

SS-8 Determination—Determination for Public Inspection

Occupation

03TRA.193 Tradesperson

Determination:

☒ Employee

☐ Contractor

UILC

Third Party Communication:

☒ None

☐ Yes

Facts of Case

The worker submitted a request for a determination of worker status in regard to services performed for the firm from February 2014 to June 2014 as an apprentice electrician. The work done by the worker included electrical services for new construction. The worker filed Form SS-8 as he believes he erroneously received Form 1099-MISC.

The firm's response stated it is an electrical contractor business. The worker was engaged as an electrician, laborer. The worker was classified as an independent contractor as he was only brought on as-needed/as-available. The worker worked for other firms, used his own tools, and provided his own transportation. There was no written agreement between the parties.

The firm stated it provided no specific training to the worker. The firm provided instruction related to work assignments and determined the methods by which assignments were performed. The firm assumed responsibility for problem resolution. The firm required the worker to provide a list of hours worked each week. Meetings were not required. The worker's routine consisted of performing work as assigned by the firm, with limited supervision by the firm. The firm required the worker to personally perform services.

The firm stated it and the worker purchased supplies as needed. The worker did not lease equipment, space, or a facility. The worker incurred the expenses associated with tools, materials, and truck. Customers reimbursed for the expense of materials. Customers paid the firm. The firm paid the worker an hourly rate of pay; a drawing account for advances was not allowed. The firm carried workers' compensation insurance on the worker. The worker did not establish the level of payment for the services provided. The worker stated he only provided transportation and tools. The firm was in charge of all expenses.

Benefits were not made available to the worker. The work relationship could be terminated by either party without incurring liability or penalty. The worker did not perform similar services for others or advertise. There was no written agreement prohibiting competition between the parties. The firm stated the work relationship ended when the worker started full-time for another business. The worker stated he performed services under the firm's business name.

Analysis

Generally, the relationship of employer and employee exists when the person for whom the services are performed has the right to control and direct the individual who performs the services, not only as to what is to be done, but also how it is to be done. It is not necessary that the employer actually direct or control the individual, it is sufficient if he or she has the right to do so.

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, a statement that a worker is an independent contractor pursuant to a written or verbal 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.

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. In this case, the firm required the worker to personally perform services. Furthermore, the services performed by the worker were integral to the firm's business operation. The firm provided work assignments, determined the methods by which assignments were performed, and assumed responsibility for problem resolution. These facts evidence the firm retained the right to direct and control the worker to the extent necessary to ensure satisfactory job performance in a manner acceptable to the firm. Based on the worker's education, past work experience, and work ethic the firm may not have needed to frequently exercise its right to direct and control the worker; however, the facts evidence the firm retained the right to do so if needed.

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. In this case, the worker did not invest capital or assume business risks. 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. Based on the hourly rate of pay arrangement the worker could not incur economic loss or financial risk.

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. 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. Both parties retained the right to terminate the work relationship at any time without incurring a liability. There is no evidence to suggest the worker performed similar services for others as an independent contractor or advertised business services to the general public during the term of this work relationship. The classification of a worker as an independent contractor should not be based primarily on the fact that a worker's services may be used on a temporary, part-time, or as-needed basis. As noted above, common law factors are considered when examining the worker classification issue.

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.

The firm can obtain additional information related to worker classification online at www.irs.gov; Publication 4341.