

SS-8 Determination—Determination for Public Inspection

Occupation 05PRW.6 Public Relations Worker	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 is in the business of providing cloud based telecommunications systems. The worker was engaged by the firm to provide customer support services. The firm reported the worker's remuneration on Form 1099-MISC for 2013.

According to the agreement signed by the parties effective September 3, 2013, the worker represented and warranted to the company that he was an independent contractor and not an employee; he was skilled and did not require supervision; he would pay applicable taxes; and he was not entitled to benefits. All products and results belonged to the firm; the firm retained the right to terminate the work relationship at any time; and the worker could terminate the work relationship with a 30-day notice.

Information from the worker shows that the firm provided him with a training manual. It instructed him on how to establish priority for customers and if necessary, the worker contacted his manager for additional guidance. The firm provided the worker with his work assignments and the methods by which to perform them. If problems or complaints occurred, the worker contacted the firm for resolution. The worker submitted computer generated reports after every case was closed. He followed a routine schedule and performed his services on the firm's premises. The worker attended work flow meetings. He was required to perform his services personally. If additional personnel were needed, the firm was responsible for hiring and compensating them.

The firm provided the supplies, equipment, materials, and the business property. The worker did not lease equipment or incur expenses in the performance of his services. The firm paid the worker at an hourly rate. Customers paid the firm directly at prices established by the firm. The worker did not indicate an investment in the firm or a related business, or the risk of 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 his services or provide similar services for others during the same time period. The firm terminated the work relationship when it terminated the worker.

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. If a firm has to make a worker "understand" or even if a worker "agreed to" being an independent contractor (as in a verbal or written agreement), this factor does not determine the worker's status as an independent contractor. An individual knows they are in business for themselves offering their services to the public and does not need to be made aware of, understand, or agree to be an independent contractor.

Factors that illustrate whether there was a right to control how a worker performed a task include training and instructions. In this case, the firm provided the worker with a training manual. It was responsible for resolving any problems or complaints that may have occurred, showing it 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 followed the schedule set by the firm. He performed his services on the firm's premises. 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. The worker was required to perform his services personally, meaning he could not engage and pay others to perform services for the firm on his 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 at an hourly rate. Payment by the hour generally points to an employer-employee relationship. 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 his services under the firm's name. He was not engaged in an independent enterprise, but rather the customer support services performed by the worker were a necessary and integral part of the firm's telecommunications systems 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 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.