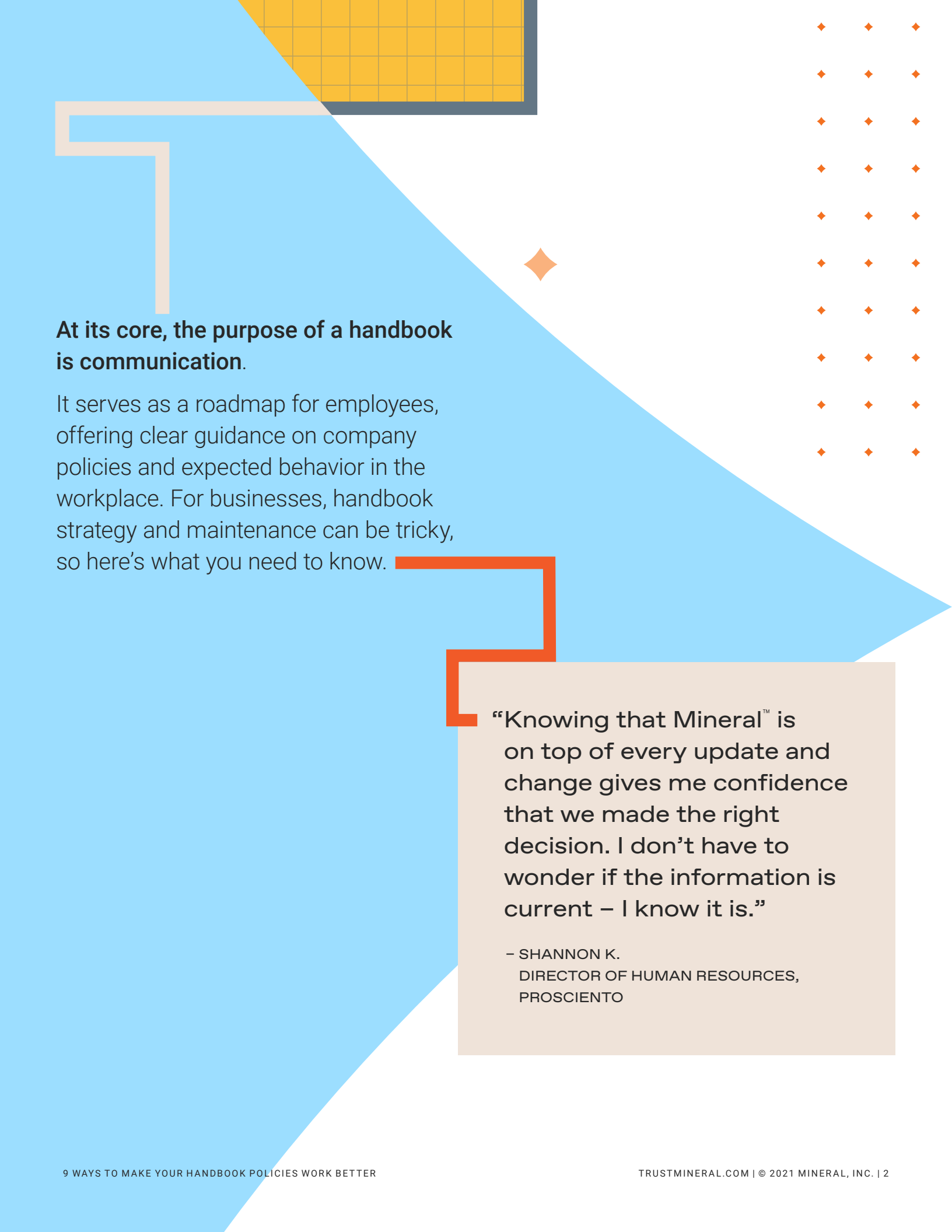# Mineral™

Handbook Policy Must-Haves

Create solid, compliant policies for your employee handbook.

At its core, the purpose of a handbook is communication.

It serves as a roadmap for employees, offering clear guidance on company policies and expected behavior in the workplace. For businesses, handbook strategy and maintenance can be tricky, so here's what you need to know.

"Knowing that Mineral™ is on top of every update and change gives me confidence that we made the right decision. I don't have to wonder if the information is current – I know it is."

