

Managing Probationary Employment Challenges

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I feel for clients when they realise they want to let an employee go and then discover the probationary employment period is already over.

Employees cannot make an unfair dismissal claim if they have been employed for less than six months, or twelve months if you employ less than fifteen staff.

This situation happens more often than you might think.

I guess that clients are so busy, or sometimes their managers are not properly focused, that they have not noticed an employee they are unhappy with has been with them for longer than the allowed probation period.

Tempus fugit ... time flies!

But it is much more difficult to end an underperformer's employment once the probation threshold has been passed.

Conduct scheduled probationary reviews

Here are some simple recommendations:

1. **The moment you issue the new hire's employment contract, diarise performance reviews at one, three and five months from the employment commencement date.**
2. Appoint a small panel to conduct the probationary employment reviews at the above intervals. The panel could be the probationary employee's line manager, the line manager's superior, and, say, another manager of a different team who could provide valuable input to the panel's decision making.
3. The panel should follow a standard assessment process. I have attached a simple template for your information to give you an idea of how the panel could assess the probationer.
4. The panel's job is to decide whether the probationer should continue working for the organisation: after one month, after three months and after five months.
5. If the panel feels that the probationer is not suitable at any of the one, three and five month reviews the organisation should move swiftly to look at whether to end the probationary employment.

I believe it is good for an organisation if a structured, collegiate approach is taken in these matters. I also consider that it is a valuable growth opportunity for managers to participate in a process like this, building on their capability for the future and helping them to understand, promote and maintain the desired organisational culture.

Q: What is culture? A: The way we do things around here.

Please contact us if you need help to ensure the success of new hires to your organisation.

Kind regards

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