
How to hire your first employee

Hiring your first employee is one of the most important things you will do as a business person. You need to get it right.

Starting a new business is an exciting, and stressful, time for any new entrepreneur. One of the toughest phases that any new business can experience is growth. There will eventually come the point where you will reach the limit of what you can achieve as a one-man show. When it comes to hiring your second in command; you need to not only make sure you are choosing the right person for the right role but that you are in a good position to hire. Here are some items to check off your list when hiring your first employee.

Recruiting - know what you need

Full time, part time or just a few hours a week? Salesperson or office admin? Deciding which role you need to hire for first is just as important as the person you hire. Are you gathering more interest than you can keep up with and need a second salesperson to help with demand? Or are your suppliers not getting paid and admin is backing up? Perhaps you need both. Sitting down and deciding the most important role to help you to get to the next phase of growth is important. It's easy to get caught up in the excitement of hiring your first employee but don't hire because having a second salesperson sounds good, hire because you need them.

Advertise the role

Choosing the wording and platform to advertise your position can be just as important as the person you want. Ensure your job description is as detailed as possible so candidates know exactly what they are applying for. Vague titles, such as Business Development, can mean different things to different people so try to add as many particulars as possible. Avoid generic soft-skilled terms like “self-starter” or “motivated” – these should be implied throughout your job description.

Be careful not to use unbiased language and don't discriminate on the grounds of gender, age, race, disability, sexual orientation, religion, civil status (married, single, in a civil partnership, etc.), family status and membership of the Traveller community. This includes using descriptors like “young”, “mature”, and “salesman” amongst others. Using adjectives like this can result in costly legal action by candidates who may feel singled out by your poor choice of terminology. Think carefully about your wording and use neutral terms like “experienced” or “salesperson” instead.

Use reputable job boards liked LinkedIn and Monster.ie to advertise your role. It can be tempting to save money by using less expensive or free sites, but you are also opening yourself up to less determined job seekers this way. Don't be afraid to use word of mouth, or in this digital age, 'word of web'. Ask your LinkedIn network to recommend and share your advert, update your status on Facebook to let personal connections know you're looking to hire and add a link to the job spec the signature of your email with the tagline “We're hiring!” You never know where you might stumble across an excellent candidate.

Now that you're an employer - sort out the legalities

Becoming an employer is a tremendous responsibility. Not only are your employees reliant on you for their income and professional growth, but you also have a legal responsibility to ensure they are eligible to work for you and you must demonstrate that you are compliant with employment legislation.

Background checks

It's a criminal offence to employ someone who requires a work permit to work in Ireland and doesn't have one. You could face a fine of up to €50,000 and a potential prison term of up to five years, so due diligence at this stage cannot be over emphasised. Make sure you check original documents and if unsure, consult the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation to verify the various right-to-work permits issued to foreign workers.

Contracts

Under the Terms of Employment (Information) Acts 1994 and 2001, an employer is legally obliged to issue their employees with a written statement of their key requirements within the first two months of their employment. Not only does this protect both you and your employee, but it also ensures you both have a clear understanding of what is expected during the term of employment.

Register with Revenue

You must also register as an employer with Revenue within nine days of making a payment to an employee. You are required to notify the Revenue Commissioners within nine days of your name and address. As an employer, you are obliged to keep a record of every employee employed during the tax year, including their name, address, PPS number and the dates of their employment.

Get liability insurance

While employer's liability insurance is not compulsory in Ireland, as an employer it is your duty to ensure the health and safety of your staff while they are at work. Liability insurance can limit the cost to your business should your new employee suffer an injury in the workplace.

On-boarding

Once all the legal and compliance stuff is out of the way, you need to start thinking about onboarding your new joiner. This might seem like something only larger, more established companies should be concerned with but getting this right in the first instance will help to create a

great first impression for your new employee.

First day nerves can be eased by sending a friendly email a few days before the start date, with your company history, core values and details around what your new employee should expect during their first day, week and month. On their first day, give them a document with relevant links, contact details, pricing guides and have an open discussion about the role and responsibilities.

It is important to remember that onboarding is not a one-day activity. There should be a clearly outlined 30/60/90 plan, and expectations or objectives should be discussed with the employee early on to identify any potential roadblocks. Regular check-ins and progress checks should be maintained throughout this stage. A carefully crafted onboarding plan is the perfect opportunity to make a lasting positive impression on your new colleague.

Trust them

You've hired your new employee for a reason. You need them. You cannot continue to scale and grow alone. Now that you have found someone trust them to be able to do the job you have hired them to do. Give your new hire the autonomy and tools to be able to do their job. Recognise that they do not need to be micromanaged, but that they may still need guidance, and encourage open dialogue. After all, if you do not trust this person to do just as good a job as you would do (ideally, better!), then you've probably hired the wrong person.