

SS-8 Determination—Determination for Public Inspection

Occupation 02OFF Office Workers	Determination: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Employee <input type="checkbox"/> Contractor
UILC	Third Party Communication: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> None <input type="checkbox"/> Yes

I have read Notice 441 and am requesting:

- Additional redactions based on categories listed in section entitled "Deletions We May Have Made to Your Original Determination Letter"
- Delay based on an on-going transaction
- 90 day delay

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Facts of Case

The worker initiated the request for a determination of her work status as an assistant to a real estate agent in tax year 2018, for which she received Form 1099-MISC. In this capacity she was responsible for the efficient maintenance of client transactions and regular communications with clients. She developed standard operating procedures to assist the agent to grow the market presence and brand development. The firm's business is described as a real estate agent.

The firm's response was signed by the realtor. The firm's business is real estate. The worker provided services stuffing envelopes, mailings, and running errands, checking on files and doing any updates and marketing, as needed.

The worker indicated she was given training and instructions on a system that tracked all buying/selling transactions, scheduling open houses, and maintaining the social media account. The job assignments were disseminated by the firm via phone, email, or in person. The firm determined the methods by which the worker's services were performed; and, any problems or complaints encountered by the worker were directed to the firm for resolution. The worker's services were rendered in the firm's office 5 days a week for 5-6 hours a day unless she was out posting 'open house' signs. The worker was required to perform the services personally.

Although the firm did not indicate whether training or instructions were given, the worker was provided with a list of job assignments/tasks which was added to when she was in the office. The worker determined the methods by which she performed her services. Any problems or complaints encountered by the worker were directed to the firm, but were resolved by both parties. The worker's services were rendered 10-15 hours a week depending on her schedule of classes/tests, and about 80% of that time was at the office with the remainder at her home or around town. The worker attended meetings if her schedule allowed. The worker was not required to perform the services personally; any additional personnel were hired and paid by the firm.

The firm and worker concur the firm provided a desk, computer, and any other equipment and supplies; and the worker furnished nothing. The worker did not lease equipment, space, or a facility. The firm paid the worker an hourly wage; the customers paid the firm. The worker was not covered under the firm's workers' compensation insurance policy. The worker was not at risk for a financial loss in this work relationship and she did not establish the level of payment for services provided.

Both parties acknowledge there were no benefits extended to the worker and that either party could terminate the work relationship without incurring a liability or penalty. The worker responded that she was not performing same or similar services for others during the same time frame; the firm noted that she covered the front desk periodically. The firm and worker agree the worker terminated the work arrangement to accept an internship that was more in line with her long-term goals in pursuing her education degrees.

Analysis

A worker who is required to comply with another person's instructions about when, where, and how he or she is to work is ordinarily an employee. This control factor is present if the person or persons for whom the services are performed have the right to require compliance with instructions. Some employees may work without receiving instructions because they are highly proficient and conscientious workers or because the duties are so simple or familiar to them. Furthermore, the instructions, that show how to reach the desired results, may have been oral and given only once at the beginning of the relationship.

Payment by the hour, week, or month generally points to an employer-employee relationship, provided that this method of payment is not just a convenient way of paying a lump sum agreed upon as the cost of a job. In such instances, the firm assumes the hazard that the services of the worker will be proportionate to the regular payments. This action warrants the assumption that, to protect its investment, the firm has the right to direct and control the performance of the workers. Also, workers are assumed to be employees if they are guaranteed a minimum salary or are given a drawing account of a specified amount that need not be repaid when it exceeds earnings.

Lack of significant investment by a person in facilities or equipment used in performing services for another indicates dependence on the employer and, accordingly, the existence of an employer-employee relationship. The term "significant investment" does not include tools, instruments, and clothing commonly provided by employees in their trade; nor does it include education, experience, or training. Also, if the firm has the right to control the equipment, it is unlikely the worker had an investment in facilities.

A person who can realize a profit or suffer a loss as a result of his or her services is generally an independent contractor, while the person who cannot is an employee. "Profit or loss" implies the use of capital by a person in an independent business of his or her own. The risk that a worker will not receive payment for his or her services, however, is common to both independent contractors and employees and, thus, does not constitute a sufficient economic risk to support treatment as an independent contractor. If a worker loses payment from the firm's customer for poor work, the firm shares the risk of such loss. Control of the firm over the worker would be necessary in order to reduce the risk of financial loss to the firm. The opportunity for higher earnings or of gain or loss from a commission arrangement is not considered profit or loss.

We have considered the information provided by both parties to this work relationship. In this case, the firm retained the right to change the worker's methods and to direct the worker to the extent necessary to protect its financial investment and business reputation and to ensure its customers' satisfaction and that its contractual obligations were met. The worker was not operating a separate and distinct business; the worker did not invest capital or assume business risks, and therefore, did not have the opportunity to realize a profit or incur a loss as a result of the services provided. Integration of the worker's services into the business operations generally shows that the worker is subject to direction and control. When the success or continuation of a business depends to an appreciable degree upon the performance of certain services, the workers who perform those services must necessarily be subject to a certain amount of control by the owner of the business. In this case, the worker was not engaged in an independent enterprise, but rather the services performed by the worker were a necessary and integral part of the firm's business.

CONCLUSION

Based on the above analysis, we conclude that the firm had the right to exercise direction and control over the worker to the degree necessary to establish that the worker was a common law employee, and not an independent contractor operating a trade or business.