

Hiring staff? The Fair Work Ombudsman can help

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There are simple and practical steps small business operators can take to find the right staff for their workplace, according to the Fair Work Ombudsman.

Businesses that invest time in planning their recruitment are more likely to find someone who is the right fit.

Good recruitment practices and a proper induction process will help employers get their new employee started on the right foot and contributing to productivity sooner.

Before advertising a role, employers should think about what they need from the person they are hiring and develop a job description to match, taking into consideration the tasks that need to be done and skills and qualifications required.

The next step is to ensure the right applicants hear about the opportunity and find the job appealing, says Fair Work Ombudsman Natalie James.

She suggests job advertisements should be specific about what skills and experience are required to ensure suitable candidates apply.

"The interview process can be as formal or informal as employers like - the focus should be on asking the right questions so the candidate's skills and experience can be matched with the job that needs to be done," Ms James said.

"Avoid asking questions that are personal, intrusive or irrelevant to the role as they may be seen as discriminatory."

After the best candidate has been chosen and has accepted the position, it is important that time is invested in a thorough induction to get the most from a new employee.

"A thorough induction does take a bit more time, but it has long-term benefits," Ms James says.

"New employees who are well-informed and have a clear direction of what's expected of them will feel confident to go ahead and do the job they were hired to do."

The Fair Work Ombudsman has launched a guide to hiring new employees for small business that outlines these steps and provides straight-forward advice about hiring new staff.

The guide was created to give small business operators advice in plain-English about the best way to employ new workers and to outline their workplace obligations in simple terms.

"We want to help small business recruit the right people and grow their business by understanding the process of hiring staff," Ms James said.

The guide will be complemented by an interactive online learning course that employers can access for free to improve their skills in hiring and inducting new staff.

The course includes an interactive tool to help employers build a profile of the employee they want to hire and a video activity to help them practice their interview skills.

The course will be available at the Online Learning Centre on the Fair Work Ombudsman's website at www.fairwork.gov.au/learning (www.fairwork.gov.au/how-we-will-help/online-training/default) .

Another course titled 'Difficult conversations in the workplace' has practical tips to help employers develop the skills and confidence to have a difficult conversation in the workplace and minimise disputes.

"Encouraging communication in the workplace and equipping people with the information they need to resolve workplace issues is important for us," Ms James said.

"By providing employers with reliable and credible tools and resources, we are able to help them better understand their options for resolution and how to work at best practice."

Feedback was sought from a number of representative bodies when creating the guide to hiring new employees and online learning course.

"We're serious about getting input from those who are part of the small business community, and tailoring our services to suit their needs, so consultation is a really important part of our work," Ms James said.

Earlier this month, the Fair Work Ombudsman met with members of the small business community at a Roundtable in Melbourne to discuss how the Fair Work agencies can best assist small business.

The discussion was co-hosted by the Fair Work Ombudsman, Fair Work Commission General Manager Bernadette O'Neill and Director of Fair Work Building and Construction, Nigel Hadgkiss.

The Commonwealth Small Business Minister, the Hon. Bruce Billson, also attended the forum, spoke to participants and fielded questions.

The Fair Work Ombudsman has recently established a dedicated Small Business Strategy Team that has been tasked with responding to the needs of small businesses.

A dedicated webpage for small business, including free tools and resources, is available at www.fairwork.gov.au/smallbusiness (www.fairwork.gov.au/find-help-for/small-business/default).

Employers and employees seeking further information and advice can visit the website or call the Fair Work Infoline on 13 13 94. A free interpreter service is also available on 13 14 50.

Small business employers calling the Fair Work Infoline can opt to be put through to the Small Business Helpline to receive priority service.

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Fair Work Online: www.fairwork.gov.au

Fair Work Infoline: 13 13 94

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