

Zo's EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK. . . Part 2, The Rules: "Be Professional"

September 23, 2011 Steve Palazzolo

Last time we talked I gave you the intro page to my new "Zo's Employee Handbook." You might recall that I decided to write Zo's Employee Handbook because when I was helping a client rewrite her company's employee handbook she told me to write it like I was writing for my own company.

In part one of this little endeavor I gave you my introduction. Now I will admit, having gone back and read it again, that the page sounds more than a bit lawyerly. But come on I am, after all, a lawyer. It is just not going to be possible for me to write something and not have some of what I learned in law school come to the surface, no matter how hard I try. Page 2 will be better, I promise.

Page 2 of my handbook is going to look like this:

THE RULES

Here are the rules we expect you to live by here at Zo's:

Rule 1. Be professional.

Rule 2. When doing your job or anything else at work, see Rule 1.

Yep. That's it. Two rules that we expect you to follow whenever you are representing the company, dealing with a client or with each other or just doing your job. By "Be professional" we mean use that good judgment we know you have, always be honest, reliable and committed to doing your best. Be a team player and take personal responsibility for your actions. That is not always easy, but we know you can do it.

Here is the first thing you need to know about our rules. I borrowed them. Honesty, remember? I wrote an article about the Tribune Company handbook way back in the Spring of 2008. You can see the article

here. http://www.wnj.com/first_thing_we_do:_lets_kill_all_the_lawyers_spring_2008_hr_focus/.

Sam Zell and the Tribune company have a Rule 1 and a Rule 2 and they are very similar to mine. I have changed them a bit, but the idea came from Mr. Zell.

The second thing you need to know is that these two simple rules cover everything you do at work. Thinking of starting a romantic relationship with a coworker? See Rule 1. Now think again. Thinking of harassing someone? Is that really professional? See Rule 1. Thinking of "fudging" an expense report? Yep. Rule 1 again. Want to exaggerate the performance of the company's products in an Internet chat room? Rule 1 again.

In fact, I defy you to find a situation at work — your work or at Zo's — that Rule 1 and Rule 2 don't cover. You can't, can you? Of course not.

You see, you may not need a list of 40 things you expect your employee *not* to do. And then again you may. But at Zo's we are not going to have that list. We are going to expect our supervisors and employees to know what is right and what is wrong.

Now that means that we are going to have to pay a lot of attention to who we hire; and a lot of attention to training and retraining. And that is going to cost some money. But in the long run, it should be money well spent.

Next time we will talk about EEO policies.