

Personnel Issues

by Vicki Stute, president

Dakota County Regional Chamber of Commerce

Job Descriptions

The executive and staff must have accurate job descriptions. Job descriptions should be reviewed and approved by the board of directors and personnel committee. A clear and concise job description not only tells you what you should be doing, but also what the board's expectations are of you. If you take on additional responsibilities, add them to your job description. As with any job description, it should be referred to often, used during performance evaluations and updated at least annually. Some executives choose to have contracts with their chamber. A contract does not protect an executive from losing her/his position, but like a job description, it outlines specific expectations, benefits and may include salary continuation.

Office Policies, Procedures and Benefits Handbook

Office policies and procedures should be clearly outlined in a manual that all employees, even if there are only one or two of you, must read and understand. Once the employee demonstrates understanding of the manual, they should sign an acknowledgment letter. It is also suggested that either a human resource specialist or your attorney review the handbook on an annual basis for any legal additions or changes recently enacted.

Items included in this guide may range from policies regarding absence from work and parking to procedures for check disbursements and volunteer recognition. In addition, it is extremely important to have benefits outlined and should include sick leave/vacation leave, holidays, health savings accounts, health care benefits, jury duty, other leaves if appropriate, retirements benefits, continuing education, etc.

Many chambers of commerce also have separate policy manuals regarding accounting principles and procedures. Useful examples of this type of manual can be obtained from various local chambers, U.S. Chamber of Commerce, or your local accountant.

Employee Applications and Timesheets

Job application forms should be used for all employees, and a time sheet should be implemented for any non-exempt employees.

Employee Checklists

Checklists should be used in order to better prepare new employees beginning their responsibilities at your chamber. Checklists also insure that as the employer, you have met the legal requirements necessary for state and federal laws. Forms such as W4's, Employment Eligibility Verifications, Insurance Applications, Retirement Deferrals and Contributions and Human Rights Registration must be completed prior to the new employee beginning their duties.

Checklists can also be used for any employees terminating their responsibilities with the chamber. This provides written verification that the terminating employee has received any appropriate payments and that all necessary forms have been completed.

Annual Performance Evaluation

The chief staff person should meet with his or her employees at least annually for a performance evaluation. You may choose to also conduct ongoing informal evaluation(s). For new employees, a meeting after three months of employment can be productive to keep an employee focused. Be specific when discussing performance and close the interview by summarizing and planning for improvements. Write down the results of the interview and evaluation. All documents should be signed by both the executive and the employee in order to obtain acknowledgment and understanding of the expectations. Don't give insincere or excessive praise and don't use too many negative words or criticisms. Finally, and most important, provide the performance evaluation on a timely basis.

The chief staff person should also receive an annual evaluation. If your board does not bring it up, or think it necessary, ask for one. Knowing your board's expectations and their measurement of your performance is essential to fulfilling their expectations. A couple of representatives from the board, or a personnel committee, should meet with you to review your performance and the achievement of chamber goals over the year. You should provide the board a written report of your accomplishments for the year. Be prepared.

Salary Benefit Survey

Minnesota Chamber of Commerce Executives along with Mid-America Chamber Executives conducts a survey of chamber executive salaries and benefits every two years. This document can be very helpful for some executives and organizations seeking appropriate salary and or benefit levels and for volunteer search and review committees as they establish salary and benefit levels. Contact the MCCE office if you would like a copy of this publication.

Titles

Several years ago, the MCCE Board of Directors has adopted a unanimous resolution regarding titles for chief paid staff persons and chief volunteers. The recommendation is that all chief paid staff persons of local chambers of commerce have the title of president and all chief volunteers have the title of chair or chairman.

In most cases, the paid staff person of a chamber is the person who is actually performing the duties outlined in the statutes. For instance, the chief paid staff person, rather than the chief volunteer, is generally the one who actively manages the business by carrying out the day-to-day operations of the chamber. Generally, the chief volunteer's duties, on the other hand, involve chairing meetings, acting as a liaison between the Board of Directors and the staff, and acting as the spokesperson for the Chamber in the community. In addition, it is generally a paid staff person, rather than a volunteer, who is in charge of the day-to-day financial matters of the chamber as outlined in the statutes.