

Employee manuals should include the following:

- *A Welcome statement from firm leader(s)*
- *An Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) policy statement (including sexual and other forms of harassment)*
- *The firm history and overview*
- *The Firm Mission Statement and values*
- *Basic firm rules: work hours, business ethics, smoking, drinking, drugs, dress code, sick days, holidays, etc.*
- *Performance appraisal procedures*
- *Disciplinary procedures*
- *Health, safety, and security rules and procedures (fire exit maps, etc.)*
- *Benefit, pension (401k) and/or deferred-income programs*
- *Parking and transportation information*

BEST PRACTICES

“Best practices” are guidelines for how a firm can improve its human capital. The following elements are considered HR best practices in leading design firms today.

- *Aggressive recruiting. The traditional laid-back approach to recruiting in the design field is giving way to aggressive tactics that are becoming the norm today. Online recruiting via e-mail and through the firm’s Web site are two major, and inexpensive, new ways to get the word out about the firm and to target market-talented individuals quickly and effectively. The Hillier Group (<http://www.hillier.com>) uses its Website to engage a potential employee through an entertaining yet informative site. The design of the site sets the tone for the culture of the firm.*

- *Maintaining a creative, healthy firm culture. The work style and environment of the design firm has a bigger influence on its bottom line than firm members may think. Stagnant, nonflexible firms will bleed talent, but energetic, forward-looking leadership will provide vision and fuel the growth of successful firms. In essence, although success for the design firm starts at the top, it is enabled by proper HR policies that help nurture the firm's vision. Gensler (<http://www.gensler.com>) has been recognized by many in the design community as a leader in providing a nurturing, creative culture that is measured in its business success.*
- *Communicate regulatory changes. To maintain a stable work environment, the design firm must communicate changes to regulatory HR procedures and policies between the firm and employees in a timely way. Many successful design firms share the best practice of open communications and education as to what changes mean to employees.*
- *Strategic staffing. One important best practice element is hiring the right people at the right time. The design firm should take the time and effort to make sure that each staffing decision made will meet the goals and operational needs of the firm.*
- *Temporary staffing. Temporary, sometimes called contingent, staffing has become a staple of best practice at leading firms. When it brings in talented individuals from time to time on a per-project basis, the firm gets the value of a fresh viewpoint outside the firm's knowledge base, and the project team members get the introduction of innovative ideas and new ways of working. When managed properly, contingent workers can be a wonderful element of a successful design firm.*
- *High-performance work models. The hierarchal studio model of the 1900s has given way to two basic models that are delivering high-performance measurements for leading firms:*
 - *Autonomy: The firm gives the people who do the work more power to determine how it gets done.*
 - *Teaming: The firm gives a group of employees an assignment, provides resources, and authorizes them to do what's necessary to best get the work accomplished.*