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Many small business owners who are starting to hire workers are finding they too have a new role: They're becoming employers for the first time.

It can be a hard transition from employee to employer. Even if you were a manager in the past, you'll probably find that being an employer requires a different approach toward workers. You'll have to do a lot of thinking just about being an employer before you hire someone.

You'll also learn quickly that things that an HR department used to handle are now your responsibilities. And you now have a new boss of sorts yourself — the government.

Here's more about some issues that brand-new employers face:

MANAGING EVERYONE'S EXPECTATIONS

One of the hard parts about being a first-time employer is having a different feeling about the business than your employees do, says Arlene Vernon, president of HRx Inc., an Eden Prairie, Minn.-based HR consultancy. Vernon says of entrepreneurs, "they think about the benefits of how everything is going to impact growth, and a lot of employees are just coming to work -- even the good ones."

That means an owner needs to understand that he or she can't expect employees to be as passionate as they are about the business. That doesn't mean you can't have high expectations or standards for how they do their job and their commitment to the business.

But, for example, your new employees may not want to consistently work 12-hour days as you do. That has to be OK, or you could lose a good staffer.

Another problem new employers have is taking their vision of what this new job is about and putting it into concrete terms so a new hire knows what to expect, and do. You may know that you want an assistant, but do you know exactly what assignments you're going to give your new employee? Vernon says some workers might just jump in, figure out what they need to do and get the job done. But others will want specific guidelines about the work. The solution is to come up with a job description before you start looking, and put it in writing.

You also need to think about how you're going to work with your new hire. When you're used to doing everything yourself, are you going to be able to train your staffer and delegate tasks?

THE NITTY GRITTY: VACATION, SICK TIME AND OTHER DETAILS

When you were an employee, chances are you were told how much vacation you could take and how far in advance you had to ask for it. You probably knew how much sick time you'd get. You understood what the dress code was. Now, you're the one who has to come up with policies to cover a variety of workplace issues.

You need to think about these policies before you hire. When a candidate you want to hire asks how much vacation time they'll get, you shouldn't be answering the question on the fly. You also need to put your policies in writing in an employee handbook.

If you need help in putting together policies or a handbook, you can find sample policies by searching online. You can get more comprehensive advice from a human resources consultant. If you can't afford a consultant, SCORE, the organization that gives free advice to small businesses, can help. Visit www.score.org ^[3]. You can ask for a counselor online or you can call the group.

Another option is the Small Business Administration's Small Business Development Centers. They are located across the country, often on college campuses. You can find one by visiting <http://www.sba.gov/content/small-business-development-centers-sbdcs> ^[4].

DON'T FORGET THE GOVERNMENT

Having even one employee means you have to start complying with government regulations. And more laws will apply to you if you keep hiring.

"There are things you as a manager may not have known about, but as a business owner, you're going to be accountable for," said Rob Wilson, president of Employco, a Chicago-based human resources outsourcing company.

For example, you'll need to pay employment taxes and file tax forms with the government. You'll need to have each employee complete I-9 forms, which document that your staffers are authorized to work in the U.S. If you have 15 or more workers, you'll need to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act. And there are probably state laws you need to comply with. Most states require employers to buy workers' compensation insurance.

It's a good idea to see an HR consultant or a labor lawyer to be sure you comply with all the laws that apply to your company. SCORE or your local Small Business Development Center should also be good resources.

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