How to Write a Policies and Procedures Manual


By Chris Anderson

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# Table of Contents

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION ................................................................. 1
  What is a procedure? ..................................................... 2
  Procedure Definition .................................................. 2
  Compliance Procedures ............................................... 3
  Policies and Procedures ............................................... 3
  Employee Policy Manual .............................................. 4
  So What Is a Procedure? ............................................... 5
  Scope of this Book ....................................................... 5

CHAPTER 1 Building an Effective Management System with Procedures .... 7
  Evaluating Business Success ........................................ 8
  Policies and Procedures Are Your Business Success .......... 8
  What are Procedures For? ............................................ 10
  Procedures Are For Managers ...................................... 11
  Five Phases to Building an Effective Management System ... 12
    1. Discovery ............................................................. 13
    2. Planning ............................................................. 15
    3. Development ....................................................... 16
    4. Implementation .................................................... 17
    5. Re-Discovery ....................................................... 17

CHAPTER 2 Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) ........................ 19
  Standard Procedures .................................................. 20
  The Difference between Policies and Procedures ............... 20
  Work Instructions ....................................................... 22
    A Procedure for Making Dinner ................................... 23
    Procedure Users ...................................................... 24
    Work Instructions for Making Dinner ......................... 24
    Work Instruction Users ............................................ 25
  Procedure Details ...................................................... 25
  Documentation Pyramid .............................................. 26
    Level 1 – Policies ...................................................... 26
    Level 2 – Procedures or Processes ............................... 26
    Level 3 – Work Instructions ....................................... 27
    Level 4 – Forms/Records .......................................... 28
  The Need Policies and Procedures ................................... 28
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Compliance</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operational Needs</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managing Risks</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuous Improvement</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Why People Don’t Follow Procedures</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Out of Date</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hard to Find</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too Simple</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poorly Written or Designed</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too Long</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Why Policies are Unenforceable</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Written for Problems That Don’t Exist</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employees Are Unaware a Policy Exists</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficult to Understand</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unclear Who Owns the Policy</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy Enforcement Responsibility Unclear</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consequences of Violation Are Unclear</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People Don’t Believe in