

The Minimum Viable HR Stack

Ten foundational processes every small company should set up first.

If you're building HR from scratch or ready to make a few things more formal, these are the ten things to set up first. This is the bar for making each of these minimally viable and most of what you need right now.

1 Job Descriptions

A short document for every role that names the responsibilities, requirements, and reporting structure.

START HERE: One page per role with 5–7 bullet points of tasks, duties, and responsibilities, and who they report to. List if the position is exempt of nonexempt.

2 Org Chart

A simple visual map of who reports to whom and what teams exist.

START HERE: A one-page diagram (whiteboard, slide, or a free tool like draw.io) showing every employee, their manager, and team groupings. Update as people join or move.

3 Structured Interview Procedure

A consistent process for evaluating candidates with the same questions and scoring, based on the job description. Makes hiring decisions more accurate and legally defensible.

START HERE: Write 3 – 7 core questions per role, based on the job description and have interviewers take notes.

4 New Hire Compliance

Federal forms every new hire must complete (Form I-9 verifies work eligibility; W-4 sets tax withholding).

START HERE: I-9 and W-4 completed before day one. Store I-9s separately from the personnel file.

5 Onboarding Checklist

A structured plan for the first 30 days covering paperwork, introductions, training, and early goals.

START HERE: One checklist for day one (paperwork, workspace, team intros), week one (training, key meetings), and 30/60/90-day check-ins. Give a heads up before day one as to what to wear and what will happen, so day one goes well.

6 Employee Policies & Procedures

A short document covering policies, expectations, time-off rules, and legal protections, and an acknowledgment every employee signs. No need for a full employee handbook.

START HERE: 5 - 10 pages: at-will employment, anti-discrimination, anti-harassment, conduct, attendance, time off (vacation/sick/holidays), and basic discipline.

7 Performance Check-Ins

A regular rhythm of feedback conversations between managers about what's going well and what isn't, and what each side needs from the other. This frequent feedback takes the place of the annual performance review.

START HERE: A 30-minute manager-employee check-in monthly or quarterly to address successes, areas for improvement, and growth. These notes create an annual performance review.

8 Documentation Practices

A consistent, written paper trail of any issues related to performance, discipline, or recognition.

START HERE: A simple form managers use to capture incidents and improvements in real time, stored in the personnel file. The paper trail is what protects you from unemployment claims, EEOC complaints, or wrongful termination disputes.

Want the done-for-you system? Build a Paper Trail → [click here](#)

9 Pay Structure

An intentional approach to compensation, what you pay people, why, and how it scales as you grow. A schedule for considering cost of living increases and raises that is predictable.

START HERE: Document current salaries by role, pull market comparisons (BLS, Glassdoor, Levels.fyi), and sketch rough bands per role family.

10 Termination & Exit

A consistent offboarding procedure for when employment ends, voluntarily or not.

START HERE: A checklist for termination meeting prep, COBRA handoff, final pay timing, equipment return, exit interview, and revoking access (passwords, email, shared accounts like company social media). Get legal review for non-voluntary exits.