

***HIGHTECH SIGNS***

**ASSOCIATE  
HANDBOOK**

**OCTOBER, 2011**

Modified 3/21/13

**Equal Opportunity Employer**

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October, 2011

## **WELCOME**

**Welcome! We're glad to have you on our team. At HIGHTECH SIGNS we believe that our associates are our most valuable asset. We attribute our success as a company in significant part to our ability to recruit, hire, and maintain a happy and productive work force.**

**This Associate Handbook describes the personnel policies and procedures of HIGHTECH SIGNS. The policies stated in this handbook are subject to change at any time at the sole discretion of the company. This handbook supersedes any handbooks or written policies of the company issued previously. You may receive updated information concerning changes in policy from time to time, and those updates should be kept with your copy of the handbook. If you have any questions about any of the provisions in the handbook, please ask your supervisor.**

**Our handbook provides both you and your supervisor with a guide regarding how to handle typical situations. However, no handbook can cover every situation and, therefore, good judgment must be applied in all circumstances. The commitment of HIGHTECH SIGNS is to fair treatment for all associates as described by the provisions of this handbook. In return the company expects your best effort as a member of the HIGHTECH SIGNS team.**

**Sincerely,**

**Doug Abramowski, President  
Castleton Village Center, Inc.  
DBA HIGHTECH SIGNS  
3205 Clairmont Ct., Suite A  
Fort Wayne, IN 46808  
260-471-5959**

## PHILOSOPHY AND MISSION

**HIGHTECH SIGNS** was established to meet the needs of customers for signs which communicate key messages about their businesses and organizations. It is our belief that signs can be more effective when they are designed and produced in a creative and high quality fashion.

We believe these processes can be enhanced by the use of the most advanced sign making technology and that this should be made readily available to our customers. It is well qualified, well trained and motivated associates who earn customer respect for **HIGHTECH SIGNS**. We believe it is only through the creative efforts of associates, using the best technology that signs become artistically pleasing products in the service of our customers and communities.

The associates of **HIGHTECH SIGNS** believe that financial stability and company profitability come from satisfied customers. As a group, we are committed to working together as a team to make customer satisfaction an everyday reality.

**HIGHTECH SIGNS'** goal is total customer satisfaction with every sign we produce.

## HISTORY

**HIGHTECH SIGNS** was first established in June 1988, when a franchise agreement was signed with Custom Signs Today. The plan was to open a franchise in Indianapolis in September 1988, and later in April 1989, in Fort Wayne, Indiana. Stan Abramowski founded the company and served as its President and CEO. His wife, Marge, was the Chairman of the Board and assisted Stan with the company while she pursued her career. Stan and Marge's sons, Mike and Doug, later joined the company in 1994 and 1996 respectively.

In August 1988 the first associate of the company was engaged as manager of the Indianapolis operation. On September 19, 1988 the store in Indianapolis was opened. In April 1989, the Fort Wayne store was opened at its original location on Coldwater Rd.

In January 1992 Custom Signs Today sold its franchise to **HIGHTECH SIGNS** in Dallas, Texas. In February 1992, a Custom Signs Today store in Grand Rapids, Michigan was acquired. This store has been in continuous operation since November, 1988.

In April 1993, the **HIGHTECH SIGNS** franchiser closed its operation, and Stan continued operations using the **HIGHTECH SIGNS** name, but having no affiliation with the franchise. There have been several expansions, relocations and consolidations over the years since 1989. A major change was the establishment of the corporate offices and a production facility at 3205 Clairmont Ct., Fort Wayne, Indiana, in May 1998. A year later, the Fort Wayne store relocated to the corporate headquarters and production facility.

In June, 2005, the company continued to expand and add equipment to meet the needs of its customers. At this time, the Fort Wayne operation doubled its space to 10,000 square feet, adding additional office and warehouse space to facilitate the extra printing equipment and assembly space required for the changing sign industry. In 2006, the company consolidated its Indianapolis manufacturing with its expanded Fort Wayne production facility, and yet maintained an Indianapolis sales office.

Doug Abramowski purchased the company and took over as President of the company on January 1, 2008. Mike Abramowski continues as Vice President of Sales, leading sales with many prominent national companies and brands. Stan Abramowski has stayed with the company as a consultant and serves in the role of President Emeritus. He continues to provide invaluable counsel and expert advice in the areas of finance and management.

The company's continued growth plan emphasizes the value of associates, asset management, customer service, and quality.

You should know that the corporate name of **HIGHTECH SIGNS** is **Castleton Village Center, Inc.**

# EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY

**HIGHTECH SIGNS** believes that its associates should be able to enjoy a workplace free from all forms of discrimination, including harassment, on the basis of race, color, religion, gender, national origin, age, disability or sexual orientation. Any such discrimination is prohibited.

It is against the policy of the company for any associate, whether a manager, supervisor or coworker to harass another associate.

Prohibited harassment occurs when verbal or physical conduct that defames or shows hostility toward an individual because of his/her race, color, religion, gender, national origin, age, disability, or sexual orientation, or that of the individual's relatives, friends, or associates and creates or is intended to create an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment, interferes or is intended to interfere with an individual's work performance or other wise adversely affects an individual's employment opportunities.

Harassing conduct includes, but is not limited to:

- Epithets, slurs, negative stereotyping, or threatening, intimidating or hostile acts which relate to race, color, religion, gender, national origin, age, disability, or sexual orientation.
- Written or graphic material that defames or shows hostility or aversion toward an individual or group because of race, color, religion, gender, national origin, age, disability, or sexual orientation and that is placed on walls, bulletin boards, or elsewhere on the company's premises, or that is circulated in the workplace.

