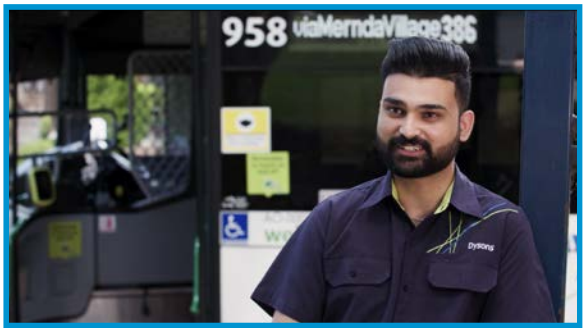
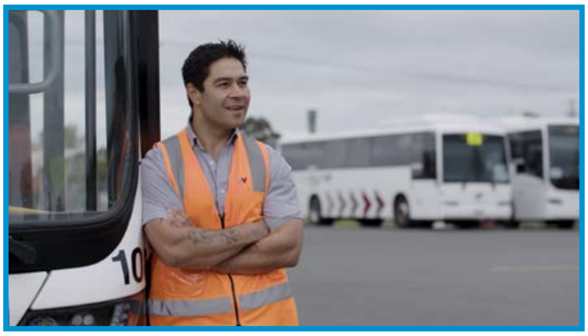
Bus Association Victoria

Human Resources: A Practical Guide for Bus Operators







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Section 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Foreword from the Bus Association Victoria Inc

An effective and productive, healthy, inclusive, and safe workplace is everyone's responsibly. Bus operators and senior leaders play a critical role in creating culture and driving policies and practices that promote staff retention and growth, health, wellness, and safety.

When effective recruitment and staff retention is valued by leaders, and appropriate resources are available and practices are in place, there are real benefits to employees in terms of improved health and wellbeing, as well as to operations such as increased productivity and job satisfaction, reduced absenteeism, and reduced compensation claims.

That's why your voluntary bus industry professional association has developed this resource: to help operators continuously improve their people policies and practices and remain great employers.

Victoria's bus and coach operators have developed a reputation for reliability and safety over generations. We trust this guide helps you sustain that.

This Guide was developed by the Association in consultation with BusVic's Social Strategies Committee and external consultants.

1.2 Purpose & Use of the Guide

This Guide is for operators and senior leaders and aims to provide practical hints and tips on how to effectively manage the employee life cycle. If you are a single operator working rurally, a mid-sized firm servicing a region or a large operator in the city, there will be something in this Guide that will suit your needs and budget for your entire workforce.

Who is the 'workforce'?

Throughout this manual the terms employees and workforce are used. They will generally refer to the five key areas of a bus operation:

- Drivers
- Chaperones/supervisors
- Workshop and maintenance
- Yard/cleaner/refueller
- Administration

Each of these roles have their own unique job requirements, skill sets, qualifications, and licensing. Where possible, this manual aims to be inclusive of all roles. Future editions of this manual will aim to elaborate further on roles other than drivers.

1.3 Employer Obligations & Disclaimer

The information in this Guide is not a substitute for legal or industrial relations advice.

The Bus Association Victoria Inc. makes no guarantees, representations, or warranties in relation to this Guide, or the information and materials provided within this Guide. The Bus Association Victoria Inc. will not be liable in relation to the contents or use or otherwise in connection with this Guide. The Bus Association Victoria Inc. has aimed to source reputable organisations as examples and potential resources for this Guide but does not represent, nor have any commercial agreements, with them.

Bus operators are required to comply with a number of industrial relations and workplace laws, such as but not limited to:

- Industrial awards and wages (found on BusVic's website)
- National Employment Standards
- Providing employees with the Fair Work Information Statement and Casual Employment Information Statement (for casuals only)
- Superannuation
- Victorian workplace health and safety acts and regulations
- Victorian Equal Opportunity Act 2010
- Australian Privacy Principles
- If you employ less than 15 people, the Small Business Fair Dismissal Code may apply.

Industrial relations and workplace laws are subject to change. Seek legal or industrial relations advice, or contact your industry association for assistance, to ensure your employment policies and practices are compliant.

1.4 Copyright

Section 2. WORKFORCE STRATEGY

In this section:

2.1 Workforce Planning

2.2 Employer of Choice

2.3 The Value of Diversity

2.4 Optimising Health

5.3 Maximising Supplier Partnerships

2.1 Workforce Planning

What is workforce planning?

Workforce Planning is the ongoing process of proactively planning ahead to avoid employee surpluses or skill shortages. It involves processes of analysing, forecasting, planning, assessing gaps, and determining actions to ensure you have the right skills at the right price and in the right place at the right time. Workforce Planning allows you to anticipate change rather than being surprised by events, as well as providing strategic approaches for addressing present and anticipated workforce issues.

Why is it important?

Workforce Planning has become increasingly important in order to:

- Achieve your strategic goals and annual budget.
- Provide realistic workforce projections for budgeting purposes.
- Build a capable, resilient, and diverse workforce.
- Prepare for succession planning and predicted waves of retirement.
- Address skill shortages and deal with a strong labour market.
- Maintain a competitive advantage as an employer of choice.
- Effectively manage of time and money invested in workforce training and development.

What are the phases of Workforce Planning?

Following the Motor Carrier Passenger Council of Canada's Workforce Planning model (see image on next page) is highly recommended. The model outlines the key phases of the workforce planning process and provides relevant information to the bus and coach industry.

Template

See the Motor Carrier Passenger Council of Canada's Workforce Planning webpage for free guidebooks and templates.

(Motor Carrier Passenger Council of Canada, n.d)

What are the top tips for effective Workforce Planning?

Use data for workforce demand and supply planning: Regularly collect the following data and review to help detect the patterns that occur at your business and predict the future:

- Number of employees and their status (contractor, casual, part, and full time)
- Age and gender distribution.
- Turnover and retention rate (see the Business Victoria's staff turnover calculator to identify turnover rate and cost to your operation)
- Internal mobility. This refers to the number of internal promotions or changes to employment status (for example, moved from casual to part or full time, or the reverse)
- Skill and driver licence/accreditation matrix of your employees.
- Map average time-to-hire for critical positions, particularly bus drivers.

Have a few scenarios to tackle future challenges: When undertaking Workforce Planning, develop a number of possible scenarios to consider and cost. Scenarios could include addressing skill shortages, planning for specific staff retirements, preparing for known future restructuring or transformation (such as with zero emission buses) or expected business growth, diversification or sale. Having the necessary data, you can simulate different predictable and unpredictable workforce scenarios. Using the Workforce Planning model will help determine in advance possible action pathways.

Track labour market insights: Keeping track of what is happening within the industry and more broadly within the labour market helps the Workforce Planning process. Questions to regularly investigate include:

- What are the upcoming trends in the bus and coach industry?
- How do these trends impact current job roles/position descriptions and skill demand?
- What are the emerging/new jobs and skills of the future in the bus and coach industry?
- What are your competitors doing to prepare for and attract the future workforce?

Bust misconceptions and get the buy-in: Workforce Planning is not the sole responsibility of one person, it is a collaborative process. To get buy-in from your colleagues, managers, and owners before you start the process, you need to be ready to combat misconceptions such as "*Strategic workforce planning is not for small and medium-sized operators*", *"Workforce planning is the responsibility of the HR manager"* or *"Let's do it like we've always done it".* Ensure you know or can predict objections in advance and address them by discussing the features and benefits of Workforce Planning.

Resources & additional information
Business Victoria's Staff turnover calculator
HR Forecast's Strategic workforce planning tips
Motor Carrier Passenger Council of Canada's Workforce Planning resources

2.2 Employer of Choice

What is Employer of Choice?

An Employer of Choice is someone who employees choose to work for when presented with other employment choices. This choice is a conscious decision made when joining, and staying, with a company – because your reputation, employment offer (terms and conditions), workplace culture, job security, and future potential is deemed to be better than someone else's.

Employers of Choice are committed to continually reviewing and improving workplace policies and practices that support better productivity, healthy and safe workplace culture, training and development, and reward and recognition.

Why is it important?

Employers of Choice have been found to retain top performers and attract the best external talent. Additionally, they support the following:

- Creating a workplace based on collaboration, meaningful connections, trust, and fairness, transparency, and accountability.
- Enriching the lives of employees, meeting their health, wealth, and career growth needs where individuals feel connected, challenged, and empowered.
- Ability to create a business that is relevant to employees, has a positive reputation within the community, is agile and adaptive to change, and open to innovation.

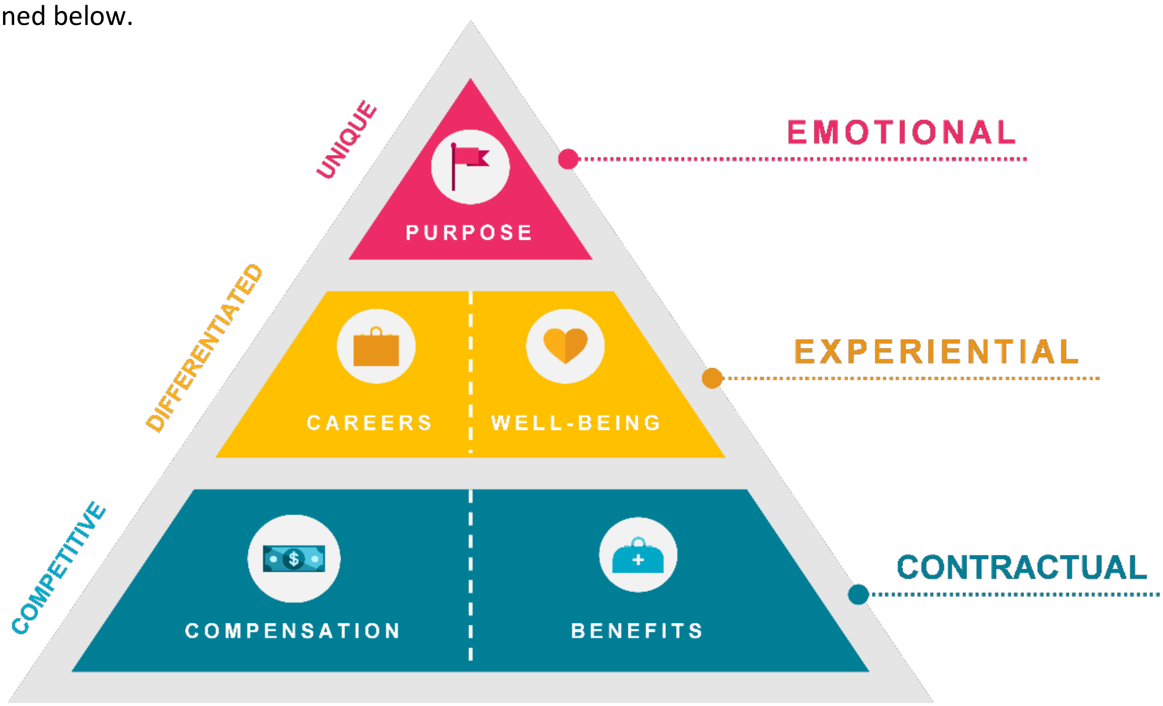
Resource

The annual Australian Business Award for Employer of Choice recognises organisations that develop leading workplaces that maximise the full potential of their employees through established policies and practices that demonstrate effective employee recruitment, engagement, and retention.

What is an Employee Value Proposition?

Underpinning the idea of Employer of Choice is the *Employee Value Proposition* (EVP) model. You can use this model to help identify the unique set of benefits an employee receives from your business in return for their skills, capabilities, and experience. It is meant to communicate a range of benefits, as well as taking the focus off salary as the sole reason for working in your business. An EVP is about defining how you are an Employer of Choice – how your business is unique, what it stands for, what you provide employees, and why. An EVP encompasses the central reasons that people are proud and motivated to work there, such as the inspiring vision, social contribution, or distinctive culture.

One model you can use to help articulate the benefits and value you provide to employees is outlined below.



(Marsh McLennan, 2018)

The layers are as follows:

- Forming the base are *contractual benefits* which represent standard industrial relation obligations of salary, employment conditions and benefits, and other contractual perks you might provide. At this level, you are *competing* with every other employer as these conditions can be directly compared to other jobs.
- The next layer up relates to *experiential benefits*. These refer to the *different* experiences (resources, support, and activities) you provide employees such as planned career progression and retirement planning, skill development and promotion, health and wellbeing programs, diversity and inclusion, and social events.
- The top layer is *emotional benefits*. These are truly *unique* to your operation as these benefits create a connection with employees based on your operation's history, vision, values, and purpose. This includes not only the meaningful social impact of the bus services you provide and philanthropic activities you are involved in, but also the option for employees to be involved in these, and the support and encouragement you provide employees to pursue their own activities that provide personal fulfillment.

How can I become an Employer of Choice?

Understand existing perceptions: First understand what perceptions existing and potential employees have about you and your business. You could ask these questions in a survey, at a team meeting, or informally one-on-one to learn more:

- Why are potential employees attracted to us?
- In what ways do existing employees think the business is unique?
- What do employees value most about working there?
- Why do employees stay? Why do they leave?

Draft your EVP: Collaborate with your team or managers to review the survey and your own research to draft an EVP statement. When drafted, review and test it against these questions:

- Does it align with your strategic objectives?
- Does it differentiate your business?
- Does it paint a realistic picture of what it's like to work for your business?
- Is it inspirational?
- Is it simple but broad enough to appeal to different groups?

Communicate, measure and review: When you have articulated your EVP you can:

- Publish a statement on your website and include quotes from employees on what it is like to work in your business.
- Use in regular communications and social media.
- Use in recruitment advertising and interviews.
- Embed into induction programs and team meetings.
- Review annually when you are considering strategic plans, budgets, and workforce planning.

Also see in this manual:

Section 2.3 The Value of Diversity

Section 6.1 The Value of Good Employee Engagement

Section 6.2 Inclusion & Belonging

Resources & additional information

Australian Business Award for Employer of Choice

Human Resource Director's Are you an employer of choice? Aim to become one

Mercer's Thriving in an Age of Disruption: Putting People at the Heart of Change

Marsh McLennan's Curating a Compelling Employee Value Proposition in Emerging Markets.

Michael Page's How to create a compelling EVP

2.3 The Value of Diversity

What is diversity?

Diversity refers to the mix of people in your workforce that have a range of similarities and differences that are both *social* (including cultural heritage, age, caring responsibilities, disability status, religious and political affiliation, gender, sexual orientation, and socio-economic background) and *professional* (such as job role and responsibilities, education and qualifications, work experiences, and locations where they've worked).

The Victorian Government Department of Transport's Inclusion & Diversity Strategy 2020-2023 aims to address the challenges faced by five groups traditionally marginalised in the workplace. These are:

- Women
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians
- Lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, intersex and queer + (LGBTIQ+) people
- People with disability
- Culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) people

See the Department's website for more details on their strategy.

Did you know?

- Women comprise 13% of the Australian bus and coach driver workforce, compared to 18% of the tram driver workforce and 8% of the train driver workforce (Transitioning Well & Bus Association Victoria, 2021).
- In the USA, estimates claim 47.9% of American bus drivers are women (Transitioning Well & Bus Association Victoria, 2021).

What are the benefits of a diverse workforce?

The Victorian Department of Transport's Inclusion & Diversity Strategy states:

> "A diverse workforce operating within an inclusive workplace culture makes business, cultural, and social sense. Global research indicates that inclusion and diversity is inextricably linked to enhanced productivity measures, including innovation, engagement, creating and realising business opportunities and wellbeing."

Other benefits include:

- Improvements to financial performance, productivity and work attendance, problem solving, market share, and organisational reputation.
- Help address skill shortages.
- A workforce that is representative of the community and customers you serve.
- A less intimidating place to work for people from diverse backgrounds.
- Stimulates greater creativity and greater ideas which drive innovation and productivity.

What are the major barriers to workplace diversity?

- Leadership and workplace culture skills and resistance to change (often evident as stereotyping, insensitive or inappropriate remarks or behaviour, intentional exclusion, or racism).
- Problems with inducting, integrating, and supporting diverse employees.
- Poor communication that leads to unintentional offence, mistrust, or unclear instructions.
- Lack of role models and allies.
- Lack of budget for programs, training, and resources.

How can I create a workplace that supports diversity?

Throughout this manual, you will find examples of how to build and support a diverse workforce. There is no one solution or strategy to increasing workforce diversity. Well-resourced bus operators might select a few different approaches while regional and rural operators face different challenges.

Develop a formal diversity plan: You may want to formalise your commitment to building a diverse workforce by developing a plan or making a public statement. This may include mechanisms to review and integrate diversity and inclusion into operational and human resource policy and procedures. Some organisations have established a diversity and inclusion committee of managers and employers to lead this work.

Measuring diversity: Consider measuring the diversity of your workforce. Firstly, determine which factors you will monitor – for example gender, age, cultural heritage, languages spoken, and ability – why you will monitor them, and how often you will monitor. Other metrics include:

- Recruitment applicants
- Leadership and management roles
- Job satisfaction
- Job position and tenure

Diversity and inclusion training: Owners, managers and your teams are encouraged to attend training programs on the following topics:

- Fundamentals of workplace equality and respect.
- Responding to everyday sexism and sexual harassment.
- Cultural (Indigenous and CALD) awareness training.
- LGBTIQ+ awareness and ally training.
- Supporting employee disabilities.

Operational practices:

- Strategies used around the world to attract women, in particular, include improving and promoting the industry as a desirable place to work (including using positive images of women and the industry, and positive messaging and quotes from current workforce); develop internships, pre-apprenticeship, and apprenticeship programs; provide opportunities for networking and mentoring; promote training and career pathways; and ensure gender-balance on decision making committees and working groups.
- Some businesses establish targets to increase women, long term unemployed, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander people into the workforce.

Also see in this manual:

Section 6.1 The Value of Good Employee Engagement

Section 6.2 Inclusion & Belonging

Resources & additional information

BSC Designer's Diversity and Inclusion: Strategy Scorecard with KPIs

Deloitte's The path to prosperity: why the future of work is human

Diversity Council Australia's Key definitions and state of play

Fair Work Ombudsman's free self-paced online program on Diversity and discrimination

Transitioning Well & Bus Association Victoria's Victorian Bus and Coach Industry Future Workforce: Literature Review (see the BusVic Bus Industry Innovation Fund webpage for details)

Victorian Government Department of Transport's Inclusion & Diversity Strategy 2020-2023

2.4 Optimising Health

What is a healthy workplace?

Healthy workplaces promote the physical, mental, economic, and social wellbeing of its employees, and in turn the health of their families, communities, and society. A healthy workforce is often described as one where employees characterise vigour and are flourishing, robust, fit, resilient, positive, and thriving.

Some other key definitions:

- *Health* is a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.
- *Mental health* refers to a person's ability to realise their own potential, cope with the normal stresses of life, work productively and fruitfully and make a contribution to the community.
- *Health literacy* relates to how people access, understand, and use health information in ways that benefit their health. People with low health literacy are at higher risk of worse health outcomes and poorer health behaviours.

Did you know?

