

Employer's Guide to Employees

Great care must be taken in hiring and firing employees. (you never know when some kid's uncle is a hot shot lawyer with time on his hands and a grudge against hot dog vendors) (or the mayor, chief of police, newspaper editor, Health Dept. director, etc.) But seriously, many potential problems with employees can be avoided by following a few simple and reasonable steps. These guidelines are important even if the employees are family members.

Personnel are any company's most valuable asset. That's why large companies have departments called Human Resources devoted solely to managing this crucial resource. Many companies with incredible products failed because they mismanaged their human resources.

The best course is **Selection, Education, Direction and Prevention.**

Selection

Choose only quality employees that look and act the part. Don't be pressured or rushed into hiring. Check references. Referrals from friends and acquaintances are always your best source for good employees.

Education

Teach them what is expected of them and how to do the job required of them. Show them how to do it and then have them do it themselves while you observe. Give them all the tools needed to do their job. Include written directions such as the "Hotdog Cart Operations and Maintenance Manual" and the "Health Guidelines".

Direction

Give kind dignified correction when necessary and commendation for a job well done. Check up on their performance regularly. Reward excellence. Keep your promises. Show appreciation. Lead by example.

Prevention

Have them read and sign the "Employee Rules of Conduct" and the "Dress, Department, and Hygiene Code". Quiz them to ensure these rules are clearly understood. This will prevent many problems and misunderstandings. Give written warnings for any serious violations or problems and have them sign it and you keep a copy. Firing is a last resort. Never fire in anger. Always maintain a calm, serious and professional bearing.

Here are some more suggestions in finding and dealing with employees:

Finding and Interviewing, Hiring and Firing

Where to Look for Good Help:

Referrals:

Referrals from friends and family are the best source as the candidates are known and easily checked. Good employees or former employees are another source. Ask if this person is someone they would be willing to work with. Good people know good people.

Classified Ads:

Place classified ads in the local newspaper "Help Wanted" section. This will likely draw a lot of response but a lot of the response will be unqualified or poor quality. You will have to sift through them carefully.

Schools:

High schools, colleges, universities and trade schools are a good source for part-time, weekend and seasonal help. They often have a job placement center or a job bulletin board. Place an ad on the job placement bulletin board. Make a personal appointment with the job counselor if they have one. Or ask a teacher or professor who they would recommend. Clearly outline the job and the kind of person you want. They will often give you a list of quality candidates.

Community Organizations:

Boy scouts, church groups, Rotary and Kiwanis clubs, etc. usually know of bright young people looking for work.

Government Employment Agencies:

Unlike private agencies, these services are free to both employers and employees. The best results occur by talking personally with a placement officer.

Help Wanted Sign:

Posting a sign on your vendor cart will draw a lot of response but also may prove time consuming. It may attract a lot of poor quality respondents. At the same time, the applicants will have a very clear understanding of what the job entails.

Keep records of all good applicants in case any don't work out or have to leave. This would include names and phone numbers.

Be clear and direct about the job description and hours of work. Do not sugar coat it as you will just waste your time.

Interviewing:

Ask questions to determine what kind of worker they will be. Ask about past work history and why they left those jobs.

Get at least 2 references from previous employers and check them. If these references are reluctant to answer questions or the applicant is reluctant to provide them, this is a clear indicator of a bad employee. Ask the previous employer if they would hire the person again if they are unwilling to provide details concerning the reason the person left their company. Sometimes people feel guilty for dismissing someone and will want to help them find replacement work so beware of vague details or evasive wording. If you can not reach any of the references previous employers ask for another. If they can't provide, do not proceed.

How a person dresses when appearing for an interview or applying for a job is a good indicator of their quality. If they don't appear clean, presentable, respectful, honest, reliable, personable, etc., for the interview, do not proceed.

If they are late for a specific interview appointment, it is a good indicator that they are unreliable.

Qualify the applicant for the job they will be performing. For example, role play as a customer to test whether they can add up the prices of various items and provide correct change.

Give the applicants a clear picture of what is required of them and spell out their earnings potential. This will avoid having them quit after a few days because the job didn't meet their expectations. Only hire after they have been informed of and agree to the rate of pay, hours of work, and when you will pay them.

Ask them if they have any reservations or difficulties about the job and its requirements for them.

Hiring:

Have the new employees read and sign the Employee Rules of Conduct, the Dress, Department, and Hygiene Guide, and the Hotdog Cart Operations and Maintenance Manual. Review it with them.

Give adequate training and supervision. A good rule of thumb is to work with each new employee for 3 days before sending them out on their own. Train them by having them do the work while you watch as opposed to you working and they watch. People forget what they see but remember what they do. Hands on training is best.

Even the best employees can develop bad habits if not supervised. Give correction, direction and counsel as required.

Avoid vague and subjective instructions like “keep the cart clean”. Instead, give specific instructions such as “wipe down the cart every 30 minutes”.

Any serious shortcomings should be handled in writing. See the Employee Warning Notice.

Give commendation for work well done.

Two part time workers may give you more security and flexibility than one full time worker.

Firing:

You can be held liable for certain penalties or even legal action if you terminate an employee without good cause or adequate warnings.

Employees should be warned in writing prior to termination. See the sample Employee Warning Notice. Keep a record on file of these. Verbal warnings for smaller infractions should be noted in their file.

Employers may lay off or terminate employees because of lack of work or to meet other staffing needs provided that the decision to terminate is not based on age or race. If an employee is laid off at the employer's convenience, he/she can usually collect unemployment insurance, for which a fee is paid by the employer.

If the employee is at fault, the employer does not have to pay any penalties. Employees can be fired for “good cause” which generally means unsatisfactory job performance.

Good Cause is determined by a 2 part evaluation:

1. A test of reasonableness. Was the employee terminated for failing to carry out a reasonable rule of the employer? For example, having the employee make correct change for a customer is a reasonable rule.
2. A test of knowledge. Did the employee have knowledge of this rule. Employees can not be required to comply with rules of which they have no knowledge.

Keep forwarding addresses of all employees and former employees. If dealing with minors such as teenagers, get the addresses of their parents. You may need these for mailing forms at year end.

Have the terminated employee sign the termination form as a condition of receiving their final pay check.