Sexual and sex-based harassment may include:

- Requests for sexual favors.
- Unwanted physical contact, including touching, pinching, or brushing the body.
- Verbal harassment, such as sexual innuendoes, suggestive comments, jokes of a sexual nature, sexual propositions, and threats.

- Non-verbal conduct, such as display of sexually suggestive objects or pictures, leering, whistling, or obscene gestures, and
- Acts of physical aggression, intimidation, hostility, threats or unequal treatment based on sex (even if not sexual in sexual nature).

## **EMPLOYMENT CLASSIFICATION**

**HIGHTECH SIGNS** maintains standard definitions of employment and classifies associates in accordance with these definitions:

### **A. Full-Time**

Employment in an established position requiring 40 (2080 annual) hours or more of work per week is considered full-time. After successfully completing the probationary (orientation) period, the full-time associate may be eligible for full participation in benefit programs. For the first year, holiday and bereavement benefits pay will be based on the usual number of hours worked per day up to 8 hours. After the first year, vacation pay will be paid at 8 hours per day unless the average of the total hours worked in the prior year is less than 2080 hours. Holiday and bereavement hours will be paid at 8 hours per day also, unless the average work day is less than 8 hours (based on a 7 pay period look-back).

### **B. Part-Time**

Employment in an established position requiring less than 40 (2080 annual) hours of work per week is considered part-time. Normally, a part-time schedule, such as portions of days or weeks, will be established. Participation in benefits programs for part-time associates is limited. However, an associate working at least 30 (1560 annual) hours per week on average qualifies for health and life insurance, as well as the long-term disability benefit. In order to qualify for the 401(k) program and Holiday, Bereavement or Vacation pay, a part-time associate must work a minimum of 20 (1040 annual) hours per week on average.

After successfully completing the orientation period, the part-time associate may be eligible for prorated holiday and bereavement pay. Holiday and bereavement pay will be based on a 7 pay period look-back. The average hours worked per day during that period

of time will be used for holiday or bereavement pay, not to exceed 8 hours per day. Vacation pay will be based on the average of the total hours worked in the prior year.

### **C. Temporary**

Associate hired for a specific time period, usually not exceeding 120 days. No benefits are available for associates classified as temporary.

### **D. Exempt/Non-Exempt**

Additionally, all associates are defined as either:

Exempt – Those associates who are employed in an executive, administrative, or professional capacity and who are classified as exempt by the Fair Labor Standards Act; or

Non-Exempt – Those associates who are not employed in an executive, administrative, or professional capacity and who are subject to the Fair Labor Standards Act.

All associates, regardless of employment status, are subject to all company rules and procedures. Associates with a question about their employment status should see their immediate supervisor. Your supervisor is the person to whom you report and may be an officer of the company, a manager, leader, or someone with the title “supervisor.”

## **PROPRIETARY INFORMATION**

Associates, who have knowledge of specific customer and pricing information, or details of the manufacturing techniques and processes developed by **HIGHTECH SIGNS**, will be required to sign a Non-Compete agreement before starting work. One signed copy becomes part of the personnel file, and the other copy is for the associate’s records. This will be reviewed with you prior to you signing the agreement.

## **EMPLOYMENT AGREEMENTS**

This handbook does not create an employment contract between **HIGHTECH SIGNS** and its associates. Although we hope that your employment relationship with **HIGHTECH SIGNS** will be long term, either you or the company may terminate this relationship at any time, for any reason, with or without cause or notice. Therefore, our relationship remains entirely at-will. No supervisor, or manager, or representative of **HIGHTECH SIGNS** other than the President has the authority to enter into any agreement with you regarding the terms of your employment that changes our at-will relationship.

## **ORIENTATION PERIOD**

All associates of **HIGHTECH SIGNS** are employed on a probationary basis until they have completed the first 90 days of employment. This 90 day trial period is designed to determine whether the associate is suited to the job and capable of satisfactorily performing the work assigned. The provision of the progressive disciplinary procedure does not apply during the orientation period. The company will make every reasonable effort to coach associates during the orientation period to help ensure their success.

After 90 days, non-exempt associates will be evaluated and their ratings will be discussed with them by their supervisor.

After 90 days, exempt associates will be notified by letter if they satisfactorily completed the probationary period.

A satisfactory rating upon completion of the probationary period will qualify them as a regular associate eligible for continuing employment and benefits. However, an associate may be terminated at any time during the orientation period with or without “cause.”

# CORRECTIVE ACTION POLICY

We believe that our associates are and will continue to be good citizens both in the community and on their jobs, and they ordinarily will not engage in acts contrary to the best interests of themselves, other associates, customers, or the company. However, in instances in which associates do engage in conduct contrary to these interests, they will receive discipline appropriate for such misconduct. The degree of discipline in each case, up to and including discharge, will be determined at the sole discretion of **HIGHTECH SIGNS**, by the severity of the situation involved.

The **Corrective Action Policy** includes the following elements:

## A. GENERAL

- **Progressive Discipline** includes procedures for less serious infractions. This may include documentation and warnings; for example, for poor job performance. Such discipline is intended to help correct problems, but may lead to termination.
- **Immediate Discipline** includes disciplinary actions up to and including immediate discharge for serious infractions.
- **Work Rules** describe standards and expectations. These rules are merely for reference and cannot be all inclusive.
- **Documentation** - each step of the process will be documented for your personnel file. Documentation for serious infractions will be retained indefinitely.
- **Applicability** – The corrective action process does not apply to associates who are still on their orientation period. In addition, the corrective action policy doesn't alter the at-will employment relationship with the associate.