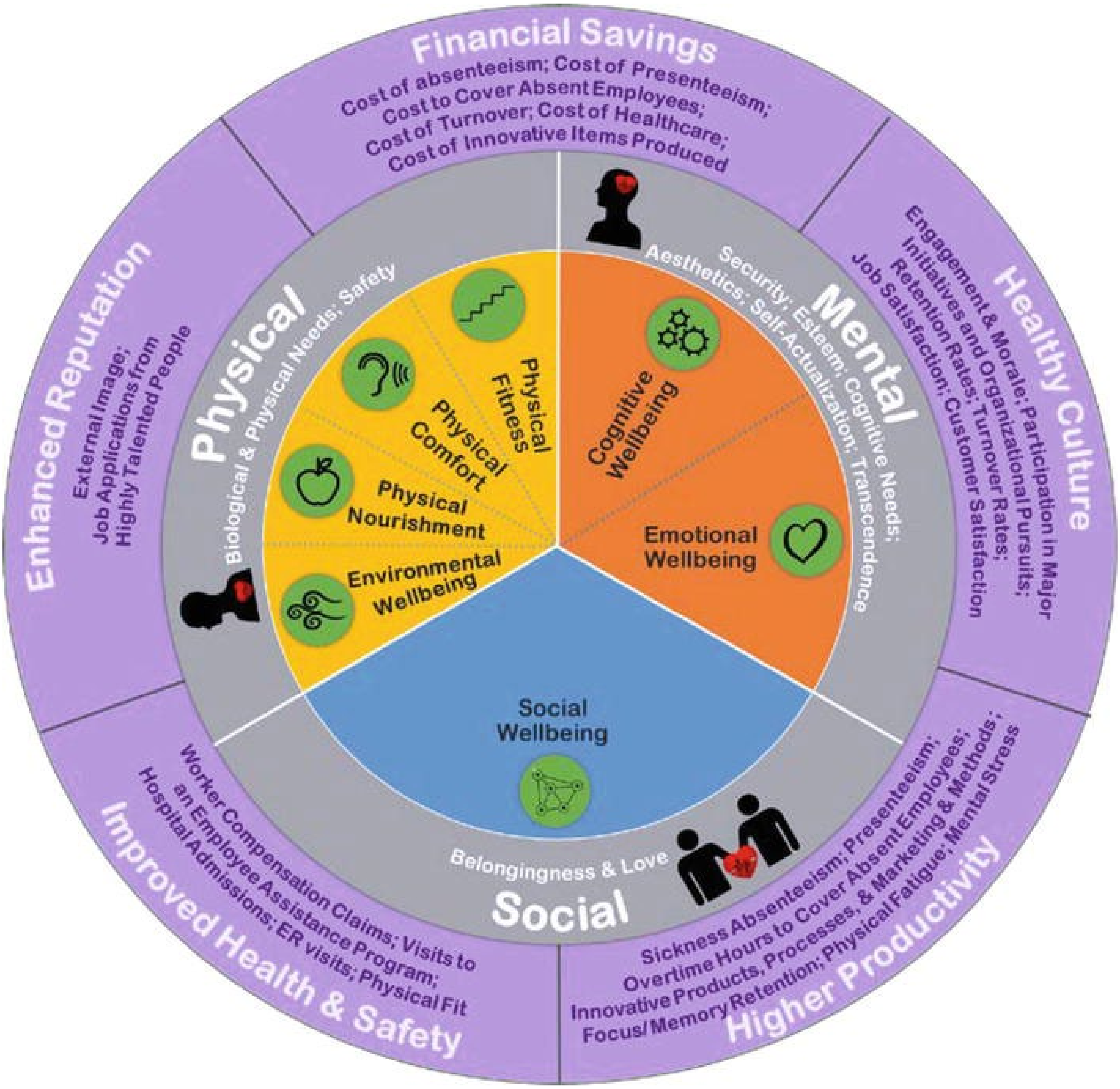
- A 2015 review of the Victorian bus and coach workforce found 61% experiencing job stress, 35% experiencing depression, 28% disclosing they have a diagnosed mental illness, and 12% currently seeking treatment (Mental Health at Work, 2015).
- Bus drivers have been shown to have higher rates of stress, psychological injury, and mental illness, as well as cardiovascular, gastrointestinal, and musculoskeletal health issues than those in other occupations (Lowe & Evans, 2016).

What are the benefits and key measures of a healthy workforce?

The benefits of such a workforce are widely researched and recognised to include improvements to:

- Organisational productivity by reduced sickness absenteeism and presenteeism, decreased overtime hours, and decreased mental stress and physical fatigue.
- Workplace health and safety by reduced workplace accidents and incidents, reduced workers compensation claims, and better physical fitness.
- Workplace culture with increased retention rates, increased job satisfaction, and decreased turnover rates.
- Financial savings by reduced cost of absenteeism and presenteeism, cost of turnover, and financial returns from more healthy employees.
- Business reputation.

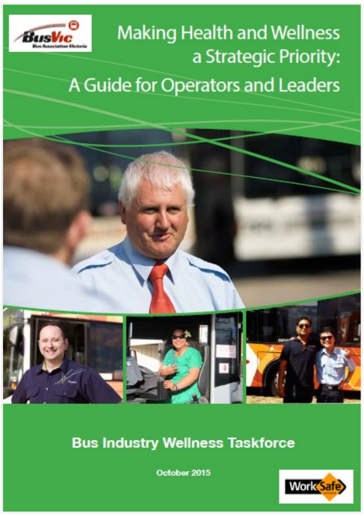
See the image below that connects these benefits to key measures:



(Lee, 2019)

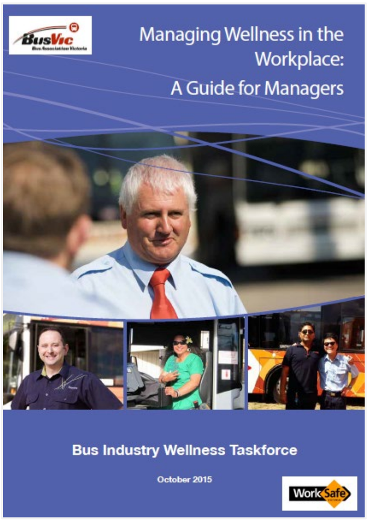
How can I optimise health in my operation?

For ideas on how to promote a healthy and safe workplace, visit BusVic's website to download the following guides and support resources:



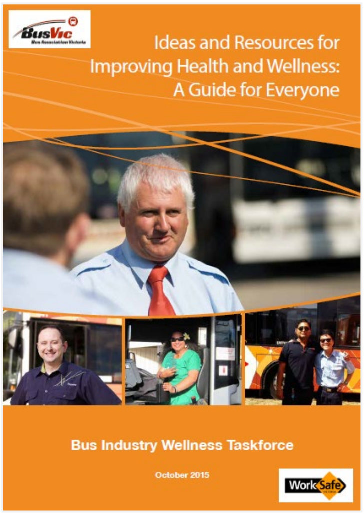
Making Health and Wellness a Strategic Priority: A Guide for Operators and Senior Leaders

This Guide is for operators and senior leaders and aims to provide practical hints and tips on how to make health, wellness and safety a strategic priority. If you are a single operator working rurally, a mid-sized firm servicing a region or a large operator in the city, there will be something in these Guides that will suit your needs and budget for your entire workforce.



Managing Wellness in the Workplace: A Guide for Managers

This Guide is for managers and supervisors. It presents some ideas on how to manage health and wellness in the workplace and best support employees – from those who work in administration, customer service, in the workshop, the refuelers and cleaners through to bus chaperones and our bus drivers.

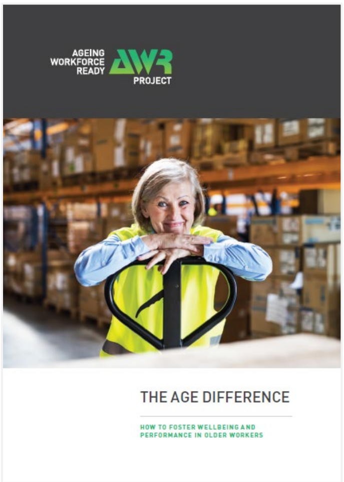


Ideas and Resources for Improving Health and Wellness

This Guide starts with an overview of health, wellness and productivity in our industry and is followed by ideas and resources across five major areas – Health and Fitness, Driver Safety, Skills and Support, Sense of Belonging, and Workplace Responsibility.

Implementing one or two ideas across these five major areas may start a conversation that could have long term impact on improving health, wellness and productivity.

Also see information and resources from BusVic's participation in the Ageing Workforce Ready project:



The Ageing Workforce Ready (AWR) project is an innovative collaboration between Australia's largest industry super fund AustralianSuper, and organisational psychology practitioners, Transitioning Well.

The project aims to protect and promote the mental health and wellbeing of ageing workers in the public transport industry. This will be achieved through the delivery of resources and advice to a pilot group of Victorian workplaces and their employees.

Industry resources

BusVic's Making Health and Wellness a Strategic Priority: A Guide for Operators and Senior Leaders

BusVic's Managing Wellness in the Workplace: A Guide for Managers

BusVic's Ideas and Resources for Improving Health and Wellness

Transitioning Well's Ageing Workforce Ready (AWR) project and News and resources

Additional information

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare's Health literacy

Beyond Blue's Developing a workplace mental health strategy: A how-to guide for organisations

Bus Association Victoria's An Investigation into Abuse and Assault of Route Bus Drivers: Statistics, triggers, risk reduction, training and opportunities

Lee's Workplace Health and its Impact on Human Capital: Seven Key Performance Indicators of Workplace Health

Mental Health at Work's Creating Safe, Mentally Health, Resilient and Support Work environments for Victoria's Bus Industry

VicHealth's Creating Healthy Workplaces Program

2.5 Maximising Supplier Partnerships

Bus operators are encouraged to explore how other organisations – such as BusVic supplier partners and those within the local community – could support their workforce needs. This could include accessing resources and training, exchanging information, and sharing news of job vacancies.

Organisations that might be able to assist include:

- BusVic and other bus operators.
- Bus and coach manufacturers and service suppliers.
- Jobs Victoria website where you can promote job vacancies and find candidates in your area.
- Your superannuation fund.
- Your business and workers compensation insurer.
- Local job and training providers.
- Local cultural and community groups.

Section 3. RECRUITMENT

In this section:

3.1 Position Descriptions

3.2 Advertising Strategies

3.2.1 Word of Mouth

3.2.2 Writing Adverts

3.2.3 Operator Websites

3.2.4 BusVic's Industry Careers Website

3.2.5 Online Advertising

3.2.6 Social Media

3.2.7 On-board Advertising

3.2.8 Attracting Passive Candidates, Career Changers & the 'Home Force'

3.3 Application Forms

3.4 Conducting Interviews

3.4.1 Responding to Candidate Questions

3.5 License & Pre-employment Checks

3.6 Medical Tests

3.7 Reference Checks

3.8 Offering Employment

5.3 Managing Unsuccessful Candidates

3.1 Position Descriptions

The first step in the recruitment process is to ensure there is a documented up-to-date position description for the role that aligns with industrial relations requirements (such as correct hours of work, wages etc) and clearly outlines industry and driver licensing/accreditation requirements.

Position Descriptions help communicate to each employee what is expected of them, such as:

- **Position specifications**: Role title, purpose and objectives of the position, who the role will report to, what are the limits of the role's authority and who they need to involve when making key decisions, other primary relationships, and what work needs to be performed and how.
- **Capability specifications**: Information on the knowledge (education, qualifications, and driver licensing/accreditation), skills and experience, and attitudes the person should possess for the role.

- **Key Performance Indicators**: Outline how the role's performance will be measured such as safety, service satisfaction, timeliness, and accuracy.
- **Workplace operations:** Describe a typical workload of the position, such as rosters, anticipated days/hours of work, breaks, and wage rates**.**

Having accurate Position Descriptions for all roles helps:

- Determine training and development required for the role.
- Establish a career path for employees (for example, if an employee wishes to become a supervisor you can show them the relevant Position Description to outline what is required).
- Provide effective feedback and management when actual performance does not algin to the requirements of the role.

3.2 Advertising Strategies

Did you know?

The average recruitment lead time in Australia – from advertising the position through to successful appointment – is 82 days (Majer Recruitment, 2021).

Bus operators involved in the development of this manual suggest it takes around 35-56 days (or longer) to recruit a currently accredited bus driver with previous experience. Recruiting workshop mechanics takes longer, with some operators looking at international skill labour programs to fill vacancies (which can take up to 6-months).

In this section, a range of strategies are discussed to help bus operators recruit staff including:

- How and where to advertise.
- How to use social media for recruitment.
- Leveraging local networks, connections with community groups, education, and training providers.

In addition to the information provided in this manual, also see the American Bus Association's Recruiting and Retaining Drivers toolkit for more ideas.

3.2.1 Word of Mouth

What is word of mouth recruitment?

Word of mouth recruitment is one of the most common and effective ways to fill job vacancies. This strategy involves promoting job vacancies to the current workforce and local networks and providers, asking them to share the news.

It has been shown that if your employees, providers, and local connections are happy and take pride in their association with you they will be more willing to spread the word to have their family, friends, and contacts apply.

Who can help spread the word?

Apart from employees, operators can also leverage local networks and community groups to help spread the word of job vacancies. This not about poaching staff from other businesses but informing select key contacts know you are recruiting and inviting them to share the news throughout their networks.

Networks and groups you may wish to contact to let them know you are recruiting could include the following:

- Local recruitment agencies and job placements agencies (fees may apply).
- Local newspaper and media outlets would be interested in good news stories and profiling locals.
- Local supermarket and shop ad boards
- Local Councils and Chambers of Commerce.
- Community organisations such as Rotary, Lions, Apex, Country Women's Association, and youth organisations.
- Emergency services organisations such as local country fire authority and surf live saving clubs.
- Cultural community groups.
- Organisations such as the University of the Third Age and Men's Sheds.
- Early childhood, primary and secondary schools for the dual benefit of showcasing careers in the industry to students as well as promoting job opportunities through the school network of parents and carers.
- Adult, Vocational and Technical Education providers.
- Local and regional job fairs and expos.
- Churches and faith centres.

What are top tips for word of mouth recruitment?

Ask people to spread the word: Once you have a job vacancy or a job ad prepared, let employees and your network know and given them details of where candidates can get more information and how they can apply.

Employee testimonials: Take quotes and comments from current employees about their positive experience with your operation, their job, and industry. Employee testimonials often refer to the features and benefits of being an Employer of Choice (see Section 2.2) and show what it is like to work in the industry and your operation from your employee's perspective. Use these testimonials on your website (see Section 3.2.3), social media (see Section 3.2.6), and in job adverts (see Section 3.2.2). Some companies turn employee testimonials into eye-catching content (such as images, graphics, videos).

Start a referral program: Some companies have created a reward program for employees who refer candidates – employees get rewarded if the candidate is successfully selected and passes their probation period (see Section 4.1). Referral programs often provide incentives like cash, gift cards, experiences (like dinners or hotel stays), extra holiday time, or other perks.

What are the challenges with word of mouth recruitment?

Personal relationships: Occasionally there might be challenges in managing existing personal relationships between employees who refer a candidate who might be a family member or close friend and expect them to get the job. Being clear from the beginning of the requirements and stages of the recruitment process (such as a clear position description, see Section 3.1) and reinforcing that 'not all mates get a job' will help manage expectations.

Diversity impact: Research suggests that men may refer mostly men, and women refer women. Some small minority groups or individuals may be more active in recruiting heavily in their cultural or ethnic communities than others. Those that do are likely to dominate over time.

Also see in this manual:

Section 3.2.3 Operator Websites

Section 3.2.6 Social Media

Resources & additional information

McGill's Word of Mouth recruitment can help workforce diversity

Monster's How to Make Word of Mouth Recruitment Work for Your Business

3.2.2 Writing Adverts

What is the future workforce looking for?

Today's post-pandemic candidate is looking for the following from their future employer:

- Employees are looking to employers that enrich or enhance their life by creating meaningful experiences for customers and passengers, the workforce, and the bus operator themselves.
- Employees are seeking employers who treat their staff well and demonstrate that they care and support their workers in meaningful ways, and they want to feel listened to.
- Flexibility is no longer a workplace benefit but an expectation.
- There is a strong preference for jobs in businesses that have a social purpose or benefit society, with females ranking social benefit as a higher motivator than males.
- Are interested in a job that has both routine and innovation (such as working with new technologies or new ways of doing business).
- Parents have been found to be a key motivator for young people to get into the bus industry.
- Young people want careers that are interesting and socially rewarding, but they also want long-term stability and security.

Some of these factors can be addressed in your recruitment advert.

What should be included in a recruitment ad?

One of the first steps in the recruitment process is knowing what position you need filled and to then write an advert.

Top tips for writing a good recruitment advert include:

- Write a strong headline that will grab candidate's attention.
- Be truthful and outline the reality of the role.
- Licenses or qualifications required for the role, or information on how the operator will provide training.
- Outline how you are an Employee of Choice and provide information on your workplace culture (see Section 2.2).
- Be succinct and focus on the features and benefits of the role. Features and benefits common in the bus and coach industry include:
  - Flexibility and life/work balance.
  - Support in obtaining driver licencing/accreditation, training, and developing transferable skills.
  - Secure, growing, innovative industry committed to sustainability.
  - Stability, in working with established and/or family-owned and operated businesses.
  - Involvement in the local community and social responsibility.
  - Salary and benefits.
  - How operator support workplace health, safety, and wellbeing.
  - Workplace benefits (such as a diverse workforce, uniform, and social events).
- Include a call to action such as information on how to apply or links to your website or the BusVic careers in the industry video.

Examples

Visit Seek's website for examples of bus and coach driver ads from around Australia, and the American Bus Association example.

What can't be said in a recruitment ad?

Recruitment adverts need to comply with state and federal legislation relating to equal opportunity and discrimination. It is unlawful to publish recruitment ads that indicate, or could reasonably be understood to imply, you are intending to discriminate.

In Victoria, there are 17 attributes protected under the Equal Opportunity Act that you cannot discriminate against, these being (in alphabetical order): age, breastfeeding, disability, employment activity, gender identity, industrial activity, lawful sexual activity, marital status, parental or carer status, physical features, political belief or activity, pregnancy, race (including colour, nationality, ethnicity and ethnic origin), religious belief or activity, sex, sexual orientation, or personal association with someone who has, or is assumed to have, any of these personal attributes.

There are many words and terms that **cannot be included** in recruitment advertisements, such as 'married man required', 'single applicants only', 'no Aborigines', 'Australian only', the use of 'he, she, male female, girl, boy, woman, man' or age-related terms of 'mature', 'senior' and 'junior'.

See the Victorian Equal Opportunity & Human Rights Commission's Guideline for the recruitment industry and employers for more information and examples.

Where can I use the ad?

The recruitment advert can be used the following ways:

- On your business website and social media.
- Posted to online recruitment platforms (see Section 3.2.5) and the BusVic industry careers website (see Section 3.2.4).
- As a flyer, emailed to local networks and key contacts and hard copies shared with the team and posted on-board.

How long should I advertise for?

To avoid frustrating job seekers, adverts should be promptly taken down/deleted when filled unless you are always seeking applications for specific roles.

