

Proactive steps to educate your team

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Many small to mid-sized businesses find themselves in a crisis mode at times and may not be prepared for it.

The crisis could range from something unexpected, such as a flood that shuts down production in the plant; or it can be from something that should have been expected (or at least could have been avoided) if there was proper training given to the team. It is normal for businesses to train for safety issues in plants or emergency responses in office buildings, but they may neglect to do proper training of their team that involves leadership skills and legal know-how that could help to avoid or alleviate crisis situations from arising.

A leadership team needs to sharpen their skills for the duties that they directly perform and in how they manage those who report to them. Leadership is both an art and a science, but when the company hires or promotes someone to a manager, they sometimes assume the person knows how to lead, train their direct reports, and what the rules are regarding human resources protocol.

Everyone on your leadership team needs to have ongoing training. A leader needs to listen to the issues raised by the team, diffuse conflict, know when to insert their presence and when not to. These skills are not inherent and need to be honed by training.

They also need to be aware of what the rules are regarding handling employee issues and concerns. What are the company protocols? What



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are the laws surrounding the issues? How do you protect the company from potential lawsuits when dealing with these concerns?

They also need to be taught how to handle contracts properly (who is authorized to sign them? Is legal counsel reviewing them?), how to interview potential team members within the law (do they know what questions to avoid? Are they being fair and unbiased?), and how to manage the team fairly (following company rules? Not playing favorites?) — just to name a few.

In addition, many issues arise because the company’s culture has allowed bad behavior to exist, which may start at the top and is left unchallenged. Eventually, this can cost the company money and bad press for human resources related lawsuits, or even cause disgruntled employees who seek revenge of some sort.

Setting the proper company culture and making sure leaders adhere to that culture, as well as their understanding the law around their words and actions, can nip a problem in the bud and prevent a major problem.

It’s also important to remember

those team members on the floor of your business who interact with vendors and customers.

There should be training for people skills, culture expectations, legal protocols, and a full understanding of their job description and employee handbook. Set up proper training sessions and clearly spell out your company’s goals, expectations, and resources for growth and skill building.

It is imperative you properly and honestly evaluate your training protocols. See where you need to add resources.

For small and mid-size businesses an outside general counsel can direct or prepare the training, as well as identify the top areas where there have been problems in the past. In a larger company, commitment to training can be shown by creating a director of training and culture position that works with a legal representative to ensure best results.

Don’t wait until there is a “fire” in your company to train your team. Train first to stay out of the heat.

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