

SS-8 Determination—Determination for Public Inspection

Occupation

02CSP Computer Services Personnel

Determination:

☒ Employee

☐ Contractor

UILC

Third Party Communication:

☒ None

☐ 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

For IRS Use Only:

Facts of Case

The firm is in the business of investing in and providing incubation of, early stage technology operations. It provided strategic and operational support as well as paid workers. The worker was engaged as an operations engineer who assisted in the assembly and fulfillment of product orders. He was issued a Form 1099-MISC for his services in 2015 and 2016. There was a written and signed agreement provided by the firm.

Both the firm and worker agreed that the worker was provided with instructions on how to assemble computers and install software. The worker received his work assignments from the firm, daily or weekly, and his work depended on orders/sales. The firm determined the methods by which the assignments were performed and would be contacted if any issues or problems arose. The firm noted however that the actual early stage technology operation would be contacted. Both parties agreed that the worker reported his hours which were then approved, according to the firm, by the technology operation. The worker's work routine was dependent on whether he was called-in for work based on orders. Both parties agreed that the worker worked at the firm's location. There were meetings. Both agreed that the worker was to provide the services personally. Only the worker noted that the firm would hire/pay any substitute workers.

Both the firm and worker agreed that the firm provided the workplace, workspace, equipment and tools for the worker. Both also agreed that the worker was paid an hourly rate and had no other economic risk. The customer paid the firm. The worker did not establish the level of payment for services.

Both the firm and the worker agreed that there were no benefits and that either party could terminate the relationship without incurring a liability. The worker did not provide similar services for others. The firm mentioned the non-compete info in the consulting agreement and indicated that the technology operation itself went out of business. The worker noted that the company closed.

Analysis

In determining whether an individual is an employee or an independent contractor under the common law, all evidence of both control and lack of control or independence must be considered. The relationship of the worker and the business must be examined. Facts that show a right to direct or control how the worker performs the specific tasks for which he or she is hired, who controls the financial aspects of the worker's activities, and how the parties perceive their relationship should be considered. As is the case in almost all worker classification cases, some facts point to an employment relationship while other facts indicate independent contractor status. The determination of the worker's status, then, rests on the weight given to the factors, keeping in mind that no one factor rules. The degree of importance of each factor varies depending on the occupation and the circumstances.

Factors that illustrate whether there is a right to control how a worker performs a task include training and instructions. 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. The worker was initially instructed on what to do and how to do it. 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.

The worker only worked when needed which was dependent on the orders that came into the firm. Therefore, his services may not have been full-time and not performed according to set scheduled hours. However, if the nature of the occupation makes fixed hours impractical, a requirement that workers be on the job at certain times is an element of control. The worker provided his services on a continuous basis throughout the time period involved. A continuing relationship between the worker and the person or persons for whom the services are performed indicates that an employer-employee relationship exists. A continuing relationship may exist where work is performed in frequently recurring although irregular intervals. In addition, the worker worked at the firm's location, another element illustrating an employer-employee relationship. If the work is performed on the premises of the person or persons for whom the services are performed, that factor suggests control over the worker, especially if the work could be done elsewhere.

Factors that illustrate whether there is a right to direct and control the financial aspects of the worker's activities include significant investment, unreimbursed expenses, the methods of payment, and the opportunity for profit or loss. In this case, 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. It was the firm that had the investment in the facility and the equipment. The worker received an hourly rate of pay and had no other economic risk. 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.

Factors that illustrate how the parties perceive their relationship include the intent of the parties as expressed in written contracts; the provision of, or lack of employee benefits; the right of the parties to terminate the relationship; the permanency of the relationship; and whether the services performed are part of the service recipient's regular business activities. There were no benefits and there was a written agreement. However, the firm's belief that the worker was an independent contractor pursuant to an agreement is without merit. For federal employment tax purposes, it is the actual working relationship that is controlling and not the terms of the contract (oral or written) between the parties.

The worker was engaged to assist in the assembly and fulfillment of product orders. When doing so, the worker was not engaged in an separate business enterprise. His services instead were essential to the firm's continuing business activities. 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.

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.

Please see Publication 4341 for guidance and instructions for firm compliance.