## B. PROGRESSIVE DISCIPLINE

If during the course of your employment a performance problem is detected, your supervisor will discuss the problem with you and offer any appropriate assistance needed to remedy the situation. If the performance problem continues, the normal steps of progressive disciplinary action by the company will be oral warning, written warning, and ultimately, termination of employment may occur. Associates also may receive a five day

suspension in appropriate circumstances as a final disciplinary action prior to termination.

### **C. IMMEDIATE DISCIPLINE – SERIOUS INFRACTIONS**

If you engage in misconduct deemed serious enough by the company, in its sole discretion, you may be subject to immediate suspension and/or termination without administration of the sequential steps of progressive discipline. Examples of serious infractions include theft, drug abuse, fighting, falsification, and insubordination.

## **WORK RULES**

The following set of rules and regulations is intended to serve as a general guideline in governing appropriate associate behavior. The list is not intended to include all offenses for which an associate may be disciplined or discharged.

### **Performance Rules**

1. Always put forth your best efforts in your work.
2. Maintain reasonable standards of efficiency, productivity, and performance.
3. Do not produce excessive scrap
4. Do not leave the work site during working hours without advance permission from your supervisor.
5. Always work until the end of your scheduled work period.
6. Be on time for your assignment, ready to work at the start of your scheduled work day.
7. Understand that poor attendance or absenteeism is a detriment to **HIGHTECH SIGNS** and an imposition on your co-workers. Plan on being present every scheduled work day.

### **Behavior Toward Others**

1. Insubordination will not be tolerated. Insubordination includes the failure or refusal to obey the orders or instructions of management, the use of abusive or threatening language toward such individuals, or any conduct that undermines supervisory authority.

2. Do not threaten, intimidate, coerce, provoke, interfere, or fight with associates, supervisors, customers, visitors, or suppliers at any time.
3. Do not make false or malicious statements about associates, supervisors, the company or its products, customers, suppliers, or visitors at any time.
4. The use of profane or abusive language is not permitted in any situation.

### **Property of Others**

1. Do not abuse, misuse, damage, destroy, sabotage, or steal company property, machines, tools, or equipment, or the property of associates, supervisors, customers, suppliers, or visitors.
2. The use of company equipment or tools for personal purposes is not permitted unless permission is given in advance.
3. Personal signage is allowed as long as the work is done by the associate(s) “off the clock.” The cost is for materials only and is to be paid to the custodian of the petty cash fund. If the personal signage is done by others during work hours, the associate is responsible for all costs of production, generally 25% of retail cost. All personal signage projects need prior approval by the immediate supervisor. Payment is due immediately.
4. Do not falsify or fail to disclose completely all information requested or recorded on any employment, personnel, production, or other record of the company or its suppliers, customers, or insurance carriers.
5. Do not alter, misuse, or remove from company premises, without proper authorization, associate lists, blueprints, company records, checks, or company information of any nature.
6. Do not falsify associate time records by recording hours as worked that are not actually worked. Do not complete any associate time records other than your own.

### **Condition of Company Premises**

1. Do not create or contribute to unsanitary conditions on company premises; do not litter.
2. Keep your work area safe and clean at all times.
3. Do not violate safe working practices.

## **Solicitation / Distribution**

1. Do not solicit or distribute any printed material to any other associate for any purpose at any time during your working time (on the clock) or that employee's working time. This does not include break periods or meal times.
2. Do not distribute any written or printed materials in any working area at any time.
3. Do not post on the premises, or remove from the premises, any notices, signs, or printed material.
4. Off-duty associates should not visit any working area during their off-duty hours (except that an associate may report for work a reasonable time in advance of the start of his or her scheduled work time).
5. Non-employees are prohibited from soliciting or distributing any written or printed material of any kind for any purpose on the Company premises at any time. Do not invite or encourage any non-employee to violate this rule.

## **Other Rules**

1. Gambling on company premises is strictly prohibited. Gambling includes lotteries, punch boards, check pools, and raffles.
2. The possession of guns or other weapons on company premises is strictly prohibited.
3. Always report any mistake by yourself or another person that could affect the company's operations or the quantity or quality of its products or services.
4. Use of telephones (see page 32).

## **Parking and Access to Premises**

Park only in the area designated for you by your supervisor.

# **ATTENDANCE PROGRAM**

Punctual and regular attendance are essential functions of each associate's job at **HIGHTECH SIGNS**. Any tardiness or absence causes problems for fellow associates and supervisors. When an associate is absent, his/her work must be performed by others.

Associates are expected to report to work as scheduled, on time and prepared to start work. Associates also are expected to remain at work for their entire work schedule, except for break periods or

when required to leave on authorized company business. Late arrival, early departure, or other absences from scheduled hours are disruptive and must be avoided.

In all cases of absence or tardiness, associates must provide their supervisor with an honest reason or explanation. Documentation of the reason may be required. Associates also must inform their supervisor of the expected duration of any absence. An associate must call in advance of his/her regular starting time on any day on which the associate is scheduled to work, and will not report to work.

