

Backword: Getting It Right from the Start

You've seen it happen time and time again, right? We work backwards. That is, we begin focusing on an employment relationship as it nears its end; e.g., when our employee is not performing as expected and we are thinking about letting him go. That's when your legal counsel or HR administrator asks the eternal question, "Do you have any documentation?" Then when you let the employee go you receive a charge from the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), or your state or local commission.

It is in that spirit that this book is written — to reflect not how this process should work but how it often happens: backwards. You may start at the end of the book, which is the beginning of the employment relationship, or start at the beginning of the book, which is the end of the employment relationship. Either way, when you finish this book, you will hopefully have some new insights, practical tips, and ideas for ensuring that the door does not hit you on the employee's way out.

There are just five things to consider as you read this book:

1. Those of you who know me know that my favorite answer for many questions is two words: "It depends." No strategy, practice, or procedure will work well in every situation or for every person. So keep in mind that this book is intended only to serve as a guide to offer tips for proactive practices, not the right answer for any particular situation.

2. For the reasons cited above and more, this book does not constitute the rendering of legal advice. You should contact your company's legal counsel for guidance on any particular employee situation.
3. The use of the pronoun he/him/his is sex neutral and applies to either sex or both.
4. We often hear about "best" practices. As you read this book, you will find that I refer to "proactive" practices. I am pleased to read the EEOC's current use of the term "Promising Practices." Because businesses vary so much in what, where, when, and how they do business, I find there are few "best" practices. I find there are, however, myriad proactive practices — and that is the focus of this book.
5. Make the most of this book. Each chapter closes with practical tips. Consider these as you review and update your company's policies, practices, and procedures. There are also myriad links and resources provided in the endnotes for you. It is my hope that this book can become a resource that you can use repeatedly.