MANAGING CHANGE IN THE WORKPLACE

Change in the workplace

All workplaces experience change. Change might affect a whole business, a part of it, a particular group of employees or a specific aspect of business practice. Factors leading to change can come from internal or external influences or events. Change is necessary to sustain business and could be as much about realising a positive opportunity as about solving a problem.

Meeting legislative requirements

Workplace change often involves new ways of operating that impact on the work undertaken, skills required or composition of the workplace. It is important to apply rigour and fairness to planned change so that compliance with industry standards, regulations and legislation is maintained. An example might be that when a business introduces new processes or systems, an assessment is required to ensure that they comply with occupational health and safety legislation and relevant industry standards.

Similarly, when making changes to business structure or job roles employers need to ensure they comply with their legal obligations regarding consultation with employees, notice periods and redundancy entitlements. These obligations will depend on whether the business is covered by the state or national industrial relations system.

Generally speaking, the national system covers incorporated businesses while the State system covers sole traders and unincorporated partnerships and trust arrangements.

Strategies to manage change

Change in a workplace is best undertaken with carefully considered goals, good planning, capable people to drive and implement change and involvement of people who are affected. People from all key business areas should be included when change is occurring.

To achieve effective change consider the following.

1   **Know your legal obligations** – Find out before you start what your legal obligations are regarding workplace change.

2   **Identify need for change** – Identify and communicate the need for the change and what needs to be done.

3   **Involve stakeholders** – Gain employee buy-in and engage the right people in addressing change, including those affected.

4   **Plan for change and assess impact** – Plan activities that need to be taken to address change, and assess the impact on people and the business.

5   **Communicate and support** – Keep staff informed throughout the change process and ensure that people involved and affected by change are supported.

6   **Monitor and evaluate** – Determine the success indicators for change, and ensure they are regularly monitored and evaluated.

For more information on the State industrial relations system, call Wageline on **1300 655 266**.

For information on the national industrial relations system, call the **Fair Work Infoline** on **13 13 94.**

Benefits of successful change management

Change actions require a business to look at its strategy, system, processes and people. Success in identifying and applying improvements across these areas will bring benefits including:

- clear and current business goals and strategies;
- alignment of structure and systems with business goals;
- removal of redundant or duplicated business practices and processes;
- replenishment of a competent workforce;
- confidence that best use of budgets occurs;
- removal of barriers to business success; and
- adoption of innovative practices and processes.

Care of employees in the change environment

Employees are one of the biggest assets in a business. Any type of change can lead to feelings of vulnerability, so it is important to include support strategies in the change plan. Support requirements will depend upon the nature of change, and the strategy should mirror that. Some considerations might be:

- mechanisms for staff to have input to change processes;
- access to services for assistance with addressing employee concerns;
- access to training for skill and professional development needs arising from change;
- support for individual impacts of a personal nature; and
- career transition advice.

For more information, resources and practical tools to help you plan, attract, recruit, manage and retain a skilled workforce visit **jobsandskills.wa.gov.au/resources-employers**