Excessive absenteeism may be grounds for discipline up to and including termination of employment. Each situation of absenteeism or tardiness will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

Any associate who fails to report to work without notification to his/her supervisor for a period of three days or more will be considered to have voluntarily terminated his/her employment with **HIGHTECH SIGNS**.

## **SAFETY POLICY**

**HIGHTECH SIGNS** will continue to make reasonable provisions for the safety and health of its associates at the work site during the hours of their employment.

### **Protective Devices and Other Equipment**

Protective devices and other equipment necessary to protect associates from injury will be provided by the company at its expense in accordance with applicable laws and safety needs. All associates are required to use these items properly, and are responsible for their return in good condition.

### **Promptly Report Accidents and Injuries**

On-the-job accidents, injuries and illnesses, regardless of how minor, must be reported to your supervisor immediately. Failure to do so may disqualify you from receiving worker's compensation benefits or from an excused absence and may result in disciplinary action.

### **Pay for Day of Lost-Time Injury**

An associate will be paid at his/her regular, straight time, hourly wage rate for time actually and necessarily lost from available work during the first eight hours of any shift during which he/she suffers any occupational disability compensable under the Worker's Compensation and Occupational Diseases Laws of the states of Indiana and Michigan while at work for the company.

### **Physician's Statement Upon Return to Work**

In order to protect you and other associates, you must present to your supervisor a physician's statement releasing you to return to work following any injury or illness for which you received a doctor's care or which results in your absence for three or more consecutive scheduled working days. The doctor's release must state that you are released to return to work either: (a) without limitation; or (b) with limitations, listing them specifically.

### **Combustibles**

Combustibles must be stored in marked, covered containers in designated areas. Authorized combustibles may be brought into the work area only in proper containers. Do not smoke, use a flame, or create sparks in the vicinity of any combustibles (e.g. gas, oil, paint, varnish, thinner, solvents and glue).

Do not store, even temporarily, any combustibles in any area in the building where smoking is permitted without advance authorization from your supervisor. It should be noted that the company often shares buildings with other businesses which may allow smoking on their premises. **HIGHTECH SIGNS** does not allow smoking in its premises at any time.

### **Safety Rules**

Safety rules will be formulated from time-to-time and posted in the work area. In addition, the following safety rules must be observed by all company associates.

- Horseplay on company premises is strictly prohibited at all times.
- Do not behave recklessly or carelessly on company premises at any time
- Observe common safety practices
- Always use safety and protective devices and equipment as directed by the company.

- Good housekeeping is part of safety, good health and good work. Each associate is responsible for keeping his/her immediate working area clean, as well as the break room (washing his/her own dishes and utensils).

Associates who violate any of these rules or any aspect of the Safety and Health Policy will be disciplined, up to and including discharge, under the company's general discipline policy.

## **SUBSTANCE ABUSE**

**HIGHTECH SIGNS** is committed to providing a safe working environment and, likewise, expects its associates to report to their jobs physically and mentally fit for work. Furthermore, the company is committed to assuring its continued representation as a quality business enterprise. To achieve these goals, **HIGHTECH SIGNS** must take a firm and positive stand against drug and alcohol abuse. This policy is intended to ensure a drug-free work environment for the benefit of associates and customers of the company.

With respect to existing associates, the policy's objective is to eliminate substance abuse, not the substance abuser. To this end, the company is prepared to help and support all associates requesting assistance in dealing with drug or alcohol problems. No one will be disciplined for requesting assistance in seeking treatment. In some instances, the costs of treatment will be reimbursed in accordance with applicable benefit plans.

### **Policy Requirements**

1. The use, presence, possession, sale, or transfer of an illegal drug or alcohol by any associate on company premises, in the performance of company business, or at company sponsored events is strictly prohibited.
2. The use of any legally obtained drug by any associate while performing company business or while on company premises is prohibited to the extent that such use may adversely affect the safety of the associate or others, the associate's job performance, or the company's regard or reputation in the community. Associates who have been informed or have discovered that the use of a legal drug may adversely affect job performance or behavior are to

report such drug use and possible side effects to their supervisor.

### **Testing and Treatment**

1. All prospective new associates will be tested for the use of illegal drugs and controlled substances.
2. Whenever the company suspects that an associate's work performance or on-the-job behavior may have been affected in any way by alcohol or drugs, or that an associate has otherwise violated the Substance Abuse Policy, the company may require a blood test, urinalysis, or other drug/alcohol test. An associate must complete the necessary drug information and consent forms prior to the testing.
3. All test results, assistance request, and treatment records will be maintained in files separate from the employee's personnel file and will be held in strictest confidence.

### **Disciplinary Action**

Depending upon the seriousness of the offense, any violation of the policy requirements of the Substance Abuse Policy may result in discipline, up to and including discharge, even for a first offense.

## **HOURS OF WORK**

### **Work Hours**

The work week is Sunday through Saturday. Your scheduled work day will be determined by your supervisor.

### **Lunch Periods**

1. A non-exempt associate will receive an unpaid lunch period from thirty minutes to sixty minutes during a work schedule lasting over four hours. The timing and length of the lunch period for each associate will be scheduled and approved by the associate's supervisor.
2. With the exception of an unusual or extreme situation no one should be working through lunch break. Skipping an official lunch period generally involves eating at one's desk, and this practice is unacceptable. This rule will be enforced by your supervisor.

3. All food (including potato chips and other snack foods) will be consumed in the break room, or other approved area, during authorized breaks and lunch periods. Beverages are allowed in the work area, keeping in mind that extreme care must be used around documents, keyboards, and signage.
4. In addition, please wash hands after eating to avoid soiling the signage and/or paperwork used on the job.