Depending on where you advertise, you can select a specific time period to promote your ad (for example, Seek has a standard minimum of 30-days before the job auto-deletes) or manually deactivate them.

Also see in this manual:

Section 2.2 Employer of Choice

Section 3.2.4 BusVic's Industry Careers Website

Section 3.2.5 Online Advertising

Section 3.2.6 Social Media

Resources & additional information

American Bus Association's Recruiting and Retaining Drivers toolkit

Seek's How to write a great job ad

Victorian Equal Opportunity & Human Rights Commission's Guideline for the recruitment industry and employers

3.2.3 Operator Websites

How can I promote job vacancies on our company website?

Bus operators who have a website might consider creating a careers or jobs available page on their site. The purpose of this is to:

- Create a good first impression with candidates.
- Provide more information, photos and videos that promote the workplace culture, showcase the current workforce, and outline how you are an Employer of Choice (see Section 2.2).
- Outline requirements of the role (including a position description) and how to apply.

See these Victorian operator examples:

- McHarry's Buslines provides features and benefits of working with them, quotes and photos from current employees, and an online application form.
- CDC Victoria which includes company information, current vacancies and additional information on key roles, a video, and expression of interest online forms.
- Dysons has a listing of current vacancies (based on role and location) which provide the position description and online application form.
- Latrobe Valley Buslines careers page includes application forms for driver and non-driver roles.

Operators may want to include profiles of their staff on their website to help encourage applications from a broader range of candidates. See Coles Coaches webpage for profiles on their drivers.

Also see in this manual:

Section 3.2.4 BusVic's Industry Careers Website

Additional information

Job Adder's Attracting Candidates to Your Career Page: Examples and important component

3.2.4 BusVic's Industry Careers Website

What is BusVic's careers website?

BusVic has created an industry careers website – www.buscareers.com.au – where BusVic members can advertise job vacancies. BusVic continually promotes the bus careers website through their broadcast communications and social media, providing another platform to showcase the variety of employment options in the industry.

Contact BusVic to post job vacancies on the bus careers website.

BusVic have also produced a video showcasing the variety of job opportunities in the industry. The video is freely available on YouTube and BusVic members can also share and use the video on their website and social media.

3.2.5 Online Advertising

Where can I post my recruitment advert online?

There are a number of ways you can post your recruitment advert online. Selecting the right online platform for your ad and the type of role you are recruiting for is important, as you can choose between free job posting sites and premium paid ones.

Popular platforms include:

- BusVic's www.buscareers.com.au website (see previous Section 3.2.4).
- Australian Government's JobActive
- Victorian Government's Jobs Victoria

- Seek
- CareerOne
- Gumtree Jobs
- Indeed
- GradConnection (a division of Seek) for students and TAFE/university graduates.
- FlexCareers for targeting career changes, women, and individuals returning to work.
- Restart Program offers financial incentives for employing people aged 50 or older.

Remember to promptly take down/delete adverts when the position is filled unless you are always seeking applications for specific roles.

3.2.6 Social Media

What are the benefits of sharing job vacancies on social media?

Social media platforms allow individuals and organisations to share content quickly and cheaply to virtual networks – information, opinions, documents, videos, and photos. Having a presence on social media has provided some businesses with a competitive advantage.

Did you know?

The most popular social media platforms for sharing news of job opportunities are Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn:

- 96% of candidates use social media to search more about your business (Sprout Social, 2021)
- 75% of employees between the ages of 18-34 found their job on social media (Smarp, 2021).

The major benefits of using social media as another strategy to promote job vacancies:

- It's free, quick, and easy.
- Increases reach and may spark interest with candidates who haven't considered working in the industry before.
- Another avenue of promoting your business and how you are an Employer of Choice.

How can I promote job vacancies on social media?

There are several ways you can use social media.

Create social media account(s) for your operation: Setting up accounts for the major platforms is free. Firstly, decide which social media platform(s) work best for you – which one(s) will be easy to use. If you are new to social media, you may choose to create one account for your business to start small.

See the following resources and examples of how Victorian bus operators are using social media:

Social Media	Operator examples
Facebook is the world's largest social media community where people and organisations share information, photos, videos, and comments **Resource** How to set up a Facebook page for a business	CDC Victoria Christians Bus Co Coles Coaches Dysons Latrobe Valley Bus Lines
Instagram allows you to share photos/images and provide captions. **Resource** How to set up an Instagram account	CDC Victoria Christians Bus Co Crown Coaches Coles Coaches
Twitter is a microblogging site that restricts word content to 280 characters but you can include website links, #hashtags, photos and videos. **Resource** How to set up a Twitter account	CDC Victoria Dysons
LinkedIn is the world's largest and most popular social media platform for recruitment. Individual LinkedIn pages read like a CV and you can post blogs and comments. **Resource** How to set up a LinkedIn page for your business	CDC Victoria Christians Bus Co Crown Coaches

Include photos and videos: Research shows that social media posts that use images or videos receive a much higher response. Include photos, images and videos of your operation or team, or links to the BusVic careers in the industry videos to show potential candidates what it is like working in the industry.

Use the job ad: When promoting job vacancies in social media include details from your ad (see Section 3.2.2) and website links to the full advert, application forms or where candidates can get more information.

Use #Hashtags: A hashtag is a keyword or phrase preceded by the hash symbol (#), written within a social media post or comment to highlight it and help readers search for it. For example, using these hashtags in a recruitment social media post – #job #hiring #career #recruit – will help candidates find your ad when they are using the hashtag term to search for jobs. You can also include hashtags that relate to the position (#busdriver #admin #HR #trades), location (#Ballarat #Sunbury) and industry (#bus #buses #buslife #publictransport).

Invite the team to share: People trust recommendations from friends and family over any other kind of marketing or promotion. Encourage current team members to share your recruitment social media post with their own networks.

Responding to comments: Individuals may reply to your social media post and provide a comment. General advice is to respond to individuals asking questions and ignore negative or inappropriate comments. Each social media platform has rules for these situations and provide information to businesses on how to report and block users doing the wrong thing.

Resources & additional information

iCIMS' Your complete guide to social media recruiting

Smarp's How to use social media for recruitment: 5 best practices

Sprout Social's The ultimate guide to social recruiting

3.2.7 On-board Advertising

What are the pros and cons of advertising job vacancies on buses?

Occasionally some operators post job vacancies on board their buses as a way of broadening the number of advertising strategies used.

However on-board advertising occurs in a 'very busy space' where your job advert will be competing with other advertising, notices, and on-board information. In some instances, posting on-board job adverts may require permission.

3.2.8 Attracting Passive Candidates, Career Changers & the 'Home Force'

Who are these people?

There are groups of people within the community who could be excellent employees but are often difficult to connect with when you are recruiting. This means you have to move beyond posting a job ad and doing your usual recruitment methods and actively promote your job in non-traditional ways.

These groups include:

- *Passive candidates* are people who are not actively seeking work and/or those happily employed elsewhere. Unlike active job seekers, passive candidates are not constantly checking job websites or applying for positions.
- *Career changers* are those purposely moving away from their current industry or job to something new. They might not have relevant experience (which if often overlooked when screening applicants), but they are typically eager for change and a new challenge.
- *Home force* of stay-at-home parents/carers, long term unemployed, and the semi-retired who are keen to work flexible hours and prefer a sow and gradual return to work.

How can I attract them?

Suggested strategies include:

- In job ads, promote role flexibility (hours and if applicable, the ability to work from home); training and mentoring provided; showcase what it is like to work in the industry with photos/profiles from current staff who once were passive candidates, career changers, or home force; and include a link to the BusVic industry career video).

- When screening applications and in interviews look for candidate strengths and skills that could transfer (with some training and support) into the role available.
- Look for networking events and job fairs in your community or region.
- Consider an employee referral program, where existing staff members are rewarded (financial or non-financial) for introducing a candidate that is ultimately hired.
- Social media has proven to be a great platform to reach passive candidates, especially with social media posts showing videos of what it's like working in the industry. You can regularly share videos on social media to prompt interest, not just when you are recruiting. Videos you can use include ones from BusVic industry career video series, and a segment from the TV program *The Project* that shows how a Sydney bus operator successfully appointed 13 QANTAS pilots as bus drivers after long-haul international flights were cancelled due to COVID-19.
- Connect with local community outreach programs that aim to create ongoing job opportunities for disadvantaged long-term unemployed.
- Develop internships, graduate programs and apprenticeships for high school and vocational education graduates and partner with local education institutions.

Also see in this manual:

Section 2.2 Employer of Choice

Section 3.2.1 Word of Mouth

Section 3.2.6 Social Media

Additional information

Smart Recruit's Career Changers: How & Why You Should Recruit Them

3.3 Application Forms

What are the benefits of an application form?

Application forms ask candidates to provide additional information to assist who you will invite for an interview. Benefits include:

- Saves time by helping you identify most relevant applications faster.
- Gain a better idea of a candidate's competency and ability profile.
- Obtain more accurate information from the candidate.

Application forms can be online (see operator examples below) or made available in hard-copy format for walk-in applications (this also provides the opportunity to have a short discussion with them about their skills and background to assess their suitability).

What can you ask in an application form?

As with job adverts, application forms need to comply with state and federal legislation relating to equal opportunity and discrimination.

For bus driver candidates, the application form can ask questions relating to their licensing/accreditation and provide the relevant documents (see Section 3.5).

You **cannot ask questions** that relate to age, breastfeeding, disability, employment activity, gender identity, industrial activity, lawful sexual activity, marital status, parental or carer status, physical features, political belief or activity, pregnancy, race (including colour, nationality, ethnicity, and ethnic origin), religious belief or activity, sex, sexual orientation, or personal association with someone who has, or is assumed to have, any of these attributes.

Template

This template (available on BusVic's website) is intended as a guide only and you are encouraged to seek legal or industrial relations advice to ensure it is fit for purpose:

- BusVic's Employment Application Form

Industry examples

See these Victorian bus operator examples:

- CDC Victoria expression of interest online forms.
- Dysons online application form.
- Latrobe Valley Buslines application forms for driver and non-driver roles.
- McHarry's Buslines online application form.

Resource

Victorian Equal Opportunity & Human Rights Commission's Guideline for the recruitment industry and employers

3.4 Conducting Interviews

What are the pros and cons of interviewing candidates?

Interviewing candidates is a critical part of the recruitment process. It is a conversation between the employer (who is assessing the candidate's ability to do the role) and the candidate (who is assessing if this is the best job and workplace for them).

Interviews can occur over the phone, virtually (via Zoom or Teams), or in person.

Interviews provide the best chance to assess a candidate's willingness and ability, as well as the opportunity to obtain additional, appropriate information about the candidate.

The disadvantages of interviews are:

- It is a time-consuming process which may lead to **'panic recruitment'** where employers make quick judgements about candidates that could lead to hiring the wrong candidate on the spot.
- **The 'halo effect'** where employers unconsciously bias themselves towards a candidate because they like their strengths or personality which may leave skill deficiencies or lack of experience go unchecked.

- **Self-censorship** where a candidate may withhold information or an opinion out of fear that it might be used against them later. This may occur if the candidate feels the interview is not going well, or it is not the job or workplace for them.
- **Formed stereotypes**, where the employer forms a strong view of the candidate's ability and future performance based on an unintentionally formed stereotype.
- **Unpredictable**, as interviews are not as reliable or valid as practical skill tests nor do they predict how a candidate's skills will successfully transfer to the job, or how they will perform in the future or interact with the team.

What is the structure and questions to ask?

Structured interviews are recommended, where a list of questions relating to the Position Description are prepared in advance. This is called a 'competency-based approach' where the interview focuses specifically on determining if the candidate has the knowledge, skills, and attributes required for the job. In competency-based interviews, questions tend to be direct, probing, and specific as candidates are asked how they have handled situations in the past.

Ask all applicants the same questions in the same order. This method ensures the same information is collected on all applicants and allows you to easily compare the applicants.

One suggested structure of an interview is as follows:

Step 1: Preparation – Have interview questions pre-determined that directly relate to the Position Description (and have a copy on hand), know what the recruitment process entails (how many interviews and if you will be conducting practical tests) and review the candidate's application.

Step 2: Open the interview – Start with a discussion of the structure and some questions to learn more about them:

- Explain who you are (and who else may be involved in the interview) and the structure of the interview.
- Outline the company's history, current work culture and how you are an Employer of Choice (see Section 2.2)
- What do you know about the bus industry and/or operator?
- How did you hear about this position?
- Discuss the role they have applied for, explain the tasks, hours of work, salary, and conditions. Ask if they have any questions and if the hours and salary meet expectations.
- Tell me about your past work experience.
- Why did you leave your last job? What are you looking for in your next job?

Step 3: Ask competency-based questions – Ask questions that specifically relate to knowledge, skills, and attitudes. This will be customised based on the role you're recruiting for. Some examples are below:

Knowledge questions refer to what they know and can reference their education and qualifications, driver licensing/accreditation, and experience:

- Confirm dates and focus of qualifications/certifications. Obtain evidence of current driver licensing/accreditation.
- Describe the type of buses driven/machinery operated/IT systems used in the past.
- What did you do in the last year to improve your knowledge?

Skill questions refer to what they can do:

- Bus driver candidates are required to provide evidence of current licensing/accreditation prior to the commencing employment (see Section 3.5). Ask candidates to provide this information at the interview.
- Conduct a supervised road test with bus driver candidates to determine their ability to drive.
- When you're balancing multiple priorities, how do you keep yourself organised?
- How do you prefer to communicate with your supervisor and team?
- What is your approach to teamwork? What kind of team member are you?

Attitude questions provide insight on how the candidate might respond to particular situations:

- Describe a situation in which you were able to use persuasion to successfully convince someone to see things your way.
- Describe a time when you were faced with a stressful situation that demonstrated your coping skills.
- Give me a specific example of a time when you used good judgment and logic in solving a problem.
- Give me an example of a time when you set a goal and were able to achieve it.
- Give me a specific example of a time when you had to conform to a policy with which you did not agree.

Step 4: Close the interview – First, ask the candidate if they have any questions they wish to ask (see Section 3.4.1). Then outline the next steps in the recruitment process, when a decision is likely to be made, and when the candidate should expect to hear from the employer to learn if their application has been successful or not. If the candidate is suitable and likely to proceed to the next stage, ask:

- Are you interested in the job based on the information provided during the interview?
- If successful, when could you start?
- Are you able to provide contact details of people to contact for a reference?

What questions can I not ask?

During an interview there are certain questions that **cannot be asked** due to state and federal laws relating to privacy, equal opportunity, and discrimination. For example, you **cannot ask** the following questions:

- Are you married? Have you got any plans to marry?
- Do you have a family?
- How old are your children?

- Do you intend to have any more children?
- What does your spouse do for a living?
- Who collects the children after school?
- Who looks after your children when they are sick or on holidays?
- Why do you work when your partner could support you?
- Do you go to church?
- What religious holidays do you observe?
- Where were you born?

What are some top tips for conducting a great interview?

- Use the 80/20 rule and ensure the candidate does 80% of the talking and ensure your 20% covers the most important information about the role and working for the company.
- Ask direct and open-ended questions that encourages a conversation and a free flow of information sharing.
- Manage the silence and allow the candidate to consider a relevant example. Silence is awkward but you should encourage the candidate to take their time to think of a specific response.
- Ask for permission to take written notes of the candidate's responses.
- Demonstrate respect by actively listening and paying attention to the candidate, minimise distractions, and listen to the full answer to the question before moving to the next question.
- Do not lead, prompt, interrupt or help the candidate find an answer.
- If necessary, repeat the question, but try not to rephrase it. Clarify the candidate's answers if necessary and ask if more information is needed.
- Schedule enough time so that the interview will not be rushed.

Also see in this manual:

Section 3.4.1 Responding to Candidate Questions

Additional information

Fair Work Ombudsman's free self-paced online program on Hiring employees

3.4.1 Responding to Candidate Questions

Should I ask candidates in an interview if they have any questions?

Asking candidates at the end of an interview 'do you have any questions for us?' provides an opportunity to:

- Learn more about what candidates find interesting about your business and the job.
- Identify well-prepared, interested candidates.

- Further discuss the policies and practices you have in place to be an Employer of Choice (see Section 2.2)

Bus operators are encouraged to be prepared to answer common questions from candidates. These are listed below. The key to answering candidate questions is to be transparent and honest. If there are things you can't discuss, be honest and explain why you can't answer at this point. Or, if there are things you don't know, tell candidates that you'll have to follow up to make sure you give them an accurate response.

What questions might candidates ask in an interview?

- What are the next steps in your hiring process?
- When (and how) will I hear from you?
- Do you have any concerns about my application?
- What are the most important skills for this job?
- What are the biggest challenges/hardest part of the job?
- What do you enjoy most about working here?
- What does a normal work day look like?
- How many people are in the team and what are their roles?
- Who will I work most closely with?
- What do you expect me to accomplish in the first 3/6/12 months?
- How do you develop and motivate your employees?

What questions do bus driver candidates usually ask?

For bus drivers, frequently asked questions from candidates are listed below:

- Do I have to have completed year 12?
- Is there a minimum age requirement?
- Can I still apply if I have driving convictions?
- What type of bus driving jobs are available?
- What are the shifts and hours?
- What type of license is required to drive a bus?
- What's the difference between a bus and a coach service?

What difficult questions do candidates ask?

- Do I need to be COVID-19 vaccinated to work?
- Are passengers well-behaved? What kind of bad behaviour happens on buses? What happens if a bus driver gets assaulted?
- Is this a safe, welcoming environment? Will I be included and respected?

Resources & additional information
Bus Association Victoria's www.buscareers.com.au website.
Fair Work Ombudsman's free self-paced online program on Hiring employees

3.5 License & Pre-employment Checks

What are pre-employment checks?

Reference checks (see Section 3.7) provide some information but conducting additional relevant checks and tests can provide an even more comprehensive assessment of candidates. Pre-employment checks allow employers to cross-check information on the candidate, confirm current capabilities, help provide reliable, objective data that could predict job performance.

When carrying out pre-employment checks:

- Ensure the checks and tests comply with bus and coach industry laws and regulations.
- Only conduct checks and tests that relate and necessary to the position, and for a specific purpose.
- Let the candidate know what checks and tests will be conducted, how they will be carried out, what you do with the results, and how long the process will take.
- Only check/test candidates who are progressing through the final stages of the recruitment process.
- If you suspect a candidate may require time, begin the check/test process earlier.

Tests and assessments shouldn't be a surprise to the candidate. Introduce and explain the rationale for checks/tests during interviews, so the candidate is aware of what will happen if they progress through the recruitment process. Clearly explain what tests will be done, why you do them, how long they will take, and what the candidate needs to do. They are more likely to be comfortable with these tests if they know in advance and understand why they are being conducted and how they link to the position description.

What licenses should be checked?

The table below outlines mandatory licences/accreditation and checks for key industry positions.

Position	Candidates during the recruitment process (and throughout their employment) need to provide evidence of the following:
Bus driver	Prior to commencing employment, bus driver candidates need to provide the following **documents**: • Accreditation with Commercial Passenger Vehicles Victoria • Current Victorian driver licence. • Victorian heavy vehicle licence (light, medium, or heavy rigid).

