



Congratulations on Growing Your Business!

FOCUS HR FOUNDER ANDREA HERRAN'S PASSION IS HELPING BUSINESSES ACHIEVE SUCCESS THROUGH THEIR PEOPLE. SHE WORKS ALONGSIDE ENTREPRENEURS, MANAGERS, AND OWNERS, LISTENING TO THEIR STORIES, ASSESSING THEIR NEEDS, AND DELIVERING WHAT THEY NEED TO KNOW. HERRAN BELIEVES THAT THE HR FUNCTION OF ANY BUSINESS ONLY ADDS VALUE IF IT SUPPORTS THE COMPANY GOALS, BOLSTERS EMPLOYEE MORALE, AND ENSURES LEGAL COMPLIANCE. SHE HAS LIVED AND WORKED OVERSEAS IN MEXICO, ARGENTINA, AND SOUTH AFRICA, AND IS BILINGUAL IN SPANISH. WE ASKED THE BARRINGTON AREA HR EXPERT TO SHARE SOME INSIGHTS ON CONCERNS FOR SMALL BUSINESS OWNERS.

CONGRATULATIONS! The business has grown and has employees. Now your business has to meet the expectations of its owner (which might be you), the employees, and the government. So how does a business know if it's doing it right?

First, let's start with owner expectations. We need to understand where the business is and where it needs to go. Understand the strategy and methods to achieve the desired goals. This is done through people.

Questions must be asked: Are the right people employed to take it from here to there? Finding the best people is a challenge for many small businesses. Why? They tend to focus only on skills. Skills will only get you part of the way there, the rest will be determined by the individual and cultural fit.

How to determine if they fit? Know the company values, for many small businesses, the owner's values are the same as the company's values. For example, a business owner who values integrity, drive, and service will have a company known to its customers by integrity, drive, and service. It's hard to separate the two. Look for the same values in potential employees. Determine beforehand the questions to ask—remember they must be work-related. For example, to determine drive ask, "Tell me what you have done to progress in your career."

Second, understand your employees' expectations. Salary and benefits are part of their expectations, but not all. A small business does not have to compete with Fortune 500 in terms of benefits, as that is unrealistic. Be creative in the offering. Most employees will tell you they want a good place to work, want to do what they enjoy each day, work with pleasant people, and can learn new things. This comes down to leadership. Let them be accountable for their work, come up with new ideas, and be heard. The best way to understand what an employee expects is to ask. Ask what they need to be successful, what will make their job better, and if there is there a project they would like to tackle.

Last, you need to understand the government's expectations of an employer. Its expectations will depend on how many employees are in the business. The major laws we typically think of kick in when there are 50 employees or more: mandatory health insurance and the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA). Both laws have more requirements than can be covered in this article. Of course, proper tax payments and reporting is a must.

However, all businesses regardless of size must have unemployment insurance (nonprofits have an option) and worker's compensation insurance. While everyone must follow OSHA regulations, additional reporting requirements may be required, depending on the type of business you have.

A recent legal update in Illinois that involves all companies is the increase in minimum wage. Currently, the State of Illinois has a minimum wage of \$8.25; it will increase to \$9.25 in January 2020 and to \$10.00 in July 2020 with further annual increases planned until it reaches \$15 in January 2025.

It may feel like there is a lot to track or to keep in mind. But each of these and other expectations do not have to take away from your business, but rather be considered part of its structure now and for a profitable future.

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