– SHANNON K.
DIRECTOR OF HUMAN RESOURCES, PROSCIENTO

The Basics

What Makes a Good Handbook

A good handbook covers a range of topics that are important to the employment relationship, from nitty gritty laws to company culture. Though handbooks will vary from company to company, they should all accomplish the following:

- Communicate expectations for all employees
- Explain your mission and values
- Outline certain manager responsibilities
- Showcase the benefits you offer
- Address state and federal employment laws
- Tell employees where to go for help
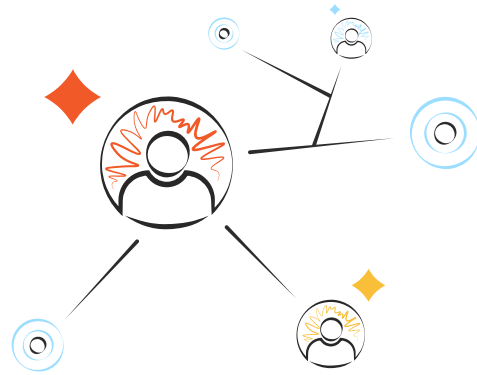
Know Your Audience

Handbooks are for employees, but not for independent contractors or volunteers— you don't want to blur any classifications. Additionally, if any policies apply to certain employees (e.g. managers), make that clear in your language.

Different States, Different Policies

Most states have at least one unique law that should be addressed in the handbook, such as specific discrimination protections, family or medical leaves, sick leaves, meal and rest periods, or records access. Because of the variation between state laws, having state specific addendums is often the way to go.

Which aspects of employee handbook or policy management are the most challenging for your HR department to manage?

- ■ TRACKING NEW COMPLIANCE REQUIREMENTS
- ■ ONGOING REVIEW + UPDATES
- ■ EMPLOYEE ACKNOWLEDGEMENT
- ■ INITIAL DRAFTING
- ■ COMMUNICATING UDPATES
- □ N/A

2019

2020
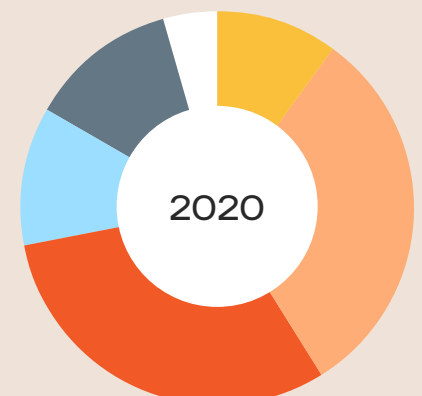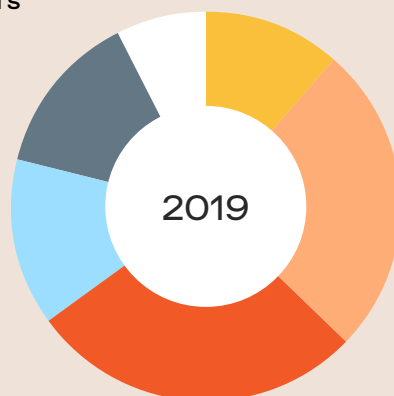
SOURCE: MINERAL 2021 STATE OF HR REPORT

Critical Policies

You have a lot of room to decide what goes into your handbook, but certain policies are necessities. **Here are the policies Mineral Experts™ have identified as must-haves.**

At-will Employment Statement

Employees need clarity about their employment status. You want to include a statement that employment is at will, meaning employment can be terminated by either party, at any time, with or without notice or cause. Again, this helps prevent misunderstandings.

EEO Statement

Employees want to know that their identities will be respected. An Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) statement affirms that your company will not discriminate against employees based on legally protected characteristics, such as sex or race. Make sure to include any characteristics that state and local laws protect.

Anti-harassment Policy

Employees increasingly want to know that their company takes harassment seriously. An anti-harassment policy should include examples of harassment, manager responsibilities in reporting it, instructions on how to lodge a complaint, and a commitment to not retaliate. A policy like this is also essential to defend the company against claims of discrimination and harassment.

Complaint Procedure

Employees need to know who to go to with their concerns. You will want to name at least two people (or position titles) that an employee can report issues to, such as your HR Director and another senior leader. In practice, make sure the people you designate know their responsibilities and what they need to do.

Sick Leave Policy

Employees need to know under what circumstances they can take time off for illness. All the details—such as eligibility, compensation, and how much time they get— should be spelled out. As an added measure during the pandemic, it's recommended that you require employees to stay home if they are sick.

COVID-19 Policy

Employees want to know that they are working in a safe environment during the pandemic. They also need to understand what you expect them to do to maintain that safety. Vaccination expectations, how you will address potential exposure, and coordination with your sick leave policy are necessary provisions.

