



Working in Wine™

Employment information provided especially for the New Zealand wine and liquor industries

June 2006

The information in this newsletter will be of most interest to those in the wine and liquor industries who are involved with employing others.

First – a little Housekeeping

If you've noticed that we have included "liquor industry" above, well done – we recently launched a sister jobs website – LIQUORJOBS.CO.NZ – for the rest of the NZ liquor industry. The jobs board is shared between **winejobsonline.com** and LIQUORJOBS.CO.NZ and so too are our employment newsletters. Yes, this one for employers is still called "Working in Wine" but the distribution list is a bit bigger. If you know people keen to join the wider liquor industry then you should pass on the news about the LIQUORJOBS website. Or, if you haven't already, check it out yourself.

Just one topic this time – What makes a good employer?

So you think you're a good employer?

Of course you do. But, in reality maybe – maybe not. Here's some areas that employers should think about if they really want to be good employers - right from pre-employment through all the ongoing stages of the employment relationship. The Employment Relations Act is all about good faith and how fair and reasonable employers behave.

Get the right person

Take time with your recruitment process. Remember, the best person for the job is not always the best person.. We stress to you the importance of sound interview techniques, and an organised recruitment and selection process. This includes pre-employment reference checking and knowing just what questions to ask. Remember it's a lot easier to employ someone than it is to get rid of them if you find they're not right for your place.

There are also several Legislative Acts that you need to be careful not to breach – the Human Rights Act, Privacy Act, Criminal Conviction Act and Employment Relations Act among them.

Interviewing prospective employees is a specialist skill and not just about telling them about your company. A good interviewer should do very little talking. Knowing just what to ask is something that can reveal all sorts of information about a candidate. **The interview process is a time for both you and the applicant to assess each other** and should be managed with skill. It also reflects on your organisation so should be a formalised experience that can test the "fit" between the company and the candidate.

Employ someone to help you if you're at all unsure, it's too important to do badly. Maybe you'd like us to assist you? That's what we do.....

Reference check carefully - And within the law.

It's not just about believing everything written on a CV. Wise employers will check and double check the information provided on application forms and CVs. But, you need to know just what questions you can ask referees, and you need to have permission from the candidate to do so. Be careful about phoning industry colleagues for an "off the record" discussion if you don't have permission.

Have you got your paperwork in place?

New Zealand's employment law requires that every employee has a written employment agreement, and that agreement must cover a number of things. There are also certain other terms and conditions that should be included to help you if things go wrong with the employment relationship down the track. We hear of employers who "don't believe in all that HR nonsense" and they're usually the first ones to complain to us when they have a problem with an employee later on. A good employment agreement removes any doubt about things that could cause a problem in the future.

Set out the rules from day one.

House Rules, that is. Before day one actually – include them in your employment agreement. If you have behaviour standards in place then there is no doubt about what you expect, and what your employees need to know about working for your company. House rules can be vital if you have compliance issues later on and can clear any potential misunderstandings. Takes away the "I didn't know that's" or "You didn't tell me that's" that can arise in employment matters. Particularly important in such things as policies on, say, internet/email use... Think about it.

Give your new recruits a sound induction.

What's that? It is more than just a "Hi there, here's your desk and the toilets are over there." It's been said that thousands of workers leave a job because of inadequate levels of induction. Take sufficient time to settle new employees in and save yourself the time and expense of replacing them if they leave because they feel unwelcome. A responsible induction process can take weeks and can make a huge difference to your new team member.

Don't let your new people learn about your company through gossip or negative feedback from other employees. Have everything ready for them before they arrive – business cards, phones, computers etc so they can start work with everything they need and you look organised and professional.

A very common mistake that employers make is to assume that new recruits will ask all the questions they need. They just don't. Start a communication process and get to know the talent that you have just invested in, rather than ticking items off a list of things you think you need to cover. If you rely on other employees to induct new people at your place, we urge you to think about the process you have in place. Remember, **it is a process**, not a one-day event and the best inductions combine ongoing support to bring new people right in to the company's culture.

Do they feel part of the team?

What do you do to include your new (and existing) people? Do you encourage participation and discussion and welcome new ideas? Or do you dismiss as unimportant any ideas that do not agree with your own?

The most successful organisations are those where the interests and efforts of all employees are aligned to the company's goals and everyone is working towards satisfying customers' needs.

When someone works for you, they become a part of a "family" and need to feel important and valued. You, as an employer, need to recognise their needs as well as your own to get the most out of every person who works for you – the company, you, and they will all benefit.

Sometimes it's as simple as having morning tea with your employees, or giving them a bottle of wine.... Surveys confirm that recognition is more important to most employees than their pay rates. (Yep, evidently true).

When did you last undertake a performance review for your staff?

Employees need feedback on how they are doing. It is simply not enough to let them think they are doing OK, particularly if they are not. We often hear of employers wanting to get rid of staff for some reason or another, and it ends up that it's not a disciplinary matter but one of poor performance – you need to manage it. Performance assessments can be an informal or formalised process – the important thing is that you take some time a couple of times a year to discuss how they are doing in the job, and setting some objectives to be achieved in the next 6 or 12 months and then reviewing their achievements the next time. This is a time that communication should be open and honest, and two-way, giving employees an opportunity to have their say as well. Be prepared to listen.

Employee Retention

Staff turnover puts a strain on a company, both on the financial resources involved in replacing them, and on the other employees who are required to do a bit more during the process of getting someone new up to speed. The best thing is to hold on to your employees and there are a number of ways good employers can do that. Make them feel important, ask for their feedback and opinions. Treat them as you would like to be treated. Communicate with them – employees like to know what they are doing and why. Train and upskill them if necessary – invest in their future, it will repay the benefits back to you.

Pay them well.

Yep, too right. Take several things into account when setting pay rates. Qualifications, knowledge, skills, abilities and experience all count. So too does industry relativity. We are continually asked by employers and employees alike what their pay rates should be. We can't answer that as so many individual factors need to be taken into account. We do recommend that all wine industry winemaker and grapegrower employers participate in the annual remuneration survey conducted by Strategic Pay in association with New Zealand Winegrowers. It is the only one for our industry and is something we think all employers should support. It is being conducted now; it is not too late to be part of it. There are also other more general surveys available for benchmarking other generic roles in sales, marketing, admin etc.

We support and endorse the participation by all New Zealand winery and grapegrower employers in the annual Wine Industry Remuneration Survey conducted by Strategic Pay in association with New Zealand Winegrowers. Participation is free (results can be purchased) and you should contact Catherine at Strategic Pay for details. Phone 09 303 4057 or email catherine@strategicpay.co.nz. The survey is currently underway and will provide guidelines for industry pay rates for the next 12 months.

Working in Wine™ contains employment information provided by Battersby & Associates, Human Resource consultants, for winejobsonline.com for general information purposes and is not intended to replace legal advice. If you have any questions you should contact us. Telephone Paddy on (+64) 09 838 6338. We are available to assist employers through our consultancy services.

Check out the latest New Zealand wine and liquor industry job vacancies and jobseekers at www.winejobsonline.com and www.LIQUORJOBS.CO.NZ. If you know someone who may be interested in a job change, please refer them to the websites. Or, if you need someone new to work with you, advertise your vacancy for national and international coverage. You can email us at mail@winejobsonline.com if you have any queries. Jobseekers and industry networking service available too...