### **Breaks**

All associates are allowed two, ten minute breaks per day – one in the morning and one in the afternoon. The timing of the breaks is typically determined by your supervisor. In addition, such breaks should be taken when the customer work load permits. Relief time is, of course, to be taken as needed.

## **TIME RECORDS**

All non-exempt associates must accurately record time worked by “clocking in and out” on the Cyrious Software program (Time Clock Entry) on the computer designated by the supervisor. Time must be recorded for lunch breaks as well. Clocking in or out for another associate is not allowed, and will be grounds for discipline up to and including termination.

Any adjustments needed on the time records should be entered on a time adjustment sheet, or discussed with the supervisor, who will make the appropriate changes. Supervisors will print the time records at the end of the pay period, adding correction if necessary, approving them, and sending to the corporate office for payroll processing.

## **PAY PRACTICES**

### **Overtime**

The company pays one and one-half times a non-exempt associate’s hourly rate for all hours worked over 40 in any work week. Non-exempt associates are those who work in positions for which an overtime premium must be paid under the Fair Labor Standards Act.

## **Supervisor Authorization**

No overtime may be worked unless specifically authorized by the supervisor or manager.

## **PAY DAY**

**HIGHTECH SIGNS** pays its associates every other Friday for the prior two weeks ending on the preceding Saturday.

If there is an error in a paycheck, the supervisor should be notified. A lost check should be reported immediately so that payment may be stopped at the bank and another check can be issued.

## **PAYROLL ADVANCES**

Payroll advances are not permitted by the company against paychecks or vacation not accrued. Exceptions to this policy may be made by the President for compelling reasons.

## **INCENTIVE COMPENSATIONS**

**HIGHTECH SIGNS** has always believed that its success is based on the effectiveness of its associates. Bonuses and commissions are two of the ways that the company has used to reward its associates. The company may use other incentive programs to compensate associates for improving the profitability and efficiency of the company.

All incentive programs will be communicated to the affected associates prior to their implementation.

## **TEAM JOBS**

You are expected to be a team player and participate enthusiastically to serve customers whenever necessary, even if you must work on an activity different from your usual assignment.

**HIGHTECH SIGNS** team jobs include:

- Account Executive
- Administrative Assistant

- Design Associate
- Director of Operations
- Manager
- Office Assistant
- President
- Production Associate
- Production Coordinator
- Senior Design Associate
- Vice President

## **PERFORMANCE REVIEWS**

All **HIGHTECH SIGNS** non-exempt associates will receive periodic performance reviews. Your review will be conducted by your supervisor who will discuss it with you. Your first performance evaluation will be after completion of your orientation period. Following your initial evaluation you will then receive an appraisal at your six month and twelve month anniversary in your first year of employment.

After that review, performance evaluations will be conducted annually, on or about the anniversary date of your employment with the company. Some events such as a promotion, medical leave, etc., may cause a change in the timing of the review date. The frequency of performance evaluations may vary depending upon length of service, job position, past performance, changes in job duties, recurring performance problems, or time away from the job for medical leaves. Exempt associates are generally evaluated on an annual basis.

Your performance evaluation will include factors such as the quality of work, attendance record, your knowledge of the job, initiative, work attitude, and attitude toward others. The performance evaluation should help you to become aware of your progress, areas that need improvement, and objectives or goals for future work performance. After the review you will be asked to sign the evaluation report simply to acknowledge that it has been presented to you, discussed with you by your supervisor, and that you are aware of its contents.

## COMPENSATION REVIEWS

Your compensation will be reviewed on a regular basis by your supervisor. Such reviews are generally conducted on at least an annual basis and typically follow your annual performance appraisal.

The amount and frequency of any compensation increase you may receive will be based upon your job performance, the profitability of the company, and the length of time since your last increase.

## VACATION

It is the policy of **HIGHTECH SIGNS** to provide each associate with vacation time on a periodic basis. The amount of vacation to which an associate becomes entitled is determined by the associate's job classification and length of service (based on the employment anniversary date).

### Vacation Eligibility

Years of Service	Non-Exempt Associates (Hourly and Sales)	Exempt Associates (Managers)
After 1 year	10 days	15 days
After 5 years	11 days	16 days
After 6 years	12 days	17 days
After 7 years	13 days	18 days
After 8 years	14 days	19 days
After 9 years	15 days	20 days

It is the policy of the company to require associates to submit vacation requests in writing at least two weeks in advance of the desired vacation days except in emergency situations.

Vacation scheduling will be subject to the needs of the business and the balanced preferences of all associates; e.g. three day weekends.

Vacations may be scheduled one day at a time with advance notice, or may be used in emergency situations. We believe, however, that associates will receive greater benefit by scheduling

full week vacations. Vacations may be scheduled at any time of the year.

All associates earn vacation on their employment anniversary date in proportion to their normally scheduled work hours. In order to qualify for benefits an associate must work a minimum of 1040 hours per year. The benefit will be prorated on the hours worked during the past year, if less than 8 hours worked daily.

Vacation does not accrue between employment anniversary dates and may not be taken until it is earned. Vacation time must be used in the anniversary year after which it is earned and may not be carried over to the next calendar year. Exceptions to this policy may only be made by the President. For example, an associate with two weeks vacation as of his/her third anniversary date must use the two weeks prior to his/her fourth anniversary date.

