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How to draft employment policies properly

Changes in the way work is arranged have been happening more rapidly over the last year than what many employers are used to. Aside from remote working (which has become a regular addition to workplaces), there are also matters such as health and safety during a global pandemic and even the decriminalisation of marijuana to contend with. What do all these issues have in common? Employers need to draft workplace policies to deal with them.

Workplace policy drafting should not be a complicated matter. It is essentially stating the employers rules in clear, understandable terms and ensuring that these are communicated to employees. Policies are not meant to be a word-for-word regurgitation of the law and they should be rooted in fairness, which is the cornerstone of labour law.

A few basic steps that could assist employers, are:

1. Make sure that employees know what acceptable workplace conduct looks like. This means clear rules as well as clear consequences for breaching those rules. Employees cannot be expected to comply with rules they did not know about.
2. Beware policy overload. Every eventuality cannot possibly be included in a policy, nor will having 20 different policies help create a more harmonious working environment. Accept that policies are dynamic documents that can be changed if need be.
3. Following on from the previous point, have a process in place to regularly review policies to ensure that they still comply with law and regulatory changes that may occur.
4. Make sure that employees have easy access to policies. Having them electronically available for office and remote workers will be fine, but keep hard copies on hand for workers who do not have access to computers.
5. Have a fairly formal onboarding process for new employees where policies are explained. This will go a long way to make new employees feel more at home too.

Keeping these simple steps in mind should help employers ensure that their workplace policies are clear, simple and understood by all employees at the workplace.