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Did You Know...

The use of confidentiality agreements can reduce the risk that sensitive internal information will be divulged to competitors and other unauthorized persons?

Employer Risks and Exposures

During employment, employees often become aware of confidential information about the organization's processes, inventions, strategies, customers, and pricing. Unauthorized disclosure of this information can negatively affect the organization and/or its customers. Consider, for example, an employee who divulges one of the organization's trade secrets to a competitor or an employee with access to personnel files who shares confidential employee information to unauthorized coworkers.

Avoiding Disaster

Employers should take proactive steps to prevent employees from disclosing confidential information to unauthorized coworkers or outsiders, especially when employees moonlight or quit to work at a competitor or start their own business. This has become even more important in recent years with the ease of transferring information via e-mail, fax, and photo phones, and with more employees telecommuting.

One of the best ways to discourage employees from sharing proprietary information to outsiders is the use of confidentiality agreements. A confidentiality agreement can restrict an employee from disclosing confidential information about the organization to unauthorized persons, both during the course of employment and after separation.

Take the following steps to protect sensitive internal information at your organization:

- Identify the information within your organization that is considered proprietary and all employees that have knowledge of this information;
- Require employees with access to, or knowledge of, sensitive information to sign a confidentiality agreement (have new employees sign the form upon hire);
- Educate employees on what internal information is considered confidential and the need to disclose it only to those individuals with a business need to know;
- Implement a written confidentiality policy and include it in your employee handbook;

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- Put security systems in place to limit access to confidential information by unauthorized employees and outsiders; and
- When employees separate from employment, remind them of their continuing obligation to maintain confidentiality and make sure they return all employer files, customer lists, and related sensitive information.

Call *AMTEK's* Human Resource Hot Line at **1.800.457.8829 for more information about confidentiality agreements or for assistance in writing or updating your confidentiality policy.**

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