	• Victoria State Government Working with Children Check (which incorporates a National Police Record Check) Prior to employment, a **supervised practical road test** can occur. This will demonstrate if the candidate can drive to standard.
School bus chaperone/supervisor	• Victoria State Government Working with Children Check (which incorporates a National Police Record Check)
Workshop and Maintenance	• 'Heavy Stream' automotive and/or commercial vehicle mechanical trade qualifications. • Forklift licence. • Current Victorian driver licence. • Victorian heavy vehicle licence (light, medium, or heavy rigid) to move buses around the depot.
Yard/cleaner/refueller	• Current Victorian driver licence. • Victorian heavy vehicle licence (light, medium, or heavy rigid) to move buses around the depot.

What other checks and assessments can be done?

For some positions, employers may wish to conduct additional tests such as:

Visa checks – There are many people in your workforce from overseas on working visas or not Australian citizens. To be employed, they need a valid work visa. Different work visas have different rights and conditions associated with them, such as maximum hours of work. As an employer, you must comply with workplace and immigration laws.

For further information, see the Australian Federal Government's Visa Entitlement Verification Online (VEVO) tool employers can use.

Qualifications – For some jobs, there are certificates or qualifications needed, such as trade tickets or first aid. Qualifications can be checked by asking for a copy of education records which confirm the school or university, the date of completion, units/subjected covered in the course, and the candidate's results.

Skills tests and simulations – These are the most common testing type. Cost effective and easy to run, these tests aim to determine whether a candidate has the specific set of skills required for the job. Skill tests require the candidate to demonstrate their skills by performing a task, in a test environment re-created as closely as possible to the real work environment. Such tests provide insight as to how much training a candidate would need when they start. Skill tests and simulations need to directly link to the position description. Prior to giving the test, brief the candidates on what the test is, workplace health and safety requirements, the criteria you will be assessing them against, and how long it will take.

Job knowledge tests – Job knowledge tests focus on the professional or technical expertise required for a specific position. These tests evaluate what the candidate knows, and they are often multiple-choice or short answer questions.

What to do with the results?

Ideally, checks and test results will validate and strengthen a candidate's application. Testing will highlight strengths and capabilities, as well as indicating opportunities for improvement compared with the job and workplace culture.

However, what if:

- **A candidate interviewed poorly but tested really well?** Invite them back for another interview to discuss results and re-explore the questions they may have found challenging in the original interview.
- **Your preferred candidate didn't meet the testing criteria?** Someone may have a strong application, interviewed well, and then performed below expectations on a test. Each situation will need to be handled differently, depending on the circumstances. You have the option to provide the candidate feedback and respectfully share relevant test results with them. If they are unsuccessful let them know why. If successful let them know how you will support them through the induction and their ongoing development.
- **You suspect cheating?** Ask the candidate to re-sit the test.

Also see in this manual:

Section 3.6 Medical Tests

Section 3.7 Reference Checks

Resources & additional information

Australian Federal Government's Visa Entitlement Verification Online (VEVO) tool

Fair Work Ombudsman's free self-paced online program on Hiring employees

3.6 Medical Tests

Why conduct medical tests?

Based on the demands of a job, a medical examination can form part of the recruitment process to test candidate suitability to the role and environment. Medical tests can occur at any time when employed, such as return to work from extended leave. Medical tests provide employers with information about how to best manage health risks in the workplace and ensure compliance to legal requirements.

Medical assessments are required for all bus drivers as part of the Commercial Passenger Vehicles Victoria (CPVV) driver accreditation process. The medical standards for driving buses in Australia are set out in the Guidelines *'Assessing Fitness to Drive 2016'*, published by Austroads and the National Transport Commission.

Most medical tests include:

- health questionnaire aimed at gathering information about health, lifestyle, and physical history (questions may relate to previous surgeries, prescription medications, vaccinations, and current disabilities and conditions, such as asthma and diabetes);
- a basic physical examination with a registered medical practitioner; and

- additional screening (specific and directly related to the job) such as drug and alcohol, psychological, fitness, vision and hearing, and manual handling.

If used, medical tests must be conducted on all candidates, not just certain individuals. For example, you can't request a drug test because you suspect a candidate might be an addict. Employers cannot discriminate against a candidate if the medical test reveals a disability or condition that is unrelated to job.

What are the rules for medically testing bus drivers?

CPVV has a legal responsibility to ensure that all bus drivers have the appropriate skills and abilities and are medically fit to hold a driver accreditation. Legislation gives CPVV the authority to ask any driver accreditation holder or applicant to provide medical evidence of their suitability to drive and/or to undergo a driver assessment.

As part of the CPVV accreditation process, prospective bus drivers are required to complete a self-assessment of their health and complete an independent examination with a registered medical practitioner. See the CPVV's Driver Health Questionnaire

What is the process?

Employers are encouraged to seek legal or industrial relations advice, or contact your industry association for assistance, if changes need to be made to a role to support any discovered medical conditions.

If you require an employee to complete a medical test to ensure they are fit for work, follow these suggested steps:

Step 1: Confirm tests – Decide which roles within your operation might require a medical test during the recruitment process, or other times during employment.

Step 2: Inform – Let candidates know that medical tests form part of the recruitment process (why they occur, what the tests involve, where, and when). Provide the same information to current employees you wish to have complete a medical examination for work.

Step 3: Organise – Organise arrangements with a registered medical practitioner and provide the candidate/employee with a formal request to attend an independent medical examination (see templates below).

Step 4: Report – Once receiving the report from the medical practitioner, inform the candidate/employee of the results and next steps.

Templates

These templates (available on BusVic's website) are intended as a guide only and you are encouraged to seek legal or industrial relations advice to ensure they are fit for purpose:

- BusVic's Independent Medical Examination (IME) Letter to Employee
- BusVic's Independent Medical Examination (IME) Letter to Bus Driver

Resources & additional information
Austroads & National Transport Commission's Assessing Fitness to Drive guidelines.
Commercial Passenger Vehicles Victoria's Driver Health Questionnaire
Commercial Passenger Vehicles Victoria's medically fit and healthy information.

3.7 Reference Checks

Why do a reference check?

Reference checks provide another perspective on a candidate's suitability. They allow you to:

- Confirm the candidates' work history, experience, and past performance and verify information gathered.
- Obtain independent information about a candidate from previous managers, peers or other people who have observed their performance.
- Examine any inconsistencies or concerns identified through the recruitment process.

Reference checks results should be considered together with the candidate's application, resume, and interview. Taking all the information into account provides a holistic view of the candidate and helps you make an informed decision.

Always let candidates know in advance that you will be contacting their references. This is not only courteous, but it also gives candidates the chance to let their referees know about the position and for the referee to prepare for your contact.

How do I conduct a reference check?

Reference checks are typically conducted over the phone. Similar to an interview, prepare questions in advance, be consistent in asking all referees the same questions, and take notes.

A basic reference check structure includes:

Step 1: Introduce yourself and the purpose of your call. Ask if this is a good time for a reference check or make a time to call back. Provide an overview of the role the candidate has applied for.

Step 2: Key questions to ask a referee:

- Confirm the nature of their relationship to the candidate: how long did they work together, what was the referee's role, what was the candidate's role, and what was their reason for leaving.
- What were the candidate's strengths and talents in not just the role but also as a team member?
- What challenges did they see the candidate overcome when they were working together? What are the candidate's opportunities for improvement?
- What advice would they give a manager to bring out the best in the candidate?

You cannot ask referees questions of a personal nature about candidates that do not relate directly to the role, such as their age, marital status, family responsibilities or disability.

Employers are encouraged to seek legal or industrial relations advice or contact your industry association for assistance on additional questions to ask referees on issues such as passenger safety and working with children.

Step 3: Close the discussion by asking for any final comments to support the candidate's application and thank them for their time.

Also see in this manual:

Section 3.6 Medical Tests

Section 3.8 Offering Employment

Resources & additional information

Seek's What you need to know about reference checks

Indeed's A Guide to Reference Checks: Questions to Ask, Best Practices and More

3.8 Offering Employment

What is the probation period?

A key aspect to offering employment is understanding the benefits and obligations of the probation period.

The probation period is a clearly defined as a period of time that is determined prior to commencing employment that allows both the employer and employee time to assess performance and suitability for the role.

The Fair Work Ombudsman states that the probation period often range from a minimum 3 to 6 months and the relevant industry award may state what the probation period should be.

Key features of probation periods are:

- During the probation period, new employees are entitled to accrue and access the same entitlements (such as annual and sick leave) as someone who isn't in a probation period.
- If an employee doesn't pass their probation, they are still entitled to receive the correct period of notice and have their unused accumulated annual leave hours paid out (see Section 8.5 Dismissal).

The major benefits of a probation period are:

- Provide the employer the opportunity to provide an effective onboarding experience (see Section 4.1); provide the necessary training and coaching; and assess their capability, reliability, and suitability for the job and a good fit for the business. Scheduling frequent performance reviews during the probation period are common to good new employee onboarding processes.
- Provide the employee the opportunity to assess if the company, workplace culture, and job is right for them.

- An employee who does not pass their probation and their employment is terminated based on performance issues prior to the completion of their minimum period of employment will not be able to make an unfair dismissal claim under the Fair Work Act (see their website for more information). The minimum period of employment relates to how long an employee must be employed in order to bring an unfair dismissal case before the Fair Work Commission. Generally, employees need to be employed for at least 6 months before they can apply for unfair dismissal, whilst employees working for a small business (less than 15 employees) need to be employed for at least 12 months before they can apply (see the Small Business Fair Dismissal Code). Such periods also apply to casual employees if **both** of the following conditions are satisfied: the employee was a regular casual employee, and the employee had a reasonable expectation of ongoing employment on a regular and systematic which would include a majority of the industry's school bus drivers.
- In some circumstances (such as wanting more time to assess suitability and provide training/support, or the employee needs to take time off during probation), the probation period can be extended by mutual agreement if the industry award or contractual arrangements permit. See legal or industrial relations advice if the probation period needs to be extended.

When and how should I offer employment?

Step 1: Decide – When deciding who to select, consider all the information you gathered through the recruitment process – their application, resume, interview, and reference check. Each of these provides important and different information on which to base your decision. As part of this step, confirm the role's status (full time, part time, or casual), hours of work, wages, and other important information and prepare a formal letter of offer. Confirm these details with your industrial relations advisor, if uncertain.

Step 2: Verbal offer – Contact your preferred candidate first by phone and verbally offer employment. This conversation allows you to address any additional questions the candidate may have and provides an opportunity to discuss starting salary, start date, and next steps. If they have accepted another role or decline your offer, you can then proceed to contact other suitable candidates you interviewed or re-advertise the position. On accepting the verbal offer, finalise a formal letter of offer and send it to the candidate for signing and keep a copy on their personal file.

Step 3: Formal letter of offer – A formal letter of offer (see template below) establishes in writing the general terms of employment and key dates. It does not replace industrial award conditions or an employment contract, it is an invitation to accept a role.

Employment terms and conditions need to comply with the relevant industry award or enterprise agreement, the 11 National Employment Standards, and is customised to suit your operation:

- Commencement date.
- Probation Period and performance management.
- Location of employment.
- Type of employment (full-time, part-time, or casual).
- Level classification (in accordance with the applicable award or agreement).
- Wage/salary.

- Standard working hours, flexible working arrangements and how rosters will be managed.
- Details of superannuation contributions.
- Overtime conditions.
- Leave entitlements (annual, parental, personal/carers, community service, long service, and public holidays).
- Period of notice and conditions of termination.
- Special conditions relating to the role.

Employment conditions are subject to the relevant industrial award and state and federal legislation. Seek legal or industrial relations advice, or contact your industry association for assistance, to ensure your employment terms and conditions are compliant.

Step 4: Prepare for onboarding & provide new employee handbook – On receiving the signed letter of offer, commence preparing for their onboarding (see Section 4.1) and you may wish to provide in advance to their first day the optional 'new employee handbook' (containing operational policies and procedures and other information on the business and their employment, see Section 4.2).

Template

This template (available on BusVic's website) is intended as a guide only and you are encouraged to seek legal or industrial relations advice to ensure it is fit for purpose:

- BusVic's Letter of Offer template

Also see in this manual:

Section 4.1 New Employee Onboarding

Section 4.2 New Employee Handbook

Resources & additional information

Fair Work Commission's What is the minimum period of employment?

Fair Work Commission's The rules for small business owners (15 employees or less)

Fair Work Ombudsman's Probation templates and resources.

Fair Work Ombudsman's National Employment Standards

3.9 Managing Unsuccessful Candidates

Should unsuccessful candidates interviewed be informed?

Following up with candidates you interviewed but were not selected for a position is a professional courtesy that should not be overlooked.

Informing all unsuccessful candidates – either by phone for those you interviewed or email for others – of the status of their application can maintain goodwill and increase the likelihood they might consider future job openings with your company in the future.

Did you know?

Two in three Australians (66%) who never heard back felt more negative towards the company and more than half (57%) said they were unlikely to apply for another job at the company in the future as a result (Seek, 2019).

What if they ask for feedback?

When informing unsuccessful candidates make it timely (as soon as possible so they can move on to the next opportunity), keep it positive and brief, and be honest about future possibilities.

Providing a reason or feedback can be challenging and complex, as it might open the employer to retaliation or claims of discrimination. This is why some employers outline why other candidates are progressing through the process – that their experience is more aligned/stronger fit to the position description.

Section 4. ONBOARDING

In this section:

4.1 New Employee Onboarding

4.1.1 Bus Driver Onboarding

4.2 New Employee Handbook

4.3 Personnel files

4.1 New Employee Onboarding

What is onboarding?

Onboarding is a learning process that aims to train, coach, review and assess a new employee's performance and suitability during their probation period.

Successful onboarding aims to provides new employees with background information about the company and the team, and information, tools, and training they need to get the best start in their new job.

An effective onboarding process:

- Sets new employees up for success by outlining expectations and providing information and resources to do their job.
- Helps employees settle in quickly and integrate into the team.
- Reduces first day nerves and helps make new employees feel respected and valued.
- Aligns with probation period requirements (see Section 3.8)

Seek legal or industrial relations advice, or contact your industry association, for assistance on probation periods and essential information to provide during the onboarding process.

What is the process?

Step 1: Preparation – Organise first day/shift and first week schedule of training, activities, and work roster. Organise work uniform, materials, tools, and equipment. For all positions, it is best practice to nominate a 'trainer' who is responsible for managing the onboarding process and ensuring all the employment tasks and training is being conducted and completed as planned. You can also nominate a 'buddy' (team member peer) someone who is prepared to be a contact, a friendly face for the new employee, and act as an informal mentor. The 'trainer' and 'buddy' can be the same person. Inform the team of the start date and position of the new employee prior to their start date. Prepare documents to be provided on the first day/shift:

- Tax File Number Declaration form
- Superannuation fund standard choice form
- Fair Work Information Statement
- Casual Employment Information Statement (for casuals only)

- **Company new employee form** that collects personal information, such as contact details, emergency contact details, tax file number, and bank account information.
- **New employee handbook** (see Section 4.2). Some operators have implemented them, but they are optional depending on the size of the workforce in your business.

Step 2: First day/shift – There are three major elements that generally occur on the first day/shift:

- **General onboarding meeting** between the new employee and the employer (manager, trainer, or who oversees human resources/payroll) to discuss the onboarding process, probation period and the purpose of regular reviews, and work through the new employee handbook policies, procedures, and paperwork.
- **Office and depot tour** and introducing the new employee to the team.
- **Role onboarding** where the new employee partners with a nominated 'buddy' to go through the functions and tasks of the specific role they were employed for.

Check in with the employee at the end of their first day/shift to hear how it went and if they have any questions.

Step 3: First week – The focus of the first week is role onboarding, where the new employee works closely with their 'trainer' and 'buddy' on their role. Organise an informal social event to welcome the new employee, such as morning or afternoon tea. Conduct a formal week one review, a discussion on their progress and respond to any feedback and questions they may have. This is a good opportunity to provide positive feedback on their performance, integration into the team, and highlight achievements from their first week. By the end of the first week, ensure all paperwork for the personnel file has been collated such as Tax File Number Declaration form, Superannuation fund standard choice form, and new employee handbook receipt (copies of driver licensing/accreditation need to be obtained prior to employment (see Section 3.5).

Step 4: Ongoing reviews – Throughout the probation period, conduct regular informal reviews with the new employee to map their progress. Draw on feedback from the 'trainer' and 'buddy' and other sources to identify achievements, strengths, and areas for further training and development. Also invite feedback from the new employee on the company and the team, what they enjoy, and what they would like to do more of. Document these reviews (noting time, date, purpose of the review, key discussion points and action items) and place them in the employee's personal file.

Step 5: Probation period completed – On successful completion of the probation period, it is best practice to issue a letter advising the employee that their employment will continue. This is an opportunity to provide feedback on their performance and the value have added to the team and company.

Also see in this manual:

Section 4.1.1 Bus Driver Onboarding

Section 4.2 New Employee Handbook

Resources & additional information

Australian Tax Office's Tax file number declaration

Australian Tax Office's Superannuation standard choice form

Fair Work Ombudsman's Fair Work Information Statement

Fair Work Ombudsman's Casual Employment Information Statement

Fair Work Ombudsman's template Letter of a Successful Probation

4.1.1 Bus Driver Onboarding

What are the top tips for onboarding new bus drivers?

Bus operators involved in the development of this manual recommend a buddy system where a new bus driver is paired with a senior, more experienced driver for the first week (after the formal onboarding activities outlined in Section 4.1).

Seek legal or industrial relations advice or contact your industry association for information on any allowances available to operators and bus drivers to help train new drivers.

4.2 New Employee Handbook

What is the purpose of the handbook?

A new employee handbook documents 'how things are done around here' and sets out expectations, mutual obligations, and consequences for actions in your workplace. Some operators have implemented them, but they are optional depending on the size of the workforce in your business.

The handbook is not a contract or employment agreement. It typically presents company's vision, history, and culture, and relevant human resource and workplace policies and procedures.

Other benefits of a handbook:

- Can help new employees settle quickly into their new role.
- Set expectations on what the company expects to see from its employees and what they can expect from the company.
- Establishes and communicates standards and procedures which helps new employee training and performance management.

The handbook is not something you write once and set aside. It needs to be reviewed and updated regularly to ensure it is up-to-date and compliant.

What should be in it?

Generally, contents for a new employee handbook would include:

Introduction

- Welcome to the company
- Company vision, mission, and values
- Company history
- Organisational chart
- Purpose of the employee handbook
- Overview of induction and probation period
- Acknowledgment of receipt of handbook (where the employee signs and returns the page as evidence they have read and understood the policies and procedures).

