# Why
# NO ONE'S FOLLOWING
## your Employee Handbook

and

# HOW TO FIX IT

INTOUCH
INSIGHT

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# Introduction

Are you a restaurant or retail manager that has spent hours crafting a detailed employee handbook? You've carefully outlined your ideal employee conduct and business standards. Now you're wondering, "How do I get my employees to start following this?"

It's a problem every company faces. No matter how detailed and comprehensive your employee handbook is you have trouble getting staff to read it, let alone follow it.

Here are five common reasons your employees aren't following your employee handbook and how to fix them.

# Reason 1: "I'll Read That In My Spare Time" Syndrome

## Scenario

You gave staff the employee handbook, instructed them to read it over the next few weeks, told them it was important and that was that. Your new employees took the handbook with the responsible intention of reading it later, then it got swept away along with gym clothes and coffee cups in the back of their car.

## Tips for Avoiding

The problem with this scenario is that the handbook was positioned from the beginning as something for "your spare time". This allows employees to mentally mark it as non-priority, where it's tossed aside for priority items.

- **Don't assume people read it on their own.**
  No matter how wonderful your employees are, if you don't prioritize the handbook as something that is absolutely vital to their job, they will not either.

- **Build the handbook into your training process interactively.**
  Design a training process built around your handbook. This doesn't mean sit and read the guide together page-by-page. Instead, interactively move through the various parts of their roles at your business, and review and reference the section of the handbook it corresponds with. Focus on how it applies to them and what actions they should take to make sure they're aligned with it.

- **Don't let trainign be the only time you reference the handbook.**
  As you manage and interact with staff daily, ensure the handbook's content is referred to often and leave copies of your handbooks out for staff to easily access.

# Reason 2: "But It's All Just Corporate Bull*$%^" Virus

## Scenario

You've built your handbook, interactively trained staff and left your handbooks out for constant reference. Still, reference to it tends to make employees' eyes roll or glaze over. They don't understand the value of your policies and assume the rules are there for "legal" or "corporate" reasons.

## Tips for Avoiding

Rules and standards annoy those who don't understand the reason behind them. To avoid, do your best to ensure your employees understand what's driving your standards, before encouraging staff to follow them.

- **Make it part of a greater vision or goal.**
  Maybe your goal is giving your customers the best service experience in town, or

streamlining operations so staff has more time for customers. Frame these goals for your employees to get them excited about what they're working towards. Look for ways to intrinsically motivate your employees first, and present standards as a means to an end.

- **Highlight the benefits to them.**
Don't forget about the famous questions, "What's in it for me?" Be sure to remind them of the direct benefits of your goals. Example, high quality service leads to higher tips, higher commission, more patrons, more shifts, and ultimately more money in your employees' pockets. Highlighting both extrinsic ($$ and success) and intrinsic motivators (visions/goal) will give employees the chance to see how standards relate to them – not just your business.

- **Design your handbook for real people.**
Great advice we came across from Restaurant Business Magazine, in an article featuring Chili's Bar & Grill employee handbook redesign. If you don't want your employees to regard your handbook as corporate bull$%&#, make sure that it's not corporate bull$%&#. Use friendly language your employees use, make concepts easier to understand by incorporating image, photos or infographics. Design your handbook for your employees and they will be more likely to read, absorb and respect its contents.

## Reason 3: "I Never Got Officially Trained Because There Was a Rush and We All Got Busy" Disease

### Scenario
Unfortunately, aside from being an avid handbook advocate, you also manage a business. Rushes happen and you and your employees' have to react. Sometimes training can fall through the cracks and bad habits form before you even get the chance to drive your points home.

### Tips for Avoiding
It's impossible to avoid an unplanned rush - they're unplanned. Instead of dropping training all together, look for ways to make training more efficient and an ongoing process.

- **Simplify standard tasks to checklists employees can refer to daily.**
Even if you don't have the ideal opportunity to thoroughly train new staff on your entire handbook, providing a checklist of items within the handbook they need to focus on every shift, or once a week empowers them to form good habits – even if your trainers are stuck dealing with customers.

- **Use checklists long after training ends.**
If used consistently, checklists can also provide a basis of ongoing reinforcement of your standards, so even if employees don't get thorough training, they are constantly being reminded of their responsibilities.

## Reason 4: The "No One Will Notice" Epidemic

### Scenario
Your employees are exhausted after a hectic night. They forget to tidy up their sections and neglected their regular duties. You don't say anything. You know they were busy. Employees notice the lack of repercussions and subconsciously begin to cut more corners when it makes sense for them. Other employees see this happening without consequence and start following suit.

Finding the line between pointing out all employee mistakes and pointing out no mistakes is a challenge for every manager. Instead look for ways to shift accountability for actions onto your employees, so you don't have to point out every thing they do wrong. They'll know for themselves when they've missed something.

- **Look for ways to measure and score performance.**
  Let's revisit the checklist concept we mentioned in the last scenario. Creating checklists that your employees need to fill out daily/weekly/monthly as they perform your operational standards automatically implies personal accountability for those actions. If they don't complete an outlined item, it stares them in the face. You can also take this concept to the next level, by collecting and even scoring checklists helps turn your standards into a game or personal contest.

- **Check out software that manages and automates this for you.**
  No one wants to go through 20 employee reports daily, so look for ways to automate your accountability programs with mobile inspection software. You can even look for inspection software for your specific business.inspection software for restaurant management.

## Reason 5: "I Couldn't Do It Because..." Affliction

### Scenario
Sometimes it's not your employees' fault if standards can't be met. Maybe there's no more toilet paper left to restock your bathrooms, or your cleaning solution has run out. They aren't able to complete a task and aren't clear what to do to fix the issue for next time.

### Tips for Avoiding
Empower employees to notify you or other managers when something stands in the way of them following your handbook or help them fix the issues themselves.

- **Ensure staff knows how to flag and help fix issues.**
  Who does staff have to notify that toilet paper is going to run out by Friday, or that a car recently damaged your outdoor sign? How can they help fix it? If something can't be fixed on the spot, how long should it take to get fixed before the problem is elevated? Outline these procedures alongside of your guidebook.

- **Make issue management easy.**
  If fixing an issue is more inconvenient than the problem, employees may opt to let the problem fester until it becomes more of a problem. Look for easy ways to identify and escalate issues as needed, like issue management software.
- **Make issue management part of your existing processes.**
  Processes are adopted faster, when they're also part of your already existing processes and platforms like POS systems or your mobile audit software, because your employees are already using them.

## Conclusion
Getting your staff to adopt your employee handbook requires more than just creating a handbook. Look for

ways to constantly reinforce and emphasize the importance of proper employee conduct and supporting company standards both in your employee training and on an ongoing basis. Develop and utilize programs and leverage software and tools that empower employees to be accountable for their own actions and resolutions of problems that prevent them from completing standards.

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