Earned vacation time must be taken. Associates are not entitled to pay in lieu of taking time off for vacation, except that terminating associates are entitled to be paid for all earned, but unused vacation.

## **HOLIDAYS**

**HIGHTECH SIGNS** recognizes six holidays each year:

**NEW YEAR'S DAY  
MEMORIAL DAY  
INDEPENDENCE DAY  
LABOR DAY  
THANKSGIVING DAY  
CHRISTMAS DAY**

A holiday that falls on a weekend will be observed on either the preceding Friday or the following Monday.

### **Eligibility**

- Full time regular associates who have successfully completed the orientation period qualify for holiday pay if they work their last scheduled work day prior to the holiday and the next scheduled work day following the holiday.

- Part time associates' eligibility for holiday pay is limited. In order to qualify for benefits an associate must work a minimum of 1040 hours per year. After completing the orientation period, the part-time associate may be eligible for prorated holiday pay.
- See the EMPLOYMENT CLASSIFICATION section for explanation on how the benefit is calculated.
- Temporary associates do not earn holiday pay.

## **MATERNITY or MEDICAL LEAVE**

If you expect to be absent from work for more than three consecutive days as a result of illness, injury, pregnancy, or disability, you must submit a written request for medical leave through your supervisor to the corporate office at least 30 days before the anticipated commencement of the leave.

In the case of an emergency or when a 30 day notice is not possible, the associate or a member of the associate's immediate family must notify the associate's supervisor as soon as possible. The written leave request normally should follow this notification by no more than three days.

In all situations the associate's request for leave must be supported by a physician's certification of medical need for leave. This certification must be furnished within 15 days of the associate's leave request. If circumstances require an extension of the leave for any reason, the associate must provide the company with a physician's statement attesting to the associate's continued medical condition and inability to work. As well, an associate returning from medical leave must submit a doctor's statement indicating that the associate has been released to return to work. The maximum duration of a medical leave of absence is 12 weeks. If an associate is unable to return to work after 12 weeks, his/her employment will be terminated.

Unless otherwise required by applicable law, the company cannot guarantee reinstatement of the associate upon completion of an approved leave of absence. Nonetheless, the company will make every effort to return the associate to a comparable job, subject to budgetary restrictions, the company's need to fill vacancies, and the company's ability to find qualified temporary replacements.

Medical leaves of absence under this policy are unpaid, or paid with unused, earned vacation, except associates who have two years or more of service. These associates will be paid for medical leave as follows:

- The first two weeks of leave will be paid with unused accrued vacation, or is unpaid.
- The next two pay periods (4 weeks) **HIGHTECH SIGNS** will pay the associates one half of their regular base pay.

## **PERSONAL DAYS/LEAVE**

Personal days off are unpaid. Occasionally, associates may request time off without pay. This is generally authorized when it does not conflict with the company's operations. Thus, in most cases, giving permission to take an unpaid day off cannot be granted until just before the date requested. Except in very unusual cases, unpaid days off will not be approved in advance. Preference will be given to newly hired associates who do not have vacation days but have a commitment made prior to the start of employment with **HIGHTECH SIGNS**. This request should be made prior to the start of employment.

A full-time associate who has completed at least one year of service with the company may request an unpaid personal leave of absence. It may be granted at the discretion of the President. A personal leave must be requested in writing at least two weeks in advance, unless necessitated by an emergency, in which case oral notification should be followed by written application for the leave.

Personal leave may be granted, for a justifiable reason, provided the leave does not seriously disrupt the company's operations. All unused, earned vacation days must be used before a personal leave will be granted. A limited number of "personal days" may be granted by the President.

The company cannot guarantee reinstatement to associates returning from personal leave, but will make every effort to reinstate associates to their former positions if business conditions permit.

## **BEREAVEMENT LEAVE**

Bereavement leave will be granted to all full-time associates who have successfully completed their orientation period in the event an absence is necessitated by the death of a family member. In the event of the death of an associate's spouse, child, parent, sibling, grandparent, father-in-law, mother-in-law, son-in-law or daughter-in-law, the associate will be granted up to three days off work with pay, if needed. Unpaid, earned vacation time may be used if additional time off is needed.

Part time associates' eligibility for bereavement pay is limited. In order to qualify for benefits an associate must work a minimum of 1040 hours per year. (See the EMPLOYMENT CLASSIFICATION section for explanation on how the benefit is calculated.) After completing the orientation period, the part-time associate may be eligible for prorated bereavement pay.

Temporary associates are not eligible for bereavement leave.

Subject to the approval of an associate's immediate supervisor, an employee may also take up to one full day without pay to attend the funeral of other relatives or friends. If available, the associate may request to use earned vacation time for this purpose.

All requests for bereavement leave should be made to the associate's immediate supervisor.

## **HEALTH INSURANCE**

**HIGHTECH SIGNS** provides health and accident insurance for all of its full-time associates at the conclusion of a successful 90-day orientation period. The company pays two thirds of the cost of individual coverage. An associate working at least 30 hours per week qualifies as a full-time associate for health insurance eligibility. Participation in the health plan is voluntary. An enrollment form and plan description is given to every full-time associate during the orientation period. Coverage is available on the first of the following month. Dependent coverage is available; however, the associate is required to pay the monthly premium for that coverage on a payroll deduction basis.

Participating associates pay for their portion of the health and accident insurance through payroll deductions taken twice every month.

Part-time associates working less than thirty hours per week are not eligible for health insurance coverage.

