

SS-8 Determination—Determination for Public Inspection

Occupation 02OFF.204 OfficeWorker	Determination: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Employee <input type="checkbox"/> Contractor
UILC	Third Party Communication: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> None <input type="checkbox"/> Yes

Facts of Case

The firm provides freight services. The worker was engaged by the firm as an office worker to implement processes and changes. The firm did not withhold taxes from the worker's remuneration for services provided in 2014 through 2016.

Information from the parties supports that the firm relied upon the worker's prior training and experience to perform her services. It allowed her time to learn the firm's daily operations and routines, and identify problems and issues, in order to implement processes and changes. If problems or complaints occurred, the worker contacted the firm for resolution. The worker performed her services on the firm's premises.

The firm provided the office equipment and supplies. The worker did not incur expenses in the performance of her services. The firm paid the worker on a weekly salary basis. It did not cover her under workers' compensation. Customers paid the firm directly at prices established by the firm. Neither party indicated an investment by the worker in the firm or a related business, or the risk of the worker incurring a financial loss beyond the normal loss of compensation.

The firm did not make benefits available to the worker. The worker did not advertise her services or provide similar services for others during the same time period. Both parties reserved the right to terminate the work relationship at any time without incurring a penalty or liability, and in fact, the firm terminated the work relationship.

Analysis

Section 31.3121(d)-1(a)(3) of the regulations provides that if the relationship of an employer and employee exists, the designation or description of the parties as anything other than that of employer and employee is immaterial. Thus, if an employer-employee relationship exists, any contractual designation of the employee as a partner, coadventurer, agent, or independent contractor must be disregarded. Therefore, the firm's statement 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.

Factors that illustrate whether there was a right to control how a worker performed a task include training and instructions. In this case, while the firm relied upon the worker's prior training and experience to perform her services, it must have retained the right to change the worker's methods and to direct the worker to the extent necessary to protect its financial investment. 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. It appears that the worker was required to perform her services personally, meaning she could not engage and pay others to perform services for the firm on her behalf. If the services must be rendered personally, presumably the person or persons for whom the services are performed are interested in the methods used to accomplish the work as well as in the results. These facts show that the firm retained behavioral control over the services of the worker.

Factors that illustrate whether there was 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. "Profit or loss" implies the use of capital by a person in an independent business of his or her own. 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 firm paid the worker on a salary basis. Workers are assumed to be employees if they are guaranteed a minimum salary. These facts show that the firm retained control over the financial aspects of the worker's services.

Factors that illustrate how the parties perceived 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 were part of the service recipient's regular business activities. In this case, the worker performed her services on a continuing basis. She performed her services under the firm's name. 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. 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. Although the firm did not provide benefits to the worker, it terminated the work relationship without incurring a liability. The right to discharge a worker is a factor indicating that the worker is an employee and the person possessing the right is an employer. These facts show that the firm retained control over the work relationship and services of the worker.

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.