Policies & Procedures

- Equal opportunity and diversity
- Harassment and bullying
- Grievance and dispute resolution
- Privacy and confidentially
- Code of conduct/workplace behaviour
- Use of company property
- Uniforms and personal presentation
- Attendance, hours of work, and rosters
- Breaks/rest periods
- Overtime
- Personnel records
- Timekeeping
- Paydays, payroll, and superannuation
- Employee engagement and inclusion
- Training and development
- Performance Reviews
- Promotions
- Reward and recognition
- Performance management and disciplinary procedure
- Transition of employment (period of notice, registration, redundancy, dismissal, and retirement)
- Team communication, newsletters, and noticeboard
- IT, telephone, email, and internet use
- Social media

Workplace Health & Safety

- Employee obligations, the law, and regulations
- COVID-19 protocols
- Emergency Procedures
- Security
- Personal Protective Equipment
- Health and wellbeing
- Drug and alcohol
- Violence and weapons
- Domestic violence abuse

Benefits

- Annual leave
- Parental leave
- Personal/carers leave
- Community service leave
- Long service
- Public holidays
- Company events and social clubs
- Employee discounts, products, and services

Template

Business Victoria's HR policies and procedures manual template.

4.3 Personnel files

Are personnel files important?

Under the Fair Work Act, operators are required to keep up-to-date and complete records on their employees and ensure correct pay slips are provided. Personnel files – either in hard-copy or digital format – are private and confidential and should only be accessed by the employer, employee, and those involved in payroll.

See the Fair Work Ombudsman's website for more information on employer's legal obligations in relation to personnel files and record keeping.

What should be kept in a personnel file?

Personnel files may contain information such as:

- Personal details such as home address, employee and emergency contact phone numbers and emails, bank account and superannuation details.

- Recruitment information such as original employment application, resume, interview notes and reference checks.
- Contractual information including position description, signed letter offer, signed employment agreement, and details of salary/wage rate, hours of work etc.
- Completed Tax File Number Declaration form
- Copies of relevant driver licences/accreditation, checks, certificates/qualifications, and assessments (see Section 3.5)
- Signed acknowledgement of having received, read, and understood the policies, procedures and key information found in the New Employee Handbook (see Section 4.2)
- Performance documents such as annual reviews and disciplinary action (including collated evidence, investigation reports, warning discussion meeting notes, and signed copies of warning letters).
- Record of training programs attended/completed and skill assessment checklists.
- Copies of accident and incident reports.
- Medical certificates.
- Leave application forms
- Employee awards and details of incentives/benefits.
- Other relevant information required by the operator.

Resources & additional information
Business Victoria's Keep good staff records
Fair Work Ombudsman's Record-keeping & pay slips
Fair Work Ombudsman's free self-paced online program on Record-keeping and pay slips

Section 5. LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT

In this section:

5.1 Trends in Workplace Learning & Development

5.2 Employee & Management Skills

5.3 Coaching & Mentoring

5.4 Other Development Strategies

5.4 Succession Planning

5.3 Trends in Workplace Learning & Development

How do adults learn at work?

We don't all learn the same way; we all have preferences on how we like to receive and learn new information and tasks. It will generally be a mix of the following, with one or two of these being more dominant than others:

- *Visual learning:* Watching people perform the task, looking at pictures, diagrams, or videos.
- *Auditory learning:* Listening to instructions from an expert, asking questions and discussion.
- *Reading and writing learning*: Read about how to perform a task, reading manuals and textbooks, taking notes and making lists.
- *Kinesthetic learning:* Watch someone else perform the skill and then trying it yourself, hands-on activities.

Understanding how individual employees prefer to learn helps customise the training experience for them and increase the speed of skill development. When you are training someone, it's important to understand and be mindful of your own preferences. You might be a kinesthetic learner but a staff member reading and writing, preferring time to read about it first. Not understanding – and adopting to – preferences can sometimes lead to frustration when training someone.

Additionally, adults learn differently to children. In the workplace, adults:

- Are internally motivated and self-directed, needing to know what and why they are learning.
- Want their life experience and knowledge recognised and drawn upon when learning.
- Are goal orientated, wanting to know the outcome of what they will be able know or do after learning.
- Are relevancy orientated, needing to clearly see why and how learning a new skill is important to them personally and how it applies to their life.
- Are practical, wanting direct hands-on experience that will improve their work and everyday lives.
- Like to be respected, involved in the design of learning and being able to provide feedback.

What are the new trends in workplace learning?

Research shows the following developments (Transitioning Well & Bus Association Victoria, 2021):

- Increased informal on-the-job learning that integrates seamlessly in the daily flow of work. This is cheaper than formal training; more targeted, relevant, and applicable; and more responsive to constantly changing and evolving workplace needs.
- Increased use of webinars and smartphone apps to attend events, view demonstrations, and share information.
- Creating peer and intergenerational coaching programs, where employees develop each other's skills.
- Digital, internet-based 'microlearning' where you access just-in time information and/or short videos that can be completed in 10-15 minutes.
- Creating communities of practice, where people come together and openly share knowledge, experiences, and processes.
- Curating digitised libraries of online articles, videos, and research to help learn new skills, refine existing ones, and stay informed on industry news and trends of tips, tools, and resources.

Also see in this manual:

Section 4.1 New Employee Onboarding

Section 5.2 Employee & Management Skills

Section 5.3 Coaching & Mentoring

Resources & additional information

Adult Learning Australia's Adult learning principles

5.2 Employee & Management Skills

What are the priority skills for employees?

The table below outlines the priority knowledge and skills today's workforce need to best perform their job (*productive*), to be healthy (*vitality*) and adaptive to change (*transformative*):

Productive skills	• Technical knowledge and skills relating to the job role. • Written and verbal communication across a range of platforms (such as handwriting/filling out hard-copy forms, email, webinars/virtual meetings). • Teamwork effectiveness. • Developing relationships and interpersonal skills. • Time management, prioritising, and planning. • Critical thinking, conflict resolution, and problem solving. • Digital literacy, using software, programs, and digital systems.

Vitality skills	• Self-awareness and self-management of emotions and stress. • Strong mental and physical health. • Good work-life balance and wellness. • Goal setting and achievement. • Courage and confidence. • Financial literacy and managing superannuation.
Transformative skills	• Openness to new experiences and adopting different perspectives. • Creativity and innovation. • Responding to, and managing, change. • Translating knowledge and skills into different situations. • Work effectively with diversity and being inclusive. • Support positive personal change and transitions, such as retirement.

What are the priority skills for bus operators and managers?

Research undertaken by BusVic indicates that in addition to the knowledge and skills required for general staff (noted above) bus operators and their managers need to also develop these leadership skills:

Strategy	• Strategic planning in uncertain environments, including identification of opportunities and managing risk. • Enterprise/business skills including financial literacy; compliance and regulation; workplace health and safety; and human resource management. • Business succession planning • Workforce strategy, planning, and innovating the employee life cycle. • Build relationships and diverse support networks with government, industry stakeholders, community, and peer operators.
Future Orientation	• Adopting futurist and systems thinking (understandings links and implications of actions). • Global orientation and across international industry developments. • Develop culture of innovation, including new business models. • Foster diversification through collaboration, coopetition, and new partnerships.
Lead People	• Adaptive, transformational, inclusive leadership to effectively manage the challenges of change and workforce diversity. • Emotional intelligence and multicultural competence. • Effective communication across a number of platforms • Create safe, supportive, and inclusive workplace culture, and shape culture by moulding practices. • Design meaningful employee experiences. • Foster ongoing workforce learning and coaching.

Lead Operations	• Complex problem-solving and informed decision making. • Digital and data literacy. • Manage human/machine interaction and collaboration. • Understanding of autonomous technology and electromobility. • Prioritise driver training and upskilling.

Additional information

Transitioning Well & Bus Association Victoria's Victorian Bus and Coach Industry Future Workforce: Final Report (see the BusVic Bus Industry Innovation Fund webpage for details)

5.3 Coaching & Mentoring

What is coaching and mentoring?

Coaching and mentoring often provides the most relevant and impactful learning experiences at work. These practices can further support and customise knowledge and skills learned in formal training programs or courses:

- *Coaching* involves giving ongoing guidance (such as knowledge, tools, and experiences) and feedback to employees as they perform their jobs. Coaching focuses on current performance and is often informal, just-in-time, and on-the-job. It greatly contributes to employee engagement, productivity, capability development, and work satisfaction, and can support employee retention.
- *Mentoring* is a 'learning relationship' where knowledge, skills, and life experience is shared to help someone achieve a specific goal or long-term career development. Mentors are often role models, coaches, sounding boards, counsellors, or trusted source. The general phases of formal mentoring include establishing an agreement (by identifying needs and setting goals), developing and implementing a plan (of tasks, activities, meetings, observations, and feedback sessions), and reviewing the relationship and creating new goals.

When would coaching and mentoring work well?

- Support new bus drivers.
- Help employees transition to new or changing roles.
- Help employees transition into retirement.

What is the process?

Many leaders use the GROW Model to help guide effective coaching and mentoring discussions and planning. GROW is an acronym for:

- **G** – *Goal*: What would the employee like to work on?
- **R** – *Reality*: Where are they now? What is needed to achieve their goal?
- **O** – *Options*: What could the employee do to achieve their goals? What are the obstacles?
- **W** – *Will*: What will the employee and employer do? What is the way forward?

To be an effective coach and mentor:

- Recognise individual strengths and limitations and work to maximise potential. Don't concentrate solely on errors or weaknesses
- Be a role model, set achievable high standards, and role model behaviour and performance.
- Encourage accountability with employees – set goals, implement action plans, and review. Ensure performance expectations and priorities are clear. Don't let employees give up
- Provide employees with regular feedback on job performance and time to self-reflect and review their own performance.

Also see in this manual:

Section 4.1 New Employee Onboarding

Section 5.2 Employee & Management Skills

Section 5.4 Other Development Strategies

Section 5.5 Succession Planning

Resources & additional information

Mind Tools' The GROW Model of Coaching and Mentoring

Performance Consulting's GROW Model worksheet

5.4 Other Development Strategies

Are there other ways to develop employees?

There are a number of other strategies available that help employees develop their skills and be exposed to different and new workplace experiences:

- **Flexitime**: Flexitime gives employees the opportunity to balance their work and personal lives by restructuring the typical workday to accommodate individual schedules. Flexitime allows employees to set their own schedules in consultation with the employer. For example, employees may adjust their starting and ending times, but are required to be at the depot during peak hours.
- **Cross-Training**: Employees are taught skills outside their current job, so they can be called upon to perform a different job when the need arises (such as covering leave). Cross-training helps businesses balance workloads and allows quick responses to team leave and changes.
- **Job rotation**: This is the systematic movement of employees from job to job. Job rotation is used as a form of job enrichment, by adding increased responsibilities, increasing challenge, and reducing boredom or burnout. Job rotation is also used for management development.
- **Job enrichment**: This involves taking on more responsibility, develop new skills, and have more control over their work without leaving the current job. The key to this strategy is to enrich jobs by providing task variety, task significance, autonomy, and feedback.

- **Job sharing**: A full time position is split between two employees who share the duties and responsibilities of the job, as well as the salary and benefits. They must also work closely together, and with their manager, to co-ordinate hours, duties, and communication amongst themselves and others.
- **Job shadowing**: This is a type of on-the-job training where an employee follows and observes a trained and experienced team member. Job shadowing allows employees to gain comprehensive knowledge about what it takes to do a particular job every day.
- **Volunteering**: Although volunteering outside of work requires a considerable time commitment, it can be an excellent way to master skills that can't be practiced in the current job. Volunteering is beneficial if an employee wants to make a career change and want to gain some practical experience in a new area. It can also help develop new contacts and networks.

5.5 Succession Planning

What is succession planning?

Succession planning is a strategy for identifying and developing the next generation — not just future owners and leaders, but for any employee ready to take on new challenges or promotion. Having a succession plan in place, and reviewing it annually, prepares you for immediate personnel change and long-term development needs of talented and ambitious team members.

Developing good succession practices help:

- Retain high-potential employees for advancement.
- Ease the pressure that can arise when employees resign, retire, get sick, or are dismissed.
- Employers are prepared for change.
- Employees prepare for their present and future work responsibilities, and
- Make the transition for owners out of their business easier.

Succession planning forms part of workforce planning (see Section 2.1).

What is the process for employees?

The suggested process for succession planning for employees:

Step 1: Regularly review and identify – Be proactive and regularly review the workforce (see Section 2.1). Consider and identify roles requiring successors and current employees who could transition into new roles.

Step 2: Discuss – Meet the identified employee to discuss their willingness and ability to transition into new opportunities. It is important to establish an understanding that there are no guarantees, and situations can change. Questions to discuss could include:

- What does the employee bring to the role?
- How would the new role/opportunity fit with the employee's career goals?
- What are the risks of putting the employee in the role?
- Are there any special requirements for the employee, such as resource needs or relocation?

Step 3: Create plans – Create an action plan and timelines of succession development for the identified employee of formal training courses, coaching, mentoring, or workplace experiences needed to develop capabilities required to transition into the proposed new role. Consider informing the team of the purpose of the succession development plan.

Step 4: Implement and review – Implement the professional development plan and regularly review progress. Formally appoint the employee to the new position by providing a position description and a suitability varied or new agreement (see Section 3.8).

What is the process for business owners?

There is a different process for a business owner considering appointing a successor or selling their business. The process includes appointing and developing a successor, valuing the business, and participating in a detailed handover.

If you are a business owner and considering succession or selling your business, seek legal or professional business advice to assist developing a business transition and succession plan.

Resources & additional information

Australian Government Business' Develop your succession plan

Australian Small Business and Family Enterprise Ombudsman's Resources & Tools Centre

Family Business Australia's An Introductory Guide to Family Business Succession Panning

Section 6. RETENTION & ENGAGEMENT

In this section:

6.1 The Value of Good Employee Engagement

6.2 Inclusion & Belonging

6.3 Staff Meetings, Toolkit Sessions & Regular Communication

6.4 Rewards & Recognition

6.5 Employee Surveys

6.6 Managing Employee Grievances & Disputes

6.1 The Value of Good Employee Engagement

What does employee retention and engagement mean?

Employee engagement and *retention* are interconnected and support a workforce that is productive and care about their work. The benefits of retention and engagement are increased workforce productivity, long-term tenure, low absenteeism, increased employee and customer satisfaction, increased employee contribution that results in an enhanced workplace culture (Transitioning Well & Bus Association Victoria, 2021).

Some key definitions:

- *Retention* refers to your ability (through leadership, workplace culture and practices) to keep your employees and limit the number of resignations.
- *Engagement* refers to the strategy and activities you have in place that facilitate emotional commitment, enthusiasm, and connection with the workforce.

Did you know?

- 70% of the variance in team engagement is determined solely by the manager (Gallup, 2021)

What practices support employee retention?

There are many reasons why employees leave – resignation, retirement, redundancy, and dismissal. For resignations, many people leave their jobs because they're unsatisfied with their current work situation, burnout, seeking better compensation and benefits, and better work-life balance (Transitioning Well & Bus Association Victoria, 2021).

If you experience high workforce turnover, consider the root cause(s), their impact, and how to resolve it.

Common retention strategies:

- Selecting candidates in the recruitment process who share similar outlook (values and purpose) as you.
- Offer ongoing training and advancement pathways, such as taking on more hours (such as increasing casual hours or moving to a permanent part or full time role) or responsibilities.
- Implement flexible working arrangements.

- Ensure fair and balanced workload distribution.
- Offer competitive salary packaging and benefits.
- Look for opportunities to offer job security.
- Recognise and reward achievement and effort (see Section 6.4).
- Opportunities to use range of skills and interests at work.
- Demonstrate trust and respect between all employees and management.
- Socialise with the team and management.

What practices support employee engagement?

Employee engagement differs from retention in that:

> "People who are engaged feel energised by their work and actually maintain positive mental health. They do more good deeds at work, like helping a new hire get acclimated (without being asked). People also work in a state of flow when they feel engaged; time passes, and they're absorbed in their work" (Croswell, 2021)

Engagement strategies you can implement to compliment your retention strategies include:

- Greater focus on supporting sustainable health and wellbeing.
- Mechanisms for regular cycles of mutual employee-employer feedback.
- Participation in corporate social responsibility programs, or time to volunteer.
- Re-imagining how productivity and performance is measured.
- Regular one-on-one meetings to drive professional development, performance, and address challenges.
- Digitise internal communications to be live and conversational.
- Employee assistance programs.

How do I measure retention and engagement?

Metrics you can use to assess employee retention and engagement:

- Employee survey and job satisfaction data (see Section 6.5)
- Employee Net Promoter Score, measuring the extent your staff would recommend your business to friends and family.
- Regrettable turnover rate, the number of employees who resign due to dissatisfaction or lack of opportunities.
- Absenteeism rates.
- Frequency of one-on-one meetings and coaching sessions between managers and staff.
- Promotion rate, number of employees who received increased responsibilities, job promotion or salary rise in last 12-months vs total number of employees.

Also see in this manual:

Section 2.1 Workforce Planning

Section 2.2 Employer of Choice

Section 2.3 The Value of Diversity

Additional information

Kazoo's 18 HR Metrics Affecting Your Organizational Health

Transitioning Well & Bus Association Victoria's Victorian Bus and Coach Industry Future Workforce: Literature Review (see the BusVic Bus Industry Innovation Fund webpage for details)

6.2 Inclusion & Belonging

What is inclusion?

Inclusion refers to getting a diverse workforce to work together to improve performance and wellbeing by adopting practices that ensure employees feel – and are -- respected, connected with a sense of belonging, able to easily contribute their perspective and talents, and progressing in their career.

Inclusion differs from engagement in that it has a stronger focus on understanding and embracing diversity, respect, and belonging. Inclusion requires everyone to value differences and create a work environment where people can feel comfortable bringing their 'full selves' to work.

As workforces become more diverse in terms of their backgrounds and abilities, workplace cultures need to shift to accommodate. Bus operators need to become more knowledgeable about the diversity features of their workforce (such as gender, age, cultural background, and disability) and how these features impact workforce experiences.

Operations that continually examine their leadership, workplace culture, plans and decisions in light workforce diversity are well-placed to improve their effectiveness and relevance.

What are the benefits?

Inclusion further enhances employee engagement and retention by creating a safe place, where employees feel they belong. Key benefits of building and maintaining an inclusive workplace include:

- Higher job satisfaction, especially among staff from diverse backgrounds.
- Leaders set the example so the more they listen and accommodate different needs, ideas and styles, the greater inclusion and diversity for everyone.
- Workforce confident in speaking up and helping others without risk.
- More respect for others.
- Greater opportunity for friendships, increased social network, and reduced social isolation.
- A more welcoming environment.
- Lower employee turnover.
- Higher productivity and employee morale.
- Improved problem solving, creativity and innovation.

- Increased collaboration and participation.
- Readiness for inclusion outside of work.

How can I build an inclusive workplace?

Suggested strategies include:

- Undertake training on the fundamentals of workplace equality and respect, responding to everyday sexism and sexual harassment, cultural (Indigenous and CALD) awareness training, LGBTIQ+ awareness and ally training, and supporting employee disabilities.
- Consider establishing a diversity and inclusion committee to support efforts.
- Provide all employees with multiple, safe avenues to provide management with feedback and to voice their concerns.
- Practical improvements to work environments and facilities (such as private spaces for prayer or gender-neutral bathrooms).
- Be alert of gender-neutral language, such as him/her/them.
- Celebrate cultural days and festivals.

