



Monthly Strategies

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Waiver Feature Launched on Delaware LaborFirst

Delaware Paid Leave officially launched the waiver feature on the Delaware LaborFirst platform, allowing Delaware employers and TPAs to begin filing waivers for approval. Waivers inform the Division of Paid Leave which employees were hired on a temporary basis (working less than 12 months a year) and/or limited basis (working an average of less than 25 hours per week).

What you need: When filing a waiver, you'll need to provide information about the employee (name, DOB, SSN/ITIN, etc.), and if you require your employees to contribute to Delaware Paid Leave, you'll also need to provide their email address.

For employers who require their employees to contribute to Delaware Paid Leave: For a waiver status to change from "pending" to "active," the employee's signature is required. Once signed, the waiver will go into effect at the beginning of the quarter in which it was received by the Division of Paid Leave. If the employee refuses to sign the waiver, it'll be marked as "refused," and contributions will still be required for that employee. Employers should check the status of the request in Delaware LaborFirst for updates.

For employers who do not require their employees to contribute to Delaware Paid Leave: Once the employer submits a waiver request, Delaware LaborFirst will either approve or deny it. If approved, the waiver will take effect at the beginning of the quarter in which it was received by the Division of Paid Leave. If the waiver is denied, contributions for that employee will still be required. The employee's signature is not required because they do not contribute to Delaware Paid Leave.

What happens once a waiver is approved? Once a waiver is approved, no contributions

(from the employer or employee) will be required. The waiver remains in effect until it's removed or revoked, or the employee is terminated.

The quarterly hour and wage report helps Delaware LaborFirst track the duration of employment. The system will know if an employee on waivers is getting close to the 12-month requirement and/or if their hours of service are approaching the 1,250-hour requirement. If this happens, Delaware LaborFirst will notify employers through the quarterly invoice and remind them to remove that employee from waivers. If an employer uses the removal-of-waiver process, Delaware LaborFirst will calculate past-due contributions for that employee and post it to the next invoice.

If an employee has exceeded the thresholds, the Division of Paid Leave will revoke that employee's waiver and calculate the past-due contributions, accumulated interest, and any applicable penalties, which will be applied to the next quarterly invoice.

Employers should set money aside in case they need to take an employee off the waiver and pay the required back contributions. This is not a requirement of the program, but it is a prudent financial practice to manage this risk.

Visit DE.gov/PaidLeave or DE.gov/LaborFirst for more information or email questions to PFML@delaware.gov

Navigating Trust Challenges

Imagine stepping into a new managerial role, only to find that the team you're leading is plagued with mistrust and unproductive behaviors. Trust has been eroded, and now it's your responsibility to rebuild it. Trust can't be rebuilt overnight, especially when it's been broken. Here are some common trust-busters and strategies to get your team back on track.

One problem behavior responsible for eroding trust is breaking promises. These can range from missed deadlines to unfulfilled commitments, leaving a team feeling like they can't rely on their leader. For instance, a new manager, promised his team a bonus if they met a deadline. They did, but the bonus never came. Consequently, the team feels frustrated and hesitant to trust this leader's word because of a broken promise. So, what is the solution? Accountability is the key. First, set realistic expectations by working with your team to establish achievable goals and clear deadlines.

Next, deliver on promises by following through on commitments, demonstrating that you can be counted on. Finally, conduct regular progress reviews by scheduling check-ins to discuss progress and adjust plans as needed.

Another major problem on the path to trust is micromanagement. For example, a team lead, constantly checks in on their team, dictating their every move. This stifles creativity and leaves them feeling micromanaged.

The solution is to empower your team. First, ask open-ended questions to encourage them to think critically – for example, "How would you approach this problem?" Next, focus on coaching, not dictating, by guiding them to set goals and hold them accountable. Finally, delegate with freedom by providing clear expectations but allowing them to choose their methods.

Withholding information is also a problem that can erode trust. Imagine working on a project with hidden details or feeling surprised by organizational changes. This secrecy breeds feelings of being undervalued and out of the loop, ultimately leading to mistrust.

The solution is transparency. First, practice transparency by sharing relevant project and organizational updates. Additionally, hold regular check-ins by scheduling one-on-one meetings for feedback and information exchange. Finally, encourage two-way communication by creating a safe space for questions and ideas.

Ignoring the perspectives and emotions of others is another problem. Sarcasm or dismissiveness during conversations sends a message that their thoughts and feelings don't matter. Similarly, downplaying concerns or rushing to solutions can leave them feeling unheard and frustrated. The solution is to show empathy and respect.

First, practice active listening by paying attention, maintaining eye contact, and summarizing points. Additionally, acknowledge and validate feelings using phrases like "I understand" and "That sounds frustrating." Finally, ensure clear communication by addressing situations directly and professionally.

Favoritism and unfairness is another major problem that destroys team morale and trust faster. Relying too much on top performers can hinder the growth of others, while affinity bias often leads to favoring those similar to yourself, excluding valuable contributors. The solution is to embrace strategic delegation.

First, don't overload top performers; instead, distribute tasks to provide growth opportunities for everyone. Additionally, practice conscious leadership by recognizing your biases and intentionally including overlooked team members in projects, training, and recognition. Finally, create equal opportunities by understanding each team member's skills and ensuring fair opportunities for all.

Trust is an ongoing process. By employing these strategies consistently, you can create a collaborative and trusting team environment.

Challenge yourself to think back on areas where you can improve trust-building, what actions will you commit to implementing tomorrow?

Contact HR Strategies at 302.376.8595 or info@hrstrategies.org if you would like support or would like to learn more about the items in this newsletter. Please contact us if you would like to be removed from our Monthly Strategies mailing list or if you would like for us to add someone to our mailing list.