Updating Policies for Compliance

It is important to create comprehensive, compliant policies for your employee handbook. But most policies aren't set-it-and-forget-it. Once created, they need to be regularly updated, or at least reviewed for accuracy.

The Crux of Compliance

Ensuring your employee handbook and other management policies are up to date with current laws will help you avoid liability, better manage discrimination issues, and proactively address problematic situations. Having policies that are out of compliance with the law is riskier than having no policies at all.

Regular Updating

When laws change, so does the way you do business. Regularly updating the handbook shows that you (and all leadership and management) pay attention to both legal and organizational changes. That level of accountability is critical for maintaining a trusting culture that serves your organization and employees well into the future.

When to Update Your Policies

You should make updates in response to changing legislation or regulations, emergency situations (such as the pandemic), and social issues that your organization cares about. You also want to update the handbook when benefits or organizational structures change.
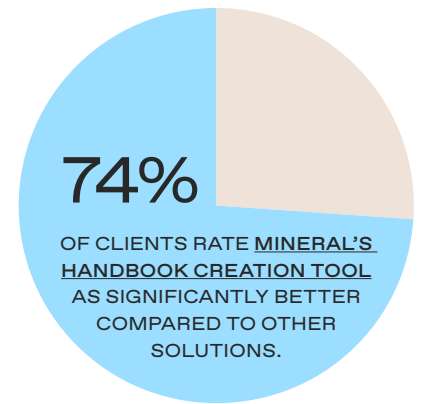
Updates can include changing current text or creating addendums to your handbook. In both cases, it is critical to lean on experts who understand the industry, can interpret laws, and are aware of what's around the corner.

Most employers update their handbooks once a year, and that's generally okay. Be aware that if your business operates in a state (like California) that frequently passes a lot of employment laws— laws may take effect mid-year, or even immediately, and would require that you do more frequent updating.
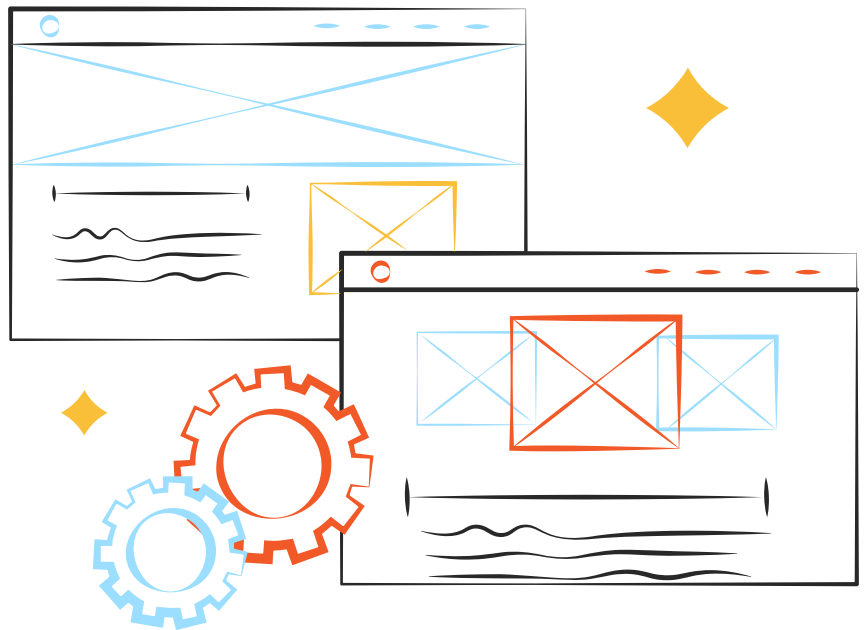
Conclusion

Smart Employee Handbook is your go-to tool for creating and maintaining federal and single state employee handbooks. Whenever applicable laws and regulations change, you'll receive proactive alerts with updated language to incorporate into your handbook.

Sign In

74%

OF CLIENTS RATE MINERAL'S HANDBOOK CREATION TOOL AS SIGNIFICANTLY BETTER COMPARED TO OTHER SOLUTIONS.

Mineral

About

Mineral is the HR and compliance leader for growing businesses. Through a combination of data, technology and human expertise, our proactive solutions take the guesswork out of HR and compliance, giving clients peace of mind. To learn more visit **trustmineral.com**.

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HR and compliance made simple.