Also see in this manual:

Section 2.2 Employer of Choice

Section 2.3 The Value of Diversity

Resources & additional information

Business News Daily's A Culture of Inclusion: Promoting Workplace Diversity and Belonging

Diversity Council Australia's latest research and guides

Fair Work Ombudsman's free self-paced online program on Diversity and discrimination

SHRM's 6 Steps for Building an Inclusive Workplace

6.3 Staff Meetings, Toolkit Sessions & Regular Communication

What are the benefits of staff meetings?

The primary purpose of any meeting is to *push information* (share news, updates on changes and key updates, and keep the team informed) and *pull information* (gather feedback and ideas from the team, encourage the team to raise issues and solve problems).

There are many benefits to having regular meetings with the team – either the entire team or smaller groups based on their job or project. Well-run, relevant meetings can help you:

- Build a safe and inclusive work environment.
- Set goals, determine agreed action items, and drive accountability.
- Communicate effectively.
- Build compliance to policies.
- Facilitate creative thinking and innovation through brainstorming.

- Unblock issues and overcome resistance through group discussion.
- Recognise staff successes and achievements

The best meetings are ones that:

- Have a clear purpose and are outcome-driven: Know why you are having the meeting in the first place, and be clear on the purpose of the meeting, what the objectives are, and have an agenda that is shared with the team prior to the meeting.
- Have the right people in the room: The purpose of the meeting will determine if the whole team needs to attend, or just select team members. For those who are not required to attend, you may want to explain why and how they will hear of any outcomes that impact them.
- Occur in the most effective way: Select the best way to have your meeting such as face-to-face, virtual (such as Zoom), a walking meeting around the depot or around the block, or could the purpose of the meeting be sent email?
- Stick to the agenda: Have an agenda for the meeting, items you and the team need and want to discuss. Avoid getting side-tracked by other discussions or topics. If you feel that a necessary discussion needs to be had, then set up another time to discuss it.
- Encourage input and feedback: Just because you set up the meeting, doesn't mean you're the only one who gets to talk. Encourage your team members to give their inputs and feedback. Give everyone the chance to speak.
- Close the loop and follow up on key decisions and outcomes: Any action items from the meeting should be properly documented and communicated. Determine who's responsible for them and also set target deadlines for completion. You also need to set how you're going to follow up on these action items.

What are toolkit sessions and how can I do it?

Toolkit sessions are short, practical, hands-on sessions where you and a small group work on a skill, task, or process together. Toolkit sessions typically happen where the skill/task/process actually occurs in 'real life' such as in a bus, in the depot, or office. These sessions are suitable for peer coaching and mentoring, learning something new, or recapping an existing skill/task/process.

Toolkit sessions include features such as:

- Having someone demonstrate the skill/task/process to the required standard.
- Everyone has the opportunity to practice and demonstrate the skill/task/process.
- Informal discussions.
- Access to the documents, materials, and equipment needed.

What other practices can I use to improve team communication?

Meetings and toolkit sessions are only one way to communicate with the team. Other ways to keep the team informed in a timelier way and to collaborate quicker include:

- Email newsletters.
- Messaging and chat apps (like Whatsapp)
- File sharing applications (like Dropbox)

- Video conferencing tools (such as Zoom and Microsoft Teams)
- Document editing software (like OneDrive)
- Project management platforms (like Asana and Slack)

Resources & additional information

Fellow's The 5 crucial benefits of a well-run team meeting

Fleep's How to Improve Team Communication The ultimate guide

How I Got the Job's Staff Meeting: The importance, do's and don't

6.4 Rewards & Recognition

What are rewards and recognition?

Rewarding and recognising your employees hard work, effort and progress, and dedication makes them feel good about themselves. It also motivates employees to keep up the good work. Positive reinforcement sets an example for everyone in your operation, showing them the kind of work you value most and helps create a sense of purpose at work that creates extra energy and commitment.

There is a difference between rewards and recognition:

- *Rewards* are usually more formal and often come in the form of a financial reward (such as a bonus or more hours), staff awards, gifts, or experience (like a movie voucher).
- *Recognition* can sometimes be informal, immediate, and specific through positive feedback or a thank you note.

How to do it?

Here are some tips and ideas on employee rewards and recognition:

- If you are considering implementing a formal rewards program or friendly competition firstly identify why you're doing it, key outcomes you want to see (such as changed or improved behaviour or skills), what the rules and procedures are, timeframe, and what the budget will be.
- Get buy-in from your employees and ask them about rewards and recognition – what would they like to see happen.
- Host an annual Team Appreciation Day.
- Implement an annual staff awards program where you recognise tenure, achievement, and success. Have a documented selection criteria and get staff input on its development. Hold an awards ceremony and promote the recipients (with their permission) on social media and your website and establish a Wall of Fame.
- Create a swag of company branded merchandise or technology (like headphones or smart watch). Not only are those gifts practical, but they're also a great way to show pride for where you work.
- Social media 'shout outs' where your post (with their permission) positive feedback or achievement by a team member on your social media.

- Create Wellness Days where you organise on-site massages, mindfulness sessions, or fitness classes for the team.
- Host regular themed team breakfasts, lunches, or social gatherings.
- Celebrate team birthdays and major work anniversaries.
- Establish a team community service project.
- On the spot rewards of small dollar amount gift cards when you see employees do something right.
- 'Cheers from Peers' initiative where team members have the chance to formally call out the positive things people are doing.

How to measure?

Key measures of the impact of rewards and recognition activities:

- Total dollars spent on employee rewards versus total number of employees.
- Increased employee retention/reduced turnover.
- Changed or improved behaviour, skills, attendance, or performance.
- Changed or improved workplace culture.

Also see in this manual:

Section 6.1 The Value of Good Employee Engagement

Section 6.2 Inclusion & Belonging

Resources & additional information

Culture Amp's 20 employee recognition ideas that work

When I Work's 37 Employee appreciation ideas your staff will love

6.5 Employee Surveys

What are employee surveys and their benefits?

Employee surveys are designed to collate views and attitudes of the operation, as well as measure and assess how motivated and engaged your employees are.

A carefully designed and conducted employee survey can reveal a great deal of information about employee perceptions that can be used to improve the workplace. Businesses that are more responsive to employee input and feedback have experienced higher retention rates, lower absenteeism, improved productivity, better customer service and higher employee morale.

Conducting an employee survey – if designed and implemented in collaboration with employees can send a positive message to employees that their opinions are valued. In addition, managers can gain insights into issues affecting the operation for improvement. Conversely, if bus operators are not fully committed and ready to really listen to and, most important, act on what employees are saying, then conducting a survey can falsely raise expectations among employees.

Depending on the size of the team, employee surveys can occur annually to every 18-months.

How do you develop a survey?

Step 1: Create a working group – The purpose of this committee (a mix of both managers and staff) is to consider the purpose, design, and strategy such as:

- Why are we conducting a survey?
- What are we measuring, and why?
- Who will create the questions?
- Who will be asked to participate in the survey?
- When will we conduct the survey?
- Will all results be communicated, and how?
- Who will be held accountable for implementing changes driven by survey results?
- Are there questions from previous surveys that should/should not be included again?

Step 2: Develop questions – Typically employee surveys ask questions on the themes of:

- Satisfaction: with their role, hours, salary, benefits, and life-work balance.
- Engagement: How engaged they feel they are in their work and with the company.
- Health and safety: How safe and well they feel at work.
- Communication: Quality and frequency of internal communication between managers and staff.
- Culture: Quality of leadership from managers, diversity, and inclusion.
- Learning: Quality and frequency of feedback and recognition, and opportunities to learn and participate in personal and professional development.
- Environment: Quality of the work environment including equipment and facilities.

Step 3: Create survey – The survey will yield excellent results if it is conducted anonymously. You can prepare an online survey (such free and paid platforms such as SurveyMonkey) or hard-copy paper-based surveys with a return box.

What does best practice look like?

- Involve employees in designing, promoting, and analysing the results.
- Communicating the purpose of the survey is an important step in getting people to participate in any type of engagement survey. When employees know why a survey is taking place, when and where to take it, and how the results will be used, they are more inclined to provide their feedback.
- Ensure confidentiality and anonymity.
- Keep the survey short, less than 10 questions.
- Use language and phrasing that everyone will understand. Avoid technical jargon
- Start and end with easy questions and provide a mix of ‘tick the box’ and ‘write a response’ questions.

Resources & additional information

Culture Amp's Communicating your next employee engagement survey

In Sync's Employee Survey: 20 essential questions to ask and what staff survey pitfalls you can avoid?

Vantage Circle's 50 Employee engagement survey questions you must ask in 2022

6.6 Managing Employee Grievances & Disputes

What are employee grievances and disputes?

- A *grievance* is a clear statement made by an employee on a work-related problem, concern, or complaint, or alleged discrimination, bullying, or harassment.
- A *dispute* is when one or more employee's question, disagree, or have concerns regarding the interpretation, application, or operation of an industrial award, enterprise agreement, or employment contract.

Common issues heard by the Fair Work Commission are unfair dismissal, manager discrimination, bullying, no casual conversion, disagreement in making an enterprise agreement, award interpretation, and union refused access to a workplace. Depending on the issue and other factors, like a grievance/dispute provision of a contract of employment, enterprise agreement or award which must be followed, employee complaints may get escalated to the Fair Work Commission and addressed through mediation, conciliation, or arbitration.

All grievances and disputes should be taken seriously. Employers should aim to resolve grievances and disputes in accordance with procedures outlined in the relevant laws, award, or agreement. Seek legal or industrial relations advice, or contact your industry association, for assistance.

What is the best way to investigate a complaint?

Subject to a grievance/dispute provision of a contract of employment, enterprise agreement or award which must be followed, a procedure will generally follow the steps outlined below, but you will need to clarify the process with your legal and/or industrial relations advisor including whether the employee may appoint a representative to accompany or represent them in relation to the complaint, and the scope of the role of that representative.

Step 1: Assess the complaint – Employees should raise the problem first with their immediate manager. Even if given verbally, complaints should be made in writing. In assessing the complaint, the employer will need to consider if it is genuine and there is evidence to support to the complaint; and if that is correct, it may indicate misconduct or serious misconduct is likely to have occurred. All complaints raised from an employee should be considered for investigation and such investigations should be conducted in a fair and respectful manner. Not every employee complaint requires an investigation. Most concerns raised might be able to be resolved informally by management.

Step 2: Identify the issues – Identify the issues that need to be investigated. These may be clearly outlined in the complaint, or they may emerge during the investigation. All investigations must be conducted without bias or judgment. Interview the employee who made the complaint to gather more information. While this process is taking place, working arrangements as they existed prior to the complaint can continue, unless the employee has reasonable concern about an imminent risk to their health or safety.

At this point, a decision can then be made as to whether the matter should be investigated further, or another course of action will be followed. Inform the employee of the next steps. The person/subject of the complaint **should not** be informed of the complaint at this stage.

Step 3: Collate evidence – Nominate a manager (or external person) to collate and record evidence such as, but not limited to, photos/video footage, reports, computer files, emails, messages etc... Obtain witness versions of events and seek written signed statements. Documented witness statements capture in a logical and sequential order relevant information such as what they saw or heard, where and when events occurred, and who was involved. When invited to give a statement, witnesses should be advised of the investigation process, their obligation in relation to confidentiality, and their possible future involvement (including that they may be asked to give their evidence later). A statement made by one witness should not be shown to another. Those investigating must abide by confidentiality requirements and must impress upon all witnesses their obligation to keep details of the investigation confidential. Interview the person(s) the complaint is about for their side of the story. This person has the right to be accompanied by a support person during any interview.

Step 4: Prepare report – A report should be prepared that documents:

- A summary of the complaint.
- A statement of the relevant facts and evidence.
- Copies of relevant legislation and/or operational policies.
- Relevant documents including witness statements and evidence etc.
- Recommended course of action, based on advice sought from legal or industrial relations advisors.

Also see in this manual:

Section 7.1 Types of Performance

Section 7.2 Giving & Receiving Feedback

Resources & additional information

Fair Work Ombudsman's free online self-paced course on Difficult conversations in the workplace

Fair Work Ombudsman's free online self-paced course on Manage employees

Fair Work Ombudsman's Manager's guide to difficult conversations in the workplace

Fair Work Ombudsman's Employer's guide to resolving workplace issues

Fair Work Ombudsman's Effective Dispute Resolution Best Practice Guide

Section 7. PROGRESSION & PERFORMANCE

In this section:

7.1 Types of Performance

7.2 Giving & Receiving Feedback

7.3 Performance Appraisals

7.4 Promotions

7.5 Performance Improvement Plans

7.6 Conducting a Disciplinary Meeting

7.7 Verbal Warnings

7.8 Written Warnings

7.1 Types of Performance

What are the types of employee performance?

Occasionally, employees will demonstrate the following:

- *High performance* (consistently exceeds expectations but may not have the potential or desire to take on more advanced work).
- *High potential* (demonstrated ability and future potential to make an impact).
- *Under performance* (failing to comply with workplace policies and procedures, or difficulty in meeting role or task requirements).
- *Unacceptable behaviour* (where employees are performing but they demonstrate interpersonal conflict, negative or disruptive behaviour).
- *Misconduct* (deliberate unprofessional, dangerous, or unlawful behaviour).

What influences poor performance?

There are many factors that may negatively impact an employee's performance at work:

- Management style and how employees are led, communicated, and engaged.
- They don't know what is expected because goals or standards or workplace policies and consequences are vague or non-existent.
- Inappropriate job fit between employee, position, and workplace environment.
- Misalignment between an employee's capabilities and the job or task they are required to do, or they don't follow instructions.
- The absence of feedback, coaching, and training.
- Low workplace morale, personal motivation, or negativity about their role, the company, the work environment, or a specific issue.
- Personal issues involving family, physical and/or mental health or substance abuse problems.

- Interpersonal differences.
- Cultural misunderstandings.
- Workplace bullying.

Why does poor performance need to be addressed?

To have a productive, skilled, healthy, and happy team, performance issues must be addressed. The goal is to have a workplace culture that supports ongoing feedback, where employees are committed to their development and issues are dealt with in an open and supportive way.

Under performance, disruptive behaviour and misconduct need to be managed promptly and appropriately. In some instances, employees may be unaware they are not performing well. If this is the case poor performance will most likely continue. Performance issues not addressed promptly have the potential to become more complicated and serious. They can also have a negative effect on your business, productivity, and performance of the entire workplace.

Employers are encouraged to:

- Avoid poor performance issues by giving regular feedback to employees, coaching, or training.
- Stay in regular contact with employees so to be aware of issues or concerns as they happen.
- Address any concerns as soon as they occur to avoid escalation.

Also see in this manual:

Section 7.2 Giving & Receiving Feedback

Section 7.5 Performance Improvement Plans

Section 7.6 Conducting a Disciplinary Meeting

Resources & additional information

Fair Work Ombudsman's free online self-paced course on Difficult conversations in the workplace

Fair Work Ombudsman's free online self-paced course on Manage employees

Fair Work Ombudsman's Manager's guide to difficult conversations in the workplace

Fair Work Ombudsman's Employer's guide to resolving workplace issues

7.2 Giving & Receiving Feedback

What are the benefits of giving feedback?

Feedback is the process of providing helpful information to adjust and improve workplace performance and behaviour. Feedback provides opportunities to improve performance in a positive and respectful way, where employers and employees can learn more from each other on how to do better, be better.

There are many benefits to providing positive and corrective feedback such as:

- Increased motivation, confidence, and performance.
- Continuous learning and personal growth.

- Improved relationships.

How can I effectively provide corrective feedback?

The steps below outline one recommended process for giving feedback to correct minor performance issues. For more major or ongoing performance issues, see Section 7.6 on how to conduct disciplinary discussions.

Step 1: Prepare for the discussion – Prepare your comments – you don't want to read a script, but you do need to be clear about you are going to say. Aim to make it a positive, respectful process and collaborative experience. Be timely – the closer to the event you address the issue, the better. Praise in public, criticise in private – while public recognition is appreciated, public scrutiny is not. Establish a safe place to talk where you won't be interrupted or overheard.

Step 2: State the purpose – Outline with the employee what you would like to discuss and why it is important. Also state that the employee will be asked for their view and feedback on the situation. Limit the discussion to one issue.

Step 3: Discuss what was specifically observed – Start with any positive observations about their performance before moving to the issue requiring attention. Then outline the facts of the situation, what was seen or heard. Be specific, calm, and factual.

Step 4: Describe your reaction – Explain the consequences of their actions and you feel about it, and how it impacted others.

Step 5: Give the employee an opportunity to respond – Ask the employee for their perspective – What is their view of the situation? If they were in your shoes, what would they do? Listen actively – paraphrase what is being said. Probe for details and try not to interrupt. Avoid debates. Feedback sessions are best viewed as a partnership for improvement. When you allow defensiveness to enter the conversation then you aren't open to hearing what the employee is saying. Accept feedback for what it is – an attempt to help both you and the employee improve skills and develop personally and professionally.

Step 6: Identity opportunities for improvement – Discuss how this situation can be prevented in the future – what coaching, training, or other actions need to occur? Remind the employee of their responsibilities towards maintaining the requirements of the Position Description and operating procedures.

Step 7: Summarise and express your support – Review the major points discussed with the employee, and check for mutual understanding. Document and agree to any action items and follow up.

How can managers receive feedback from employees?

Regularly seeking feedback from employees also helps managers develop their skills and awareness of issues impacting them. Seeking feedback from employees requires a workplace culture of open and honest communication. This can be supported by:

- Showing interest in employees, paying attention to non-verbal body language, and asking questions such as:
  - What is working well?
  - What is stopping you from doing your job effectively?
  - How can I help/what do you need from me?

— What can we do differently next time?

- Avoid defensiveness. Employees don't necessarily have all the information about a situation, but they do have a perspective. When employees share a perspective, they are demonstrating trust. Listen and be open to receiving feedback.

Also see in this manual:

Section 7.5 Performance Improvement Plans

Section 7.6 Conducting a Disciplinary Meeting

Resources & additional information

Fair Work Ombudsman's free online self-paced course on Difficult conversations in the workplace

Fair Work Ombudsman's Manager's guide to difficult conversations in the workplace

Fair Work Ombudsman's Employer's guide to resolving workplace issues

7.3 Performance Appraisals

What is a performance appraisal?

A commitment to career development is a win for both employers and employees. It is an active process focusing on the future needs of the business and the aspirations and motivations of current employees to not only progress in their career, but also develop themselves personally.

Performance appraisals provide the mechanism to this discussion and plan subsequent development. Performance appraisals help:

- Identify employee aspirations and career goals.
- Identify gaps in employee current skills, knowledge and skills needed for progression, or areas they may wish to improve.
- Pro-actively manage training, coaching, and experiences needed to achieve those goals.
- Review current position descriptions for improvement or changes.

However, not every employee will be interested in advancing their career. Some may be satisfied with continually improving their performance in their current role. Performance appraisals still serve a purpose for these employees.

What is the process?

Step 1: Plan for the appraisal – Best practice suggests that the performance appraisal format and questions are confirmed in advanced and shared with employees to help them prepare for discussions, as well as promoting the benefits of the performance appraisal.

