Northwind Studio Employee Handbook

Version 4.2 · Effective January 1, 2026

This handbook explains how we work, what we offer, and what we expect of each other. It applies to all full-time and part-time employees. Contractors should read the sections their agreement points to.

Questions about anything here go to People Operations at people@northwind.example.

Contents

This handbook has 21 sections. It starts with how we work, hours and pay, then covers benefits, time off, holidays and leave, working from home, equipment, travel and expenses, learning, conduct, confidentiality and social media, performance reviews, leaving the company, health and safety, and the acknowledgment you sign at the end.

Time off and vacation are in section 6. Sick leave and family leave are in section 8.

1. Welcome

We're a studio of about 140 people who design and build software for clients in retail, health, and logistics. We value clear writing, careful work, and kindness when things go wrong.

Your manager and an onboarding buddy will help you through your first month. Your first week includes a laptop setup session, a walkthrough of our tools, and lunch with your team.

2. How we work

Most work happens in small project teams of four to eight people. Each team keeps its own plan and meets for a short check-in on Mondays and Thursdays.

We write things down. Decisions go in the project log so people who missed a meeting can catch up without asking.

3. Hours and scheduling

Core hours are 10:00 to 15:00 in your local time zone. Outside core hours, plan your day with your team.

Full-time employees work 40 hours a week. Part-time schedules are agreed in writing with your manager and People Operations.

4. Pay and payroll

We pay on the 15th and the last business day of each month by direct deposit. Pay statements are in the payroll portal.

Report a payroll error to People Operations within 30 days so it can be fixed in the next pay run.

5. Benefits

Full-time employees are eligible for medical, dental, and vision coverage from the first day of the month after their start date. We pay 90% of the employee premium and 70% for dependants.

We match retirement contributions up to 4% of salary. Matching vests immediately.

6. Time off

Full-time employees get 20 vacation days a year, accrued at 1.67 days per month. After three years of service this rises to 25 days a year.

Part-time employees accrue vacation in proportion to their scheduled hours.

You can carry over up to 5 unused days into the next calendar year. Carried-over days expire on March 31.

Request time off in the HR portal at least two weeks ahead for anything longer than three days. Your manager approves requests within three business days.

7. Holidays

We observe 11 paid company holidays each year, published in December for the following year.

If you work on a company holiday because a client deadline requires it, you get a replacement day to use within 60 days.

8. Sick leave and family leave

Sick leave is separate from vacation: you get 10 paid sick days a year, and you don't need a doctor's note for absences of three days or fewer.

Parents get 16 weeks of paid parental leave, which can be taken in up to three blocks within the first year.

9. Working from home

You can work from home up to three days a week. Teams agree on at least two shared office days so people can work together in person.

Fully remote arrangements need approval from your manager and People Operations, and are reviewed every six months.

When you work from home, you need a private space for calls, a reliable connection of at least 25 Mbps, and to be reachable during core hours.

We provide a one-time home office stipend of $500 for a chair, desk, or monitor. Submit receipts through the expense tool within 60 days of purchase.

10. Equipment

You'll get a laptop, a monitor for the office, and a headset. Equipment stays company property and must be returned when you leave.

Report a lost or stolen device to IT within 24 hours.

11. Travel

Book client travel through the travel portal. Economy class is the default for flights under six hours; premium economy is allowed for longer flights.

Hotels should be within the city rates listed in the travel portal. If none are available, ask your manager before booking.

12. Expenses (part 1)

We reimburse reasonable costs you incur doing your job. Submit expenses in the expense tool within 30 days with an itemized receipt for anything over $25.

Meals while travelling are covered up to $75 a day. Alcohol is not reimbursed unless it's part of an approved client dinner.

Expenses over $500 need your manager's approval before you spend the money.

12. Expenses (part 2)

Reimbursements are paid in the next payroll run after approval.

Not reimbursed: personal entertainment, traffic or parking fines, upgrades you choose yourself, and costs for anyone travelling with you.

Use the company card for client travel if you have one. Personal cards are fine for everything else.

13. Learning budget

Each employee has $1,200 a year for courses, books, and conferences related to their work. Unused budget does not carry over.

Conference attendance during work hours needs your manager's approval.

14. Conduct

Treat colleagues, clients, and partners with respect. Disagree openly and kindly, and assume good intent.

Conflicts of interest, such as outside work for a client or competitor, must be disclosed to People Operations.

15. Harassment and reporting

We don't tolerate harassment or discrimination of any kind. Report concerns to your manager, People Operations, or the anonymous reporting line.

We investigate every report promptly and protect people who report in good faith from retaliation.

16. Confidentiality

Client work, internal financials, and personal data about colleagues are confidential. Don't share them outside the company, and only share them inside with people who need them.

These obligations continue after you leave.

17. Social media

You're welcome to talk about your work in general terms. Don't name clients or share project details unless the client has made the work public.

Make it clear that opinions you post are your own.

18. Performance reviews

Reviews happen twice a year, in May and November. Each includes a self-review, feedback from two colleagues, and a conversation with your manager.

Pay changes are decided after the November review and take effect in January.

19. Leaving the company

We ask for four weeks' notice where possible. Unused accrued vacation is paid out in your final paycheck.

Return all equipment by your last day. IT will schedule a pickup for remote employees.

20. Health and safety

Report any injury at work, however minor, to People Operations the same day.

Fire exits and first-aid kits are marked on the floor plan at each office entrance.

21. Acknowledgment

Please confirm in the HR portal that you've read this handbook. We review it every year and will tell you about changes at least 30 days before they take effect.