



# Back Office Risk

— simplify your back office —

## Q1 People Systems Alignment Checklist

### A Practical Back Office Review for Business Owners & Administrators

#### Purpose:

To ensure your people systems support how you actually want to operate this year: clearly, consistently and confidently.

---

#### 1. Employee Handbook Alignment

**Ask first:** Do we have an Employee Handbook? Yes No

When was it last reviewed and updated? \_\_\_\_\_

Does this reflect how we actually operate today? Yes No

#### Review Checklist

- Handbook reflects current leadership and reporting structure.
- Outdated policies have been removed and/or updated.
- Legal language and substance is current and compliant (federal/state).
- Job descriptions accurately outline tasks and duties related to positions.
- Remote / hybrid work language reflects reality.
- Job expectations match how roles function today.
- Discipline process is clear and applied consistently.
- Reporting path is appropriate, simple and known.
- PTO language and process match how requests are actually handled.

#### Alignment Test:

If an employee read this today, would they understand how work really works here?

---

## 2. HR Policies & Core Processes

### Clarity Check

- Policies are written in plain language.
- Policies address contemporary workplace conditions and concerns.
- Policies contain no conflicting language or instruction.
- Managers understand each policy and how to apply it.
- There is a documented process (not just tribal knowledge) for recording, reporting and tracking policy violations.
- A uniform/universal reporting form exists for documenting incidents and infractions.

### Consistency Check

- Managers are applying PTO approvals consistently.
- Attendance standards are enforced evenly.
- Performance and expectation conversations are happening regularly.
- Documentation practices are consistent across departments.

### Alignment Assessment:

If answers vary depending on which manager you ask, alignment is most likely needed.

---

## 3. Payroll Process Review

### Operational Review

- Payroll calendar is published and accessible for the year.
- Time submission deadlines are clearly noted/communicated.
- Overtime rules are clearly understood.
- PTO balances are consistently tracked and reconciled.
- Pay classifications are accurate (exempt vs non-exempt).
- Benefits deductions are verified.
- No recurring payroll errors lingering from last year,

## **Employee Experience Review**

- Employees understand how to read their paycheck.
- Direct deposit issues have been resolved.
- Employees know who to contact for payroll questions.

### **Alignment Outcome:**

Payroll should run regularly and smoothly, without recurring confusion, surprises or delays.

---

## **4. Time-Off & Leave Process**

### **Process Clarity**

- PTO request process is documented and accessible (form or digital system).
- Approval timeline is defined.
- Backup coverage plans are outlined.
- Holiday schedule is published.
- Accrual method for PTO is clearly explained.
- FMLA / medical leave process is documented,

### **Alignment Test:**

If someone asked, “How do I request time off?” would the answer be simple and consistent?

---

## **5. Benefits Communication Review**

### **Communication Check**

- Benefits booklet is updated, accessible and support is available.
- Contribution structure is clearly explained.
- Open enrollment deadlines are communicated and noted/posted.
- Employees understand what benefits are available to them.
- New hire enrollment deadlines are communicated and noted/posted.
- Claims support contact is shared.

## **Strategic Check**

- Plans are reviewed for cost efficiency.
- Broker performance is evaluated.
- Participation levels are analyzed.
- Competitiveness against market has been considered.

### **Alignment Outcome:**

Employees should not feel confused about what they have access to or the cost to them.

---

## **6. Performance & Manager Alignment**

### **Manager Readiness**

- Managers are trained to understand and apply policies properly.
- Regular employee check-ins are scheduled (quarterly minimum).
- Employee performance evaluation framework is documented and consistent.
- Performance Improvement Plans (PIPs) are properly documented and shared.
- Compensation review process is defined.
- Promotion criteria are clear.

### **Talent Retention Check**

- Career development discussions are happening.
  - Recognition processes are in place and followed.
  - Exit feedback from prior year's departures are reviewed and critically evaluated.
- 

## **7. Vendor & Back Office Review**

### **Vendor Qualification**

- Payroll provider service and value reviewed.
- HR software suitability and value evaluated.
- Benefits broker performance and value reviewed.
- Insurance policies audited for appropriateness and value.

- Duplicative vendors identified and reduced/eliminated.
- All contracts reviewed before renewal.

### **Cost Alignment**

- Labor cost ratios reviewed.
  - Benefits cost per employee analyzed.
  - Administrative overhead assessed.
  - Opportunities for consolidation identified.
- 

### **8. Systems & Documentation Check**

- Organizational chart updated.
  - Job descriptions current.
  - Policies current and compliant with state and federal laws.
  - Employee Handbook updated.
  - Key processes documented.
  - Standardized forms created for key processes.
  - Forms current, catalogued and accessible in a file share folder/library.
  - Digital personnel files organized.
  - Secure storage protocols confirmed.
  - Access permissions reviewed.
- 

### **10. The Q1 Alignment Questions (Executive Level)**

- Are employees asking the same questions repeatedly?
- Are managers making different decisions on similar issues?
- Are payroll or benefits errors or problems recurring?
- Are small administrative issues turning into larger workplace frustrations?

#### **Alignment Goal:**

Operating and responding to routine requests within a framework that facilitates timely resolution, employee satisfaction and talent retention.