The appraisal could be structured around a series of questions, such as:

- Goals: What professional or personal goals do they hope to achieve within 1, 3 and 5 years? What would they like to accomplish this year?
- Capability review: Recognise strengths and interests (successes and achievements since last review), review role Key Performance Indicators, and gaps needing to be filled or areas for development, to achieve the short-term career goal.

- Workplace review: Explore issues such as life/work balance, employee health and wellness, engagement, workplace inclusion and belonging.
- Identify activities: Brainstorm learning, training, and resources (money, time, support relationships) that will help develop knowledge and skills to achieve goals.
- Set milestones: In order to develop the skills needed, time is needed to practice. Decide together what the milestones of progress will be. What can they do to ensure that they are making progress on this career path?

Template

Fair Work Ombudsman's performance review discussion plan template

Step 2: Conduct the appraisal – The performance appraisal discussion might take around 1-hour where the points noted above are addressed in turn. Allow the employee to talk first, presenting their responses, then compare answers, and develop action plan throughout the discussion.

Step 3: Follow up – Follow up action should document goals, capability review, identify activities and set milestones. This plan (see Section 7.5 Performance Improvement Plans) should be signed by the employer and employee, a copy provided to the employee, and a copy saved in the personnel file. Aim to regularly review and set a schedule of check-in meetings to give and receive feedback on progress and adjust action steps and timelines as necessary.

What should be avoided in performance appraisals?

There are some issues you may wish to avoid as you work through the performance appraisal process. For example:

- Guaranteeing training, coaching, mentoring, a pay rise, or a new job at the end of the process.
- Overcommitting time or resources.
- The employee is responsible for carrying out action plans. Employees should understand their role and responsibilities in initiating, in participating, and achieving appraisal plans.

Also see in this manual:

Section 5.2 Employee & Management Skills

Section 5.3 Coaching & Mentoring

Section 5.5 Succession Planning

Section 7.4 Promotions

Template

Fair Work Ombudsman's Performance review discussion plan template

Resources & additional information

Business Victoria's Review staff performance

Fair Work Ombudsman's Managing Performance free self-paced online training course.

7.4 Promotions

What are promotions?

When there is a job vacancy in a business, it can be filled up by current employees or external candidates. Though many businesses prefer to fill up vacancies with external candidates, current employees should be given the opportunity to apply for the job and considered along with external candidates.

Job promotions occur when an employee is formally appointed to a new and different role. This could include:

- Appointed to a role that has more responsibility, challenge, specialisation, and higher wage rate than their previous job.
- Transitioning employment status, for example from casual to part time, or part time to full time positions.

The benefits of promotions are:

- Reward current employee performance, productivity, and long-term employee loyalty.
- Current employees already know the rules, regulations, and culture of the business.
- Allowing employees to move vertically and horizontally within the business could reduce the possibility of her looking for another job.
- Offering opportunities to current employees may boost the team morale.

The promotion process needs to be transparent and fair so to avoid the challenges of:

- Nepotism and playing favourites, where unsuitable/less qualified or experienced employees receive promotions because of existing relationships.
- No new or fresh ideas are brought into the business, or even maintaining negative habits and behaviour by the promoted employee.
- Knowing when an employee is ready for promotion, that they are willing and able to take on the new role.
- Causing resentment amongst other employees, who may feel they deserve the job more than the promoted employee.

What is the process?

Step 1: Confirm promotion policy – A documented policy can clearly outline how promotions will be managed in the business. It can include criteria (such as passed probation period, sustained high performance, skillset that matches minimum requirements of the new role, personal motivation, and willingness for change), how job vacancies will be open to current employees, and other procedural matters.

Step 2: Promotion pathways – Promotions can be considered through job vacancies made open to current employees, regular workforce planning (see Section 2.1), performance appraisals (see Section 7.3) and succession planning (see Section 5.5).

Step 3: Appointment – On promotion, follow the same process to appoint a new employee by providing a letter of offer (outlining varied or new employment terms, conditions, and entitlements, see Section 3.8) and position description (see Section 3.1).

Step 4: Inform the team – Employees work hard to achieve a promotion and while the news that they are successful in achieving a promotion should be cause for celebration, informing the team needs care. In communicating news of the promotion to the team outline the reasons for the promotion, describe the contribution required to achieve a promotion, and provide guidelines for other employees to follow and clarify what your business is looking for when deciding who to promote.

How to manage passed-over employees?

Occasionally a current employee may not get a promotion. Preserving the respect and engagement of a passed-over employees is important. Meet with them to discuss the outcome of their application for a promotion and address the following:

- Communicate honestly about requirements and capabilities required for the role.
- Express appreciation for current performance and reinforce strengths and talents.
- Don't offer false encouragement or empty compliments. Not every employee will have the capability to advance.
- Create an action plan to develop skills in preparation for the next opportunity (see Section 7.5).

This discussion should occur before any announcement is made to the team.

Also see in this manual:

Section 2.1 Workforce Planning

Section 5.3 Coaching & Mentoring

Section 5.4 Other Development Strategies

Section 5.5 Succession Planning

Template

See World Manager's Employee Promotion Policy template

Resources & additional information

Great Places to Work's 8 Ways to Have a Fair Process for Promotions

7.5 Performance Improvement Plans

What are Performance Improvement Plans?

A Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) is a tool to help guide employees to address performance issues and provide the opportunity to succeed. Reasons for implementing a PIP varies such as aiming to improve overall performance; recognising a skills or training gap; or possible employment actions such as a transfer or demotion.

One key aspect of a PIP is the written summary of employee's performance (actions, skill level, or behaviour) that stands in the way of job success. The PIP describes required follow-up actions in detail.

PIPs provide the following benefits:

- Increased accountability, by describing actions employees must take to improve performance. PIPs put them in a position to take more accountability for performance outcomes
- Clearer performance messaging, as employees can sometimes misinterpret feedback and coaching. A PIP spells out the performance issue and how to fix it.
- Better risk management, as PIP demonstrates actions employers are taking to help an employee to improve. In the unfortunate event that improvement doesn't occur, having a PIP provides further evidence of poor performance.

Template

Fair Work Ombudsman's performance improvement plan template

What is the process?

Step 1: Plan – Before you start developing a PIP, know when it is appropriate to use and when it may be premature or too late. Some of the situations in which a PIP may make sense include:

- When the employee has already received constructive feedback (see Section 7.2) and has not made the desired improvements.
- When co-workers or customers have complained about the employee.
- When the employee has consistently struggled in a particular area.
- When the employee made one or more error that negatively impacted business operations.

Use a template to prepare a PIP for your employee. Begin by clearly identifying the specific area or areas in which the employee needs to improve their performance.

Step 2: Meet with your employee – Follow the process on how to conduct a constructive feedback discussion (see Section 7.2). Complete the PIP, including review dates, and provide a copy to the employee to sign and keeping on their personnel file.

Step 3: Monitor – Monitor the employee's performance while the plan is in place. Regularly check-in with your employee over that period to discuss their progress.

Step 4: Review – Meet at the times set out in the plan to review your employee's performance. Before these meetings, both you and your employee should assess their performance. After these meetings, you should update the plan to make sure it stays current.

Also see in this manual:

Section 7.1 Types of Performance

Section 7.2 Giving & Receiving Feedback

Section 7.3 Performance Appraisals

Section 7.6 Conducting a Disciplinary Meeting

Template

Fair Work Ombudsman's Performance Improvement Plan template

Resources & additional information

Fair Work Ombudsman's free online self-paced course on Difficult conversations in the workplace

Fair Work Ombudsman's free online self-paced course on Manage employees

Fair Work Ombudsman's Manager's guide to difficult conversations in the workplace

Fair Work Ombudsman's Employer's guide to resolving workplace issues

7.6 Conducting a Disciplinary Meeting

Do I have to address poor performance?

In the instance of poor employee performance, inappropriate or dangerous conduct, employers have the option to either address the situation or ignore it (which may escalate to bigger issues down the track).

Conducting a disciplinary discussion, in accordance with best practice, ensures employees are treated fairly and consistently; and that action is taken promptly, providing a reasonable opportunity for employees to improve their performance.

Addressing disciplinary issues should not be taken lightly. Before taking action, employers should ensure they:

- have a valid reason,
- follow a fair process, and
- consider seeking independent advice.

Employers should aim to address disciplinary issues in accordance with procedures outlined in the relevant laws, award, or agreement. Seek legal or industrial relations advice or contact your industry association for assistance.

What is the process for conducting a disciplinary meeting?

One recommended process includes the following steps:

Step 1: Identify the Issue – In the instance of poor performance or an incident, it is important to investigate and identify the issue. Be clear on what the problem is, and what needs to be done to rectify it. The 'why' of the situation may not be known at this stage.

Clarify the facts. Know exactly what has occurred. Try not to pre-judge the situation. Be ready to describe what was witnessed or what your investigation revealed and have specific examples of the behaviour.

It's important to always deal with the behaviour and not the personal characteristics of a person.

When investigating the situation, employers have the option of standing-down the employee (on full pay) before the meeting. It may be necessary to interview other employees or witnesses to verify information.

Step 2: Analyse the problem – At this stage take some time to analyse the situation or issue that occurred. Based on the facts, consider:

- Is this a *skill* (they don't know what to do) or *will* (they know what to do they just aren't doing it) issue?
- Can the root of the problem be identified with the facts? If not, what are some questions you can ask employee(s) to uncover the cause?
- How serious is this issue?
- How long has the problem existed, is this the first time the issue has been raised with the employee, or is there a pattern of behaviour?
- What are the blocks between what is expected and what is being delivered?
- What exactly is your expectation?
- If the situation or issue was to occur again, what would you expect to happen?

Step 3: Organise a meeting with the employee – Organise a meeting with the employee to discuss the issue. It is important to let them know the purpose of the meeting in advance, so they are not blind-sided and have time to prepare. The intention is to get a positive resolution so any preparation they can do will be helpful.

Template
BusVic's Notification of Disciplinary Process template letter (available on BusVic's website).

Employees are entitled to bring a support person of their choice to the meeting. The role of the support person is to observe proceedings and not interject, comment, or interfere. The meeting must be suspended until the employee can organise a support person or agrees to not having one. This should be documented in the meeting notes. Same applies for employers who can bring a support person.

Select a day and time that best suits their roster, such as at the end of their shift. The meeting should be held in a private space where your employee can feel safe and speak freely. Choose a meeting room or other appropriate space that is comfortable, non-threatening and away from distractions and interruptions.

Step 4: Meet with the employee – A suggested structure to conduct the meeting is as follows:

- Begin the meeting by outlining the purpose of the meeting is to address a concern and find a solution.
- Outline the role of the representatives.
- Discuss the purpose of the meeting is and what the desired outcome is.
- Identify the facts of the issue or incident.
- Outline the facts of the issue or incident, why it is a problem, how it impacts on the workplace, and the behaviour you expect instead.
- Give the employee an opportunity to respond. Stay focused and carefully consider their response and reasons for the underperformance. Ask questions and clarifying any issues that may contribute to the problem.

- Decide if an outcome can be reached during the meeting in consultation with the employee, or if more time is required to consider next steps. Where possible, discuss and jointly agree a resolution and action to be taken. If this is not possible, inform the employee when they will be informed of the outcome.

Step 5: Determine the outcome – Based on the employee's response, determine an outcome that best meets the situation. You can decide during the course of the meeting what the outcome might be, or you can end the meeting to consider your options.

The outcome must include a clear and specific course of action and can include things like further training, mentoring, redefining roles, and expectations. The outcome should include realistic timeframes for the employee to improve their performance.

It may include:

- Mutual understanding and agreement by clearly reiterating performance expectations.
- Development and implementation of a Performance Improvement Plan (see Section 7.5).
- Change to current role and work arrangements.
- Verbal warning (for first instance of poor performance/misconduct, see Section 7.7)
- Written warning (see Section 7.8).
- Dismissal (see Section 8.5)

Discuss the outcome with the employee. Best practice suggests presenting a documentary summary of the meeting and outcome, have the employee review and sign it, and keep a copy in their employee file.

Step 6: Issue the outcome & monitor performance – Issue the outcome, such as agreed action, Performance Improvement, verbal or written warning, or termination.

Another meeting should be planned with the employee to review their progress and performance against the agreed action plan. Keep an accurate written record of your meeting in case further action is required.

Performance management includes providing the employee with regular feedback and encouragement about their performance. If the employee's performance improves another meeting should be scheduled to review and discuss their performance. This meeting gives you the opportunity to acknowledge the issue has been resolved, or to provide feedback to the employee to ensure performance improvements are continued.

Further disciplinary action may need to be taken if the employee's performance does not improve. In such cases, seek legal or industrial relations advice as the matter may result in issuing formal warnings, or if the issue cannot be resolved, termination of employment.

Also see in this manual:

Section 7.1 Types of Performance

Section 7.7 Verbal Warnings

Section 7.8 Written Warnings

Section 8.5 Dismissal

Template

This template (available on BusVic's website) is intended as a guide only and you are encouraged to seek legal or industrial relations advice to ensure it is fit for purpose:

- BusVic's Notification of Disciplinary Process template letter

Resources & additional information

Fair Work Ombudsman's Managing performance & warnings

Fair Work Ombudsman's Managing underperformance – Initial steps checklist

Fair Work Ombudsman's Managing underperformance – Formal steps checklist

Fair Work Ombudsman's Underperformance meeting plan

Fair Work Ombudsman's free online self-paced course on Difficult conversations in the workplace

Fair Work Ombudsman's Manager's guide to difficult conversations in the workplace

Fair Work Ombudsman's Employer's guide to resolving workplace issues

7.7 Verbal Warnings

What is verbal warning?

There is no mandated process under the Fair Work Act that determines verbal warnings must come before written warnings, nor the number of warnings you must receive before termination. The practice of 'one verbal warning and three written warnings' aims to demonstrate fairness and support development.

The aim of a verbal warning is to correct and realign the employee's performance or behaviour by:

- Making the employee aware that what they did was not to standard, dangerous, or inappropriate.
- Identifying what standard or behaviour is expected, and why.
- Encouraging future compliance with appropriate standards, policies, and procedures.

A verbal warning is appropriate when:

- Poor performance or conduct is first observed or reported; and
- it is considered that the employee's performance can be adequately addressed through a less formal process.

However, a verbal warning is not appropriate where employee conduct or an incident could be considered as more serious.

What is the process?

Follow the recommended process for **Conducting a Disciplinary Discussion** (see Section 7.6).

A formal verbal warning is issued after the meeting has been held.

The warning can be issued as a short, documented statement that outlines:

- Details, attendees, facts, and the outcome of the disciplinary meeting.
- What disciplinary action the employer has decided to take in response (in this instance, issue a formal verbal warning)
- What changes in behaviour or performance improvements need to be made within any set timeframe, and how the employer will support through coaching and training.
- What this means for the employee, such as likely consequences of further misconduct, or failure to improve performance may result in written warnings.

Discuss the statement with the employee, provide them with a copy, and keep a copy on their personal file.

Also see in this manual:

Section 7.1 Types of Performance

Section 7.6 Conducting a Disciplinary Meeting

Section 7.8 Written Warnings

Section 8.5 Dismissal

Resources & additional information

Fair Work Ombudsman's Managing performance & warnings

7.8 Written Warnings

What is a written warning?

A written warning is appropriate when:

- unsatisfactory performance or conduct has continued, despite a verbal warning; and
- the conduct is of a serious nature, but not so serious as to warrant dismissal.

To determine whether a written warning is appropriate, it is necessary to investigate the situation and conduct a disciplinary meeting (see Section 7.6).

A written warning is important for both employers and employees.

For employers, a written warning demonstrates that a fair process has been followed to address work performance, establishes what the employee and employer will both do to improve performance, and may act to protect the employer from a future unfair dismissal claim.

For employees, a written warning provides important feedback on their performance, the impact it had, and what both parties will do to avoid, rectify, or improve.

What is the process?

Follow the recommended process for **Conducting a Disciplinary Discussion** (see Section 7.6).

The written warning is prepared and issued after the meeting (see the template below) and then discussed with the employee and for them to sign, allowing you to document action items and responses made during the meeting. Should an employee refuse to sign the warning, the employer can ask a witness to note and acknowledge this on the warning.

Provide a copy to the employee and keep a copy on their personal file.

Also see in this manual:

Section 7.1 Types of Performance

Section 7.6 Conducting a Disciplinary Meeting

Section 8.5 Dismissal

Templates

This template (available on BusVic's website) is intended as a guide only and you are encouraged to seek legal or industrial relations advice to ensure it is fit for purpose:

BusVic's Final or First Written Warning template letter

Resources & additional information

Fair Work Ombudsman's Managing performance & warnings

Fair Work Ombudsman's First warning letter

Section 8. TRANSITION

In this section:

8.1 Managing Employee Transition

8.2 Resignations & Exit Interviews

8.3 Retirement

8.4 Redundancy

8.5 Dismissal

8.1 Managing Employee Transition

Transitioning employment and exiting the business is an ever-increasing complex activity. Seek legal or industrial relations advice or contact your industry association for assistance prior to implementing transition plans.

What are the types of transition?

There are a number of ways employees will leave your business, these are noted below. Mostly, employees will resign or retire but there are other pathways that come with legal, regulatory, emotional, and safety issues to consider.

Ending employment is complex and needs to be handled with care. Australia's workplace laws have rules in place to ensure when employment ends it is lawful and fair, and employees receive all entitlements owed at the end of their employment.

Important to all types of transition are the rules about period of notice and what needs to be included in an employee's final pay.

The common types of transition are:

- *Resignation* (see Section 8.2)
- *Retirement* (see Section 8.3)
- *Redundancy* (see Section 8.4)
- *Termination during Probation Period*: The aim of the Probation Period is to provide the employee with the training, support and coaching they need to achieve in the role. During probation, either party can terminate employment in accordance with period of notice clauses.
- *Constructive Dismissal:* When an employee resigns because their employer's behaviour has become so difficult that they believe they have no other choice. The employee must prove that the employer's behaviour was unlawful — that their actions amounted to a fundamental breach of engagement, legal and regulatory requirements. Examples include (but not limited to):
  - Bullying, harassment, and victimisation.
  - Changing an employee's job to their disadvantage.
  - Excessive and unfounded performance management action.

- Not offering a potential employee all the terms and conditions normally in a job.
- Setting unachievable goals and KPIs.

- *Unlawful Termination:* When an employee is terminated based on a discriminatory reason such as (but not limited to) their sex, religious belief, disability etc. The employee must prove that the employer's behaviour was unlawful.
- *Abandonment of Employment:* When an employee does not attend work or make any attempts to communicate with the employer after 3-days/shifts absent.
- *Termination from Final Warning* (see Section 7.8).
- *Dismissal for serious misconduct* (see Section 8.5)

How to support a good transition?

After their employment ends, employees may still stay connected to your business in some way. They might stay in touch with current team members who have become friends, they might follow you on social media, and they may be a customer. They may even return at some point as an employee.

