

# The Value of Employee Handbooks

National Farm Business Management Conference  
June 11, 2012



UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA  
**EXTENSION**  
Driven to Discover<sup>SM</sup>

Chuck Schwartau  
University of Minnesota Extension Educator  
Rochester Regional Office  
[cschwart@umn.edu](mailto:cschwart@umn.edu)  
507-536-6301 office  
507-251-8903 cell



## Common Questions:

“I have an employee that is frequently late for work and doesn’t call to let me know. What can I do?”

-- or --

“I have employees that are always taking personal calls while at work. How do I control this?”

Sounds like you trying to shut the barn door after the horse is out-



when you really should have fixed the barn door a long time ago to keep it in !



**You need an employee handbook in your toolbox**

## Four good reasons to have an employee Handbook

1. Improve the image of the farm business by conveying that employees are important and that the farm employer has carefully thought out employee policies.
2. Aid communication with employees.
3. Help assure that all employees are treated fairly and consistently.
4. Encourage employers to face important decisions about employee policies rather than continuing to postpone them.

From Writing an Employee Handbook By T. Maloney & K. Petracek

## Employee Handbooks -

Communication tool between employer and employee

- Expectations
- Obligations
- Rights

## Knowledge of the business –

Brief history of the farm

Who is involved in the farm  
ownership/management and in what  
capacity?

What is the vision for the farm – purpose  
toward which all are expected to work?



UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA | EXTENSION  
Driven to Discover™

## Suggested sections of a handbook --

- Welcome
- Brief History of the Farm
- Business Policies
- Employee Orientation and Training
- Employee Work Policies
- Employee Pay Information
- Leave of Absence
- Employee Discipline, Dismissal and Conflict



UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA | EXTENSION  
Driven to Discover™

## Other items to include --

- Performance Review
- Employee Benefits

## Items of Special Note --

- Animal handling and welfare
- Check for state and federal requirements – available from Dept of Labor websites

## [Worksheet for Organizing Your Handbook](#)



UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA | EXTENSION  
Driven to Discover™

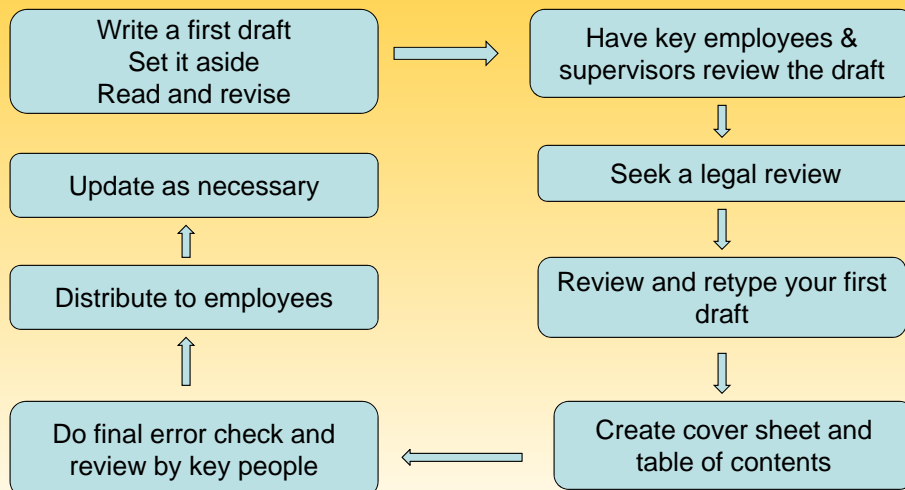
## Writing the Handbook

- Look at others for examples, but tailor them to your needs, don't just cut and paste
- Take your time. Time invested in the writing will result in less time later interpreting the policy.
- Keep the handbook alive by regular reviews and change it as necessary.
- Keep it as simple as possible while still covering the needs.



UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA | EXTENSION  
Driven to Discover™

## Drafting and Writing Your Handbook



## Resources

- University of Minnesota Extension
  - <http://www1.extension.umn.edu/dairy/employees/>
- Small Business Administration
  - <http://www.sba.gov/content/employee-handbooks>
- University of Vermont
  - [http://www.uvm.edu/~farmlabr/?Page=personnel/handbooks.html&SM=personnel/submenu\\_personnel.html](http://www.uvm.edu/~farmlabr/?Page=personnel/handbooks.html&SM=personnel/submenu_personnel.html)

## Thanks for your attention--

Chuck Schwartau  
University of Minnesota Extension Educator  
Rochester Regional Office  
[cschwart@umn.edu](mailto:cschwart@umn.edu)  
507-536-6301 office  
507-251-8903 cell

