

Confidentiality and your

o company wants to lose its valuable sensitive information to a competitor, potentially creating negative client situations and compromising future growth. The vigilant protection of company information is an issue that needs to be discussed with employees during their employment and, more especially, as they are leaving your employ. What practical and legal steps can you take to guard your company's secrets?

Start at the beginning

The best time to have an employee agree to confidentiality obligations is right at the time of hire. Managers (or HR professionals) should have employees sign a confidentiality agreement unless they have already signed a document with confidentiality provisions during the interview process.

At times, it may also be desirable for a company to require stronger post-employment restrictions, such as non-compete obligations, on a key hire. In most states, noncompete agreements are fairly routine. For example, in California, the conventional wisdom is that enforceability is limitedwhich is generally true. There is, however, some belief for enforcing agreements that do not actually prevent that restricted employee from earning a living within his or her field.

What are trade secrets, really?

The core of confidentiality obligations is the protection of trade secrets. While many states have statutes to help protect trade secrets, specific confidentiality provisions in the terms and conditions of employment re-enforce those protections, calls them to the employee's attention, and binds the employee to them using the employee's signature.

A trade secret may consist of any formula, pattern, device, or compilation of information which is used in one's business and which gives the employer an opportunity to obtain an advantage over its competition. Generally, a trade secret is a process, device, or information intended for continuous use in the operations of the business.

Trade secrets can include customer lists, pricing structures, business strategy, marketing plans, financial information, product development strategy, intellectual property, current and anticipated research and development, and inventions. Following are some questions that should clarify if you're not sure if some information, a device, or a formula constitutes a trade secret:

- Is the information known outside of the employer's business?
- Is the information known by employees and others involved in the business?
- What measures does the employer take to guard the secrecy of the information?
- What is the value of the information to the employer and to the competitors?
- What is the amount of effort or money expended by the company in developing the information?
- How easily or readily could the information be obtained by a competitor through an independent source?

Note that trade secrets need not be technical in their nature. Market-related information and documents may be deemed to be trade secrets, and thus confidential.

IMMEDIATE VACANCY **Training Manager** N.D.T or Equivalent (Engineering Council). At least 20 Years experience in field of heavy machinery. Either ; • Training School Factory

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FOR OUR CORPORATE IDENTITY



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- ✓ Prior experience in Primary Teaching.

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- ✓ Computer Graphics, & Web Design
- ✓ Accounting (Financial & Management)
- ✓ Computerised Accounting
- ✓ Marketing
- ✓ Management
- ✓ Travel and Tourism
- ✓ Human Resources Management
- ✓ Business Mathematics
- ✓ English Language

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