

Workwise  HCM

Owner Guide

*Practical HR guidance
for business owners*



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Message for the Owner

Workwise helps small to midsize businesses whose owners and senior leaders are carrying the burden of people issues, employee questions, manager support, compliance concerns, hiring challenges, and HR decisions.

Workwise serves as the HR director down the hall for businesses that need experienced HR leadership but may not need, or be ready for, a full internal HR department.

The simplest way to think about Workwise is:

When people issues, manager challenges, growth pains, hiring problems, compliance concerns, or HR questions start taking too much of your time or creating uncertainty, Workwise gives you an experienced HR partner to help you handle them with confidence.

Pain Points the Owner Should Pay Attention to

Owner and senior leadership pain points

- I'm spending too much time dealing with employee issues.
- People problems keep landing on my plate.
- I feel like I'm constantly pulled into manager or employee issues.
- We need more structure around HR.
- I don't know if we're handling this correctly.
- I'm tired of being the person everyone comes to for every employee issue.
- Our managers need more support.
- We are trying to professionalize the business.
- We are growing and the people side is getting more complicated.
- I feel exposed if an employee ever challenges something.
- We have good people, but not enough structure.
- We are too reactive with employee issues.
- We need HR leadership, but not necessarily a full-time HR executive.

Employee relations pain points

- Employee drama is taking too much leadership time.
- Managers do not know how to handle conflict.
- Poor performers are allowed to linger too long.
- Terminations feel risky or messy.
- Documentation is inconsistent or missing.
- Employees complain that rules are applied unfairly.
- Harassment, discrimination, or retaliation concerns come up.
- Attendance issues are not handled consistently.
- Leaders are unsure how to address difficult employees.
- Employee complaints are handled reactively.
- The company waits too long to address issues.

- The owner wants to terminate someone but is unsure how to do it safely.

Compliance pain points

- The handbook is outdated, generic, or missing.
- Policies do not match how the company actually operates.
- Multi-state employees are creating complexity.
- Leave laws are confusing; unsure what I can/can't do.
- Wage and hour rules are unclear.
- Exempt vs. non-exempt classification is uncertain.
- Contractor classification may be questionable.
- Timekeeping, overtime, breaks, or payroll practices may be inconsistent.
- Required postings, notices, or policies are unclear.
- Employee files are incomplete.
- The business has never had a real HR compliance review.

Hiring and onboarding pain points

- We can't find good people.
- We keep hiring the wrong people.
- New hires are not sticking.
- Our onboarding process is weak.
- Managers are too busy to interview well.
- We don't have clear job descriptions.
- We don't know what to pay.
- Recruiters are expensive, but we still need hiring help.
- We need a better process before we keep adding people.

Manager and leadership pain points

- Managers avoid hard conversations.
- Managers treat employees inconsistently.
- Managers do not document performance issues.

- Managers escalate everything to the owner or senior leader.
- Managers do not know how to coach employees.
- Managers are too casual with discipline or terminations.
- There is no consistent leadership standard across the company.
- Employees leave because of poor management.
- Managers were promoted because they were good employees, but they have not been trained to lead.

Benefits-related pain points

- Employees do not understand their benefits.
- Open enrollment is chaotic.
- Benefits questions keep going to the broker that should be answered in-house, but the owner doesn't know.
- New hires are not being enrolled consistently.
- Terminated employees are not being removed properly.
- COBRA or continuation coverage is confusing.
- Employees complain about benefit costs.
- The company wants to improve retention through benefits but does not know how to communicate value.
- The employer needs help coordinating benefits with onboarding, payroll, leave, and employee communication.
- Leadership wants a better benefits strategy but needs HR support around the employee experience.
- The broker is being pulled into HR questions that are outside the broker's core role.

Compensation pain points

- Employees are asking for raises without a clear process.

- Pay decisions feel inconsistent or emotional.
- The company does not have salary ranges.
- Leaders do not know what market pay should be.
- There is no merit increase process.
- Bonuses are informal or unclear.
- Employees do not understand how pay decisions are made.
- The company is worried about losing employees over pay.
- Internal equity issues are starting to show up.

Performance management pain points

- No formal review process.
- Reviews happen inconsistently or not at all.
- Everyone gets the same raise.
- Leaders avoid giving direct feedback.
- Poor performance is not addressed until it becomes a major issue.
- Goals are unclear.
- Employees do not know what success looks like.
- Promotions are informal.
- The company wants more accountability but does not have a system for it.

Growth pain points

- The company is adding employees quickly.
- The owner is moving from founder-led to manager-led.
- Multiple locations are creating inconsistency.
- Culture is changing as the company grows.
- Old informal practices are no longer working.
- The business needs more structure without becoming overly corporate.
- The company is preparing for expansion, acquisition, or leadership transition.

Signs Your Business May Be Ready for Workwise

- I'm tired of dealing with employee issues.
- People problems keep landing on me.
- Our managers need help.
- We probably need HR support.
- We're not ready for a full-time HR person, but we need something.
- The owner still handles all employee issues.
- We had an employee situation blow up.
- We need to update our handbook.
- We're not sure if we handled that termination correctly.
- We're growing and need more structure.

- We're having retention issues.
- We need help hiring.
- We don't know what to pay people.
- Benefits questions are taking too much time.
- We have employees in multiple states.
- We're trying to reduce risk.
- We need someone to call before we make HR decisions.
- Our managers are inconsistent.
- We need better policies.
- We need help with performance reviews.
- We don't have a good onboarding process.