The group insurance policy and the summary plan description issued to associates set out the terms and conditions of the health insurance plan. These documents govern all issues relative to the health insurance plans. Copies are available from your supervisor.

## **LIFE AND LONG-TERM DISABILITY INSURANCE**

A life insurance benefit (equal to one times the associate's annual earnings) is provided for all full-time associates, including those associates working at least 30 hours per week. The minimum benefit is \$20,000. **HIGHTECH SIGNS** provides this benefit at no cost to the associate.

A long term disability benefit is also provided for all full-time associates, including those associates working at least 30 hours per week. Again, there is no cost to the associate for this benefit.

## **SAVINGS PLAN – 401(k)**

**HIGHTECH SIGNS** sponsors a 401(k) savings plan for all qualified associates. Under the plan, associates may elect to make contributions to the plan through salary deferral. The company matches a portion of associate contributions. The company also may make additional profit-sharing contributions to the plan at its discretion. The terms of the plan are set out in the written plan document and summary plan description issued to associates. Participation in the Savings Plan is voluntary. Associates must be at least 21 years of age and must have worked for **HIGHTECH SIGNS** at least one year. Entry into the plan is allowed only on January 1 or July 1. Enrollment materials and fund information will be provided to each eligible associate the month prior to eligibility.

# CONFIDENTIALITY

It is the responsibility of all **HIGHTECH SIGNS** associates to safeguard sensitive company information. The nature of our business and the economic well being of the company is dependent upon protecting and maintaining proprietary information. Continued employment with the company is contingent upon compliance with this policy. *Sensitive Company Information* is defined as trade secrets or confidential information relating to products, processes, know-how, customers, designs, drawings, formulas, test data, marketing data, accounting, pricing or salary information, business plans and strategies, negotiations and contracts, and inventories and discoveries. Unless otherwise identified by management, all associates shall assume that such information is confidential.

# PROBLEM SOLVING

## **Problem Solving Procedure**

**HIGHTECH SIGNS** is concerned with any situation affecting the employment relationship. The company is committed to correcting any condition or situation that may cause unfairness or misunderstanding. It is inevitable that problems and misunderstanding may occur. Therefore, the company has provided an orderly manner for an associate to voice an opinion or discuss a problem with management without prejudice or fear of retaliation.

If an associate has a problem or complaint, the associate should discuss it with his/her immediate supervisor as soon as possible. If the problem is not satisfactorily resolved or the problem is with the supervisor, the associate has the right to discuss it with his/her next level supervisor.

If the problem still is not satisfactorily resolved, the associate then has the right to discuss their concerns with the next person in the "chain of command," all the way to the company President.

# PERSONNEL RECORDS

## **Examination of Pay Records**

An associate may examine time sheets and any other records relevant to proper computation of his/her pay, benefits, or personnel records at any reasonable non-working time during regular business hours providing arrangements have been made in advance. Associate records are located at the corporate office in Fort Wayne, Indiana.

As associate's records may be examined only by the associate. Records may be examined only in the presence of a designated company representative. No record may be removed from any of the company facilities, even temporarily. Associates may receive copies of documents in their file at a cost of \$0.20 per page if more than 20 pages are copied. The company reserves the right to adopt reasonable rules concerning the frequency of file inspections to prevent potential abuses.

## **Examination of Medical Records**

The Occupational Safety and Health Act provides that associates who may have been exposed to toxic substances or harmful physical agents have a right to access their medical records, exposure records, and analyses prepared from such records. Copies of all medical records, exposure records, and each analysis produced from the records may be obtained upon request.

If you wish to have any other person see your medical records, you must execute a written authorization submitted to the President.

## **Furnishing Information to Third Parties**

The company assumes no obligation to furnish information about any associate to any other party (*other than to verify his/her current employment*). An associate who desires that the company furnish certain information to a third party, may file a written request to that effect. The associate may be required to execute a release before the company will disclose certain information to third parties.

## SMOKING

Smoking is prohibited throughout all company facilities. The following guidelines must also be adhered to at all locations:

- Refrain from smoking at the front entrance of the facilities to maintain a professional image as customers enter.
- Smoking is allowed at the rear of the buildings.
- Smoking is allowed in individual cars, but the doors must remain closed.
- Cigarette butt containers should be provided at each facility. This container must be used to prevent fire hazards and to present a neater exterior appearance.

## DRESS REQUIREMENTS AND PERSONAL STANDARDS

We are always concerned with the impression we make on others as representatives of **HIGHTECH SIGNS**. Associates should strive at all times to ensure that their clothing, hygiene and personal appearance contribute to a pleasant working environment.

All associates, especially those with customer and vendor contact, are required to maintain a well groomed, professional image. Extreme hairdos, heavy jewelry, pierced body parts, visible tattoos, and provocative or revealing clothing (e.g. too short, too low-cut, too tight or see-through) should be avoided. Shirts with offensive or suggestive language printed on them are also disallowed.

Because **HIGHTECH SIGNS** has a variety of job classifications, there are certain jobs (such as Production Associates) that may have a more relaxed dress code. Neat jeans and tennis shoes are generally acceptable. Sandals are not allowed in the production area because of safety issues. The immediate supervisor should provide guidance as to the appropriate attire for those associates reporting to him/her.

Fridays are considered “business casual” and conservative jeans will be permitted for all associates if so desired.

## REFERENCE CHECKING

All requests for references, employment verification, or other employment inquiries must be directed to the President. No other manager, supervisor, or associate is authorized to release information regarding current or former associates.