Maintaining great relationships with employees when they end their employment is important. It shows your professionalism, the respect you and your business have towards the team. Spending the same amount time and effort done with onboarding new team members, off-boarding them with the same spirit ensures things end as well as they possibly can.

Off-boarding is a process that starts when an employee's employment ends. It requires coordinated effort to:

- Ensure the transition is legally compliant, respectful, safe, and fair.
- Consider the needs of the leaving employee, the remaining team, and customers.
- Protect safety and security, ensuring the employee's and the business's equipment, data and information are protected.
- Maintain current operations and team performance with minimal disruption.
- Activate the recruitment process.

If the employee is leaving on good terms consider giving them a genuinely warm farewell is the perfect time to publicly highlight their contribution and to show gratitude for their service, talents, and support for their future.

Even when the employee is leaving under challenging circumstances, it is still important to show respect and focus on a smooth exit. The remaining team will be watching how you transition employees. Doing so with fairness and respect will speak volumes to the team on how consistent you are.

Also see in this manual:

Section 7.1 Types of Performance

Section 7.6 Conducting a Disciplinary Meeting

Section 8.2 Resignations & Exit Interviews

Section 8.3 Retirement

Section 8.4 Redundancy

Section 8.5 Dismissal

Template

This template (available on BusVic's website) is intended as a guide only and you are encouraged to seek legal or industrial relations advice to ensure it is fit for purpose:

BusVic's Performance and Conduct Management suggested policy

Resources & additional information

Fair Work Ombudsman's Ending employment

Fair Work Ombudsman's Notice & final pay

8.2 Resignations & Exit Interviews

Why do employees resign?

Employees resign for many reasons. Often, it's a combination of push and pull factors:

- *Push factors* such as no promotion prospects or career development, being under-utilised, reduced work/life balance, being under-paid, job insecurity and business decline, personality clashes, high pressure, and poor workplace culture.
- *Pull factors* tempt employees away from the business to other jobs with greater opportunities to learn and advance and they are presented with an offer too good to refuse.

Whatever the push-pull factors, research has identified seven ways employees will resign:

- *By the Book* in a face-to-face meeting with their manager and provide written notice and an explanation for resigning.
- *Perfunctory,* like 'by the book', except the meeting is shorter and the reason for resigning is not provided.
- *Bridge burner*, where the employee tries to harm the business, you, or the team during the off-boarding process, often through verbal attacks or negative social media comments.
- *Grateful* where the registration discussion focuses on how grateful the employee has been for their job and how they want to help the transition process.
- *Avoidant*, where the employee lets others know that they are resigning without directly talking to their manager who hears it through the grapevine.
- *In the loop*, where the employee confides in their manager and clearly states they are contemplating leaving and are looking for opportunities elsewhere.
- *Impulsive*, where the employee walks off the job, never to return and don't tell you or communicate with the team again.

What is the process?

Step 1: Meet the employee – When an employee resigns have a discussion to explore the conditions under which the team member would stay, and identity other opportunities within the business for the employee. If not achievable, confirm the employee's last day, period of notice, determine if they would like a farewell event, and create an action plan for a smooth hand-over of tasks and information.

Step 2: Accept the resignation – After the meeting, formally accept the resignation with the employee and clarify in writing last day, period of notice, leave entitlements, expectations of performance and productivity, and hand-over action plan.

At this stage, consider timing for recruitment and implement plans to resource the role during the recruitment process.

Template
Raw HR's Registration Acceptance template letter

Step 3: Inform the team – Let the team know of the resignation and important information, such as last day, details of any farewell celebration, if and when the role will be advertised for, and how the vacancy will be managed until a replacement is found.

Step 4: Last day actions – On the employee's last day, make a time to meet with them to complete a task handover and provide a letter outlining how their final payment was calculated. As an option, you can also invite them to participate in an exit interview (see below) and/or provide a Statement of Engagement a document that states the facts of the employee's job (not a personal reference) such as length of service, position title, and a short summary of key functions of the role.

What is an exit interview?

Exit interviews are designed to identify the real reasons employees resign. The real reason may not be obvious but learning more provides a valuable opportunity to improve operations and the employee experience.

Typically, exit interviews seek feedback on reasons for leaving, the job, salary and benefits, the business, and supervisors and management.

Exit interviews are optional and can be held:

- With employees who resign or retire. An exit interview with an employee who was made redundant, retrenched, or dismissed might be a challenging experience.
- Face-to-face, or provided as a hard-copy or online survey.

Exit interviews are one of the last deep conversations you will have with your employees. They are a key feature of the off-boarding process, and not compulsory. They provide another chance for you and employee end the relationship positively and constructively.

Exit surveys can be provided in either hard-copy or online format. This allows the employee time to respond, and survey results do not have to be discussed with them.

Template
Business Victoria's Exit Interview template

Face-to-face exit interviews follow a structured process of questions where the employee responds to questions. Face-to-face exit interviews:

- Can be conducted by two people from the business (maybe others who are not the employee's direct manager) to ensure information collated during the interview and reported back to the business is objective and impartial.
- Should outline what will happen with the information provided, assuring privacy and confidentially
- Can offer the employee to invite a support person to attend, if they wish. The role of the support person is to observe proceedings and to not participate.
- Can follow the same format and questions as the exit survey (see above).
- Explore responses and obtain examples from the employee. It is not a chance for the employer to provide feedback and career advice.
- Work best when the employer remains positive; open to feedback; not demonstrate defensiveness, frustration, or resentment; not share with them how you really feel; or dig deeper on gossip or negativity.
- Are typically scheduled at the very end of the employee's last day. It shows respect and will generally result in more productive conversations.

Following the exit interview or survey, consolidate results. Document the discussion in a short report outlining questions asked and responses, and details of the meeting day, time, and who attended the meeting (they can also include their own comments). This report can go on the employee's personnel file and shared with the management team. In reviewing results from the exit interview or survey identify:

- What were the key themes from the interview?
- Are there any red flags we need to address immediately?
- What worked well? What can we do better next time?

Templates

Raw HR's The Art of Acceptance of Registration and Registration Acceptance template letter

Business Victoria's Exit Interview template

8.3 Retirement

What happens when someone retires?

Retirement is a significant milestone in the life of all employees.

There is no fixed retirement age in Australia. Many team members think about retiring when they become eligible for the Age Pension.

What if you believe an older team member can no longer do the job safely or to standard due to declining skills or capabilities? You will need to manage performance in the usual and lawful way as you would with any other team member. Remember, you cannot merely state that the employee is unable to perform their duties because they have reached a certain age. Having annual performance reviews are important for monitoring and planning for these situations.

You **cannot force retirement**, and this includes:

- Strongly persuading and suggesting to an employee to retire.
- Treating an employee in such a way that they are forced to retire.
- Terminating employment because employees are 'too old'.
- Asking employees to sign an agreement that they will retire upon reaching a certain age.

Under Australian law, forced retirement may be viewed the same as unfair dismissal.

What are the types of retirement?

There are a number of different ways team members can retire that the business needs to be aware of and prepared for.

- **Traditional retirement**: When employees decide the time to retire and work with their employer to plan the transition.
- **Early retirement**: When employees choose to retire at an earlier than expected age.
- **Phased retirement**: When employees gradually slow down their workload and roster until they reach full retirement. It's a great strategy to use to help employees successfully transition out of the workforce respectfully and with support. Phased retirement can include flexi-time or working part-time, job sharing, and mentoring and training their successors.
- **Resisting retirement**: Employees may resist thinking and talking about retirement. Some barriers might include:
    - Financial concerns about having enough money, how will I live?
    - Poor understanding of retirement.
    - Strong connection and loyalty to the business and job.
    - Belief of no longer being productive or valued.
    - Losing a social network and work friendships.
    - Fear of the unknown and not knowing what to do.

  The employer is not responsible for solving these challenges, but can provide support by referring to financial experts, agencies, and websites for additional information.

Do we need a retirement policy?

Even though there is no mandatory retirement age, you may want to consider implementing a retirement policy. This is optional. The policy statement could include:

- Clearly stating there is no retirement age.
- Types of retirement supported by the business (traditional, early and phased).
- Role of the employer in developing and supporting a transition plan.
- Period of notice required for retirement.

- What will be included in a retirement payout (confirm with your legal or industrial relations advisor, but the final payment is likely to include owed wages, annual and long service leave, and any optional payment from the business to acknowledge the employee's contribution, the 'golden handshake')
- Details of an early retirement scheme. Some businesses have in place an early retirement scheme to encourage employees to support early retirement. Such schemes have strict criteria on who is applies to and may include an extra payout amount and other benefits.

How can I support a respectful retirement?

Step 1: Talk about it – Employers have a major role in facilitating a smooth transition for retiring employees. This often starts as a long-term plan identified during annual performance reviews and career planning discussions. Discussing the importance of planning for retirement is totally okay. It is not discriminatory because you are helping employees plan their retirement when the time is right for them. Retirement planning can be discussed during:

- Induction, outlining support provided for retirement planning.
- Annual performance reviews.
- Engagement activities with the team, such as hosting superannuation seminars and providing access to legal and financial planning experts.

Employers can discuss the following with potential retirees:

- What do we all need to plan for a healthy and active retirement?
- What would a smooth transition look like?
- What might be the barriers to retirement: health, finances, social networks, and support?
- What expert advice can we help facilitate introductions to, such as financial planning?

Step 2: Give notice of retirement – When an employee has decided, they need to formally inform the business in writing and confirm a last day at work date.

Step 3: Prepare the plan – Next confirm with the employee their transition plan and how retirement is going to work best for them and the business. Helping employees team members create a retirement plan has the following benefits:

- Employees have greater control over the transition.
- Reduce fear and uncertainty of the future.
- Lower the risk of financial insecurity.

Develop an action plan in consultation with them which can include:

- A review their current capabilities and interests and how they can be utilised in the business now. Do job responsibilities need to change now?
- Is a phased retirement could work best, a reduction in work to transition to retirement activities?
- Plans to transfer knowledge and skills from experience to the team, including mentoring, job shadowing and special projects.
- Putting timeframes in place so there are clear expectations.

- Confirm support services available to them.
- Confirm with the employee what a retirement celebration could look like – what would they like to do?

Employers may want to involve the retiring employee's family in the planning process. Their involvement will help them understand the process (and possible risks) and they may have other great ideas.

Step 4: Off-boarding process – Like managing a resignation (see Section 8.2), the same off-boarding process applies with retirees. Conduct an exit interview, sort out last day arrangements and formalise final arrangements in a letter.

Step 5: Celebrate – Acknowledging and celebrating an employee's retirement is important.

When planning a retirement celebration, ask them what they like, what would be appropriate and who to invite. Not all retirement celebrations need to be grand events. It's up to the retiring team member what they want. It's about them.

Involving and inviting the team member's family and friends might be valued, and they might also like to invite past employees who they worked with and favourite customers and suppliers.

Speeches are important at these events. Usually, the employer would say a short speech, highlighting the career journey and accomplishments of their work life. Other people may wish to say a few words, such as team mates, family members, and the retiree themselves.

Beyond an event and a few speeches, other ways to celebrate include:

- A gift from the business that would be highly valued by the team member.
- Autograph book, where party guests can write something about the retiree for them to keep.
- Video interviews, asking people connected with the business to share memories and stories.
- Slideshow of photographs and images from the employee's career and run it on a loop during the event.

Step 6: Keep in touch – Schedule time over the next 18-months to 2-years to keep in touch with the retired employee. A quick phone call to hear how they are going or to seek their advice, an invitation to a work morning tea or another employee's farewell party. All these things help immensely with the transition process.

Also see in this manual:

Section 2.1 Workforce Planning

Section 6.2 Inclusion & Belonging

Section 8.1 Managing Employee Transition

Resources & additional information

Transitioning Well's Ageing Workforce Ready project

8.4 Redundancy

Seek legal or industrial relations advice, or contact your industry association for assistance, to ensure redundancies are genuine and final payments are accurate and compliant with special and standard leave entitlements.

What is redundancy?

Redundancy occurs when the employer no longer requires a position to be performed by anyone and has engaged the employee to explore redeployment to another role or terminate employment.

There are two possible outcomes in this situation:

- *Redeployment,* where the employee is offered an alternative job within the business (or with another company) that is deemed reasonable and suitable to current skills, location of the job, and salary (however the employee may be open to working for a lower salary) (see Fair Work Commission's information on redeployment)
- *Retrenchment,* where a position is no longer needed for the business or performed by anyone, and the employee will not be redeployed.

It is important to remember the position – not the employee – becomes redundant.

Redundancy can happen when the business:

- Introduces new technology so the job can be automated.
- Experiences sales or production decline.
- Closes for good.
- Moves to another location, such as a regional city, interstate, or overseas.
- Undertakes major organisational restructure.

For the redundancy to genuine, and not deemed to be unfair dismissal, it needs to meet three rules:

- The job will no longer done by anyone else.
- The business followed the proper consultation process set out in the relevant Industry Award or employment agreement. 'Proper consultation' sets out how you inform team members about the proposed changes, steps to support the team member, and ways to consider ideas the team member may have.
- The business considered redeploying the team member into other jobs.

You can't make a job redundant when the real reason to move employees on is due to poor performance or misconduct. That's not a genuine redundancy, that's unfair dismissal and the situation needs to be managed differently (see Section 8.5).

When you make a role redundant, you are required to pay more to recognise the situation. The National Employment Standards set out the legal minimum entitlements all Australian employees should receive. The redundancy payout will include:

- Wages to the date of redundancy,
- Any owning annual and long service leave,
- Payment in lieu of notice period, and

- Redundancy pay based time worked in the business.

What is the process?

Step 1: Confirm arrangements – If you decide that you no longer want a job to be done by anyone, then the job becomes redundant. Confirm with legal and industrial relations advisors your legal and financial obligations, notice periods, and redundancy entitlements.

In some situations, you may need to prepare for some negative attention from the media or even industrial action or striking during the redundancy process. If these are real risks, you may need to take proactive steps as part of the initial planning process to minimise the potential for these things to happen and their impact.

Step 2: Consult with the employee – Consulting with employees before the redundancy takes effect is necessary. It gives employees the opportunity to ask questions, discuss options, and plan for a smooth and supportive exit. Assign someone to personally guide the employees through the off-boarding process.

For redundancies to be respectful have a plan in place to ensure employees have support on hand to help with the transition, which is a time when employees might be feeling angry, vulnerable, and uncertain about their future. Support may include:

- Offering to pay for financial and legal advice to ensure they understand their rights and entitlements, and the financial implications arising from the redundancy.
- Access to Employee Assistance Programs or counselling services.
- Help with re-entering the job market, making introductions to other businesses within your network, offering references or outplacement services.

Step 3: Formalise arrangements – After consulting with employees and you have agreed on a plan, you can formalise arrangements using the redundancy letter template. The letter outlines the:

- Reason for the redundancy.
- Notice period and last day at work.
- Details of the redundancy pay entitlements and other entitlements to be paid.
- Once documented, meet with the employee again to give them the letter and to answer any questions.

Step 4: Inform the team – Regular communication with the rest of the team is important during times of redundancies:

- Share with the team about changes within the business that caused redundancies to occur.
- Provide time for the team to ask questions.
- Consider all options and alternatives to redundancies, such as redeployment or job sharing.
- Clear and strong communication with the team is needed to minimise mixed messages and gossip and avoiding inaccurate information circulating as this may damage the redundancy process.

Also see in this manual:

Section 2.1 Workforce Planning

Section 8.1 Managing Employee Transition

Template

This template (available on BusVic's website) is intended as a guide only and you are encouraged to seek legal or industrial relations advice to ensure it is fit for purpose:

- BusVic's Separation Letter by Retrenchment

Resources & additional information

Australian Government's Jobactive help for workers who have recently lost their jobs

Australian Government's What's Next? initiative for redundant and retrenched employees.

Business Victoria's Deal with redundancy and retrenchment

Fair Work Commission's Redeployment

Fair Work Ombudsman's Redundancy

Fair Work Ombudsman's Redundancy pay and entitlements

Fair Work Ombudsman's Termination of employment letter for redundancy

Jobs Victoria's Advice for employers considering retrenchment

Jobs Victoria's Workers in Transition program is designed to help businesses and workers through retrenchment and into new opportunities.

8.5 Dismissal

Seek legal or industrial relations advice, or contact your industry association for assistance, when considering dismissing employees.

What is dismissal?

Dismissal is when an individual's employment is terminated generally due to one of the following reasons:

- causing serious and imminent risk to the health and safety of another person or to the reputation or profits of their employer's business;
- theft, fraud, assault, or harassment; and/or
- refusing to carry out a lawful and reasonable instruction that is part of the job.

Dismissal cannot be harsh, unjust, or unreasonable:

- *Harsh* if the dismissal is disproportionate to the gravity of the misconduct (punishment does not 'fit the crime') and/or has major consequences for the employee's personal and economic situation.
- *Unjust* because the employee was not guilty of the misconduct on which the employer acted.

- *Unreasonable* because it was decided upon assumptions which could not reasonably have been drawn from the evidence provided.

When considering if dismissal is harsh, unjust, or unreasonable Fair Work Australia might assess the following:

- If a disciplinary procedure was followed correctly (with support persons invited) and the situation was investigated carefully and fairly. If the operator has fewer than 15 employees, if the Small Business Fair Dismissal Code was followed.
- If there were exceptional circumstances that might have impacted the situation.
- If the employee knew what they were doing would lead to dismissal, including evidence of previous performance feedback or warnings.
- If the employee was given fair opportunity to improve their performance or behaviour.
- The extent of legal, industry relations, or human resource expertise sought.

If the employee believes the dismissal is unfair, they can make a claim to Fair Work Australia which must be lodged within a certain timeframe from the date of the termination. Some possible outcomes could be reinstatement to same role, re-employment to another position the employer has available, or compensation payment.

What is the process?

Follow the recommended process for **Conducting a Disciplinary Discussion** (see Section 7.6) and ensure the employee has been offered the opportunity to have a support person present and ensuring you have a witness also.

Critical steps in the discussion process are to suspend the meeting to allow time to consider the employees response and determine the appropriate action; and communicate the outcome to the employee in clear and simple terms.

It may be appropriate to suspend the employee with pay to allow further investigation or seeking professional advice. Send the employee home and explain they will be paid for their time scheduled until they return to further discuss the situation, then schedule a meeting for the next day to discuss the situation.

Prepare dismissal paperwork (letter of termination, period of notice and last payment arrangements) and meet with the employee to discuss the paperwork and ask them to sign. The employee is invited to bring a support person to this meeting. Should an employee refuse to sign the dismissal, the employer can ask a witness to note and acknowledge this on the paperwork.

Provide a copy to the employee and keep a copy on their personal file.

Also see in this manual:
Section 2.1 Workforce Planning
Section 8.1 Managing Employee Transition

Templates

These templates (available on BusVic's website) are intended as a guide only and you are encouraged to seek legal or industrial relations advice to ensure they are fit for purpose:

BusVic's Termination Checklist – Harshness Factors

BusVic's Termination of Employment template letter

Resources & additional information

Fair Work Ombudsman's Ending employment

Fair Work Ombudsman's Termination of Employment for Serious Misconduct template letter.

Fair Work Ombudsman's Termination of Employment template letter.