organisational policies are essential for guiding behaviour, promoting fairness, and ensuring that employees understand their rights and responsibilities (which in turn means you can then

reasonably hold staff to account if there is a breach of the requirements). Policies that are aligned with your business's needs, current legislation and best practices reduce the risk of misunderstandings, support success (for both employees and the business) and help maintain a positive workplace culture.

### **Examples of Key Policies to Review:**

- **Code of Conduct or your Employee Guide:** Ensure your code of conduct and Employee Guide/Handbook reflects your organisational values, standards, practices and requirements. When these are up to date, it helps establish a professional, respectful workplace environment, clear expectations, and enables you to address any potential issues appropriately.
- **Health and Safety Policies and Drug & Alcohol Testing Policies:** Reviewing these policies is crucial for compliance and the wellbeing of your team. I've seen a number of drug and alcohol testing policies lately that don't address, in particular, prescribed medications well. For example, prescribed medicinal cannabis is relatively new to New Zealand, and a lot of drug testing policies still only address cannabis as an illicit drug, or have testing processes and rehabilitation practices that don't address what options might exist where the employee fails a drug test due to a medicinal cannabis prescription that is treating a medical condition. If you have a drug and alcohol policy – is it up to date?
- You are likely to need or have a number of other policies relevant to your staff and employment that should also be put into a schedule for development and regular reviews e.g. recruitment, selection and onboarding, performance management, remuneration and benefits, learning and

development, privacy and data protection, leave, flexible and remote working, workplace wellbeing and mental health, IT, internet and social media, bullying, harassment and discrimination, motor vehicle, company travel etc.

Well-documented, current policies ensure consistency, fairness, and legal compliance, all of which contribute to a healthier workplace.

#### **4. Training Plans – Investing in Growth and Development**

Training and development play an essential role in supporting a skilled, adaptable workforce. Reviewing your training plans allows you to identify any skill gaps, set development goals, and schedule training sessions that align with your organisational objectives for the new year. Providing learning opportunities can be an attractive benefit to employees too.

##### **Why Training Plans Matter:**

- **Skills Development:** Training ensures employees have the necessary skills to meet job demands and adjust to changes within the organisation or industry. However, it's important that to avoid a budget blow-out or investing in the wrong development opportunities, your processes ensure you're selecting the right training, rather than providing generic workshops without appropriate prior consideration and planning.
- **Employee Engagement and Retention:** Training opportunities demonstrate your commitment to employee growth, which can improve engagement and reduce turnover.

- **Proactive Compliance Training:** Ensuring employees are trained on relevant legislation and compliance requirements reduces the risk of legal issues and strengthens workplace practices.

An investment in training is an investment in your organisation's future, enabling your team to handle challenges with confidence and competence.

Do your people-managers need an update on the employment law basics, communication tips, or upskilling in a particular area of human resources? Or would you like to do a bit of a workplace culture re-set to kick off 2025? Reach out and we can discuss a plan to address these and more.

## **5. Performance Management Processes – Supporting Consistent Growth**

A well-structured performance management process is essential for helping employees meet their potential while supporting the organisation's goals. Regularly reviewing and updating this process ensures it remains effective and relevant.

### **Benefits of Reviewing Performance Management Processes:**

- **Clarity on Expectations and Feedback:** Clear performance criteria and regular feedback promote continuous improvement and alignment with organisational goals.
- **Motivation and Engagement:** Employees who receive meaningful feedback and clear development plans are more likely to be engaged and motivated.

- **Identifying High Performers:** A good performance management process allows you to recognise high performers and support those who need additional development.

By refining your performance management process, you create a supportive environment where employees can thrive, managers spend less time dealing with staff issues, and these things contribute positively to the business or organisation.

### **The Risks of Neglecting HR Updates**

Failing to update HR practices, including employment agreements, policies, recruitment practices, and performance management processes, can lead to a range of issues:

- **Increased Risk of Legal Disputes:** Non-compliance with current legislation or unclear terms can lead to costly legal disputes.
- **Reduced Employee Trust and Engagement:** Outdated or unclear practices can erode employee trust, affecting morale, productivity and reputation.
- **Missed Opportunities for Growth:** Lack of a structured training or performance management approach can lead to stagnation, where employees and the organisation are not reaching their full potential. It can also mean you're more at risk of experiencing times when you don't have the right capability on the team.


### **Start 2025 on the Right Foot**

Taking the time now to review and update these key HR practices will set you up for a smoother, more productive year. Marie Tovio Consulting can assist with every step of this review process, from

updating employment agreements and policies to supporting your recruitment, training, and performance management needs.

I can also help you to determine the priorities, if you think a more significant overhaul of your HR practices is needed.

By starting the new year with clear, up-to-date HR practices, you can create a workplace where compliance, transparency, and employee satisfaction all align with your organisation's goals.

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