## HANDLING DIFFICULT SITUATIONS

### Hold Ups

Fortunately, this is something we normally do not have to worry about. However, if you are ever confronted by this type of situation, you should cooperate with the perpetrator and turnover any monies demanded. You should endeavor to control your fear and not panic. Immediately after such an event, you should call 911. After calling the police, you should call your manager, or if your supervisor is not available, you should contact the corporate office in Fort Wayne. You should also write down the facts of the situation for future reference. **Under no circumstances should you resist the thief. The harm that could occur to you is not worth any amount of money!**

### Difficult Customers

All customers are to be treated with the utmost courtesy at all times. Under no circumstances is an associate to become abusive with a customer. Remember the Golden Rule about being treated as you would like to be treated when you feel you have a problem. If a customer becomes difficult to handle, call your supervisor for assistance. If you are unable to do that then you should contact the police department for assistance. However, by listening closely to the customer and helping to identify their concerns, most stressful situations can be resolved and you may retain a valuable customer for the future.

## PERSONAL USE OF EQUIPMENT

Any use of company equipment for personal reasons requires the advance permission of your supervisor. Making personal signs is allowed on non-working time. You are expected to reimburse the company for materials you may use. Such signs are for your

personal use and are not to be produced for sale to others, or given away for sale by other people.

## **PETTY CASH**

Petty cash is kept at each location and managed by the manager, or person designated by the manager. These funds are to be used for company purchases and reimbursements only. They are not to be used for personal reasons by an associate. This includes “borrowing” from the petty cash fund. Such borrowings are a serious violation of work rules and will be regarded as a form of theft. Termination will result from any such an event and may include criminal prosecution. In addition, cashing your personal check through these funds is not authorized.

## **TELEPHONE USAGE**

Courtesy and thoughtfulness in using the telephone are not only key elements in good public relations, but serve as indicators of an associate’s attitude and competence. The following guidelines are offered for good telephone etiquette:

- Answer the telephone promptly within the first or second ring. The caller will appreciate the promptness.
- When you answer the telephone give the company name and your own name.  
It is better to offer to return a call than to keep the caller waiting for an indefinite period of time, but be sure to follow-up and call back.
- When a caller leaves a name, number, and/or message, be sure it is recorded correctly and either passed on to the proper person via e-mail (preferred if available) or note.

Since it is the goal of **HIGHTECH SIGNS** to serve its customers, it is important that the telephone lines be kept as free as possible to not interrupt the daily flow of business. Thus, telephone calls should be limited to those that are necessary and should be brief. Personal long distance calls, when necessity requires, may be made only with specific supervisor approval. We understand that there are personal issues that do arise, particularly dealing with family members, such as children and spouses.

With the proliferation of cell phones it is important that these only be used during break times and lunch times, except in extreme emergencies. Of course cell phones provided for business use are acceptable at any time.

## **PROPERTY INSPECTION**

Lockers, vehicles, desks, and file cabinets are company property and must be maintained according to company rules and regulations. They must be kept clean and are to be used only for work related purposes. To ensure compliance with its rules and regulations, the company reserves the right to inspect all company property without prior notice to the associate and/or in the associate's absence.

Prior authorization must be obtained before any company property may be removed from the premises.

An associate's personal property, including but not limited to tool boxes, packages, purses, and vehicles, may be inspected upon reasonable suspicion of unauthorized possession of company property, weapons, or illegal drugs.

## **LAY-OFFS**

Under some circumstances, **HIGHTECH SIGNS** may need to restructure its operations or reduce its work force. If this becomes necessary, the company will attempt to provide advance notice to associates so as to minimize the impact on those affected. If possible, associates subject to layoff will be informed of the nature of the layoff and the foreseeable duration of the layoff, whether short-term or indefinite.

In determining which employees will be subject to layoff, the company will consider, among other things, operational requirements; the skill, productivity, past performance, and attendance of those involved; and, whenever feasible, length of service.

When workload increases to the extent that additional associates are needed, the company will recall individuals according to these same selection criteria. The company reserves the right to hire new

employees during a layoff period when required skills for the work at hand are not available without training among the laid-off associates.

All company benefits will terminate at the time of layoff.

If an associate on layoff has fulfilled the orientation period requirements at the time of layoff, and the associate is recalled by the company and returns to work within 90 calendar days of the date of layoff, benefits and time of service will be fully reinstated on the date of return to work. This rule does not apply to the group insurance plan, the terms of which will be governed by the actual group insurance contract in effect at the time the associate returns to work.

If an associate on layoff is recalled and does not accept the recall within three days, the employee will be terminated and will be considered to have voluntarily quit. If an associate on layoff is not recalled by the company within 90 calendar days, the associate will be terminated and will be considered to have been terminated due to lack of work.

## **TERMINATION OF EMPLOYMENT**

We hope you will be with us for a long time, but if you choose to terminate your employment, it is anticipated that you will give your supervisor as much notice as possible – preferably a minimum of two weeks. When giving your two weeks’ notice, vacation, personal, or sick days should not be used in lieu of notice. If you do not give two weeks’ notice of your intent to leave the company, you may not be eligible for re-employment at a later date.

If the associate’s decision to terminate is based on a situation that could be corrected, the associate is encouraged to discuss it with his/her supervisor before making a final decision.

Associates must return all company property, including identification cards, keys, and manuals to their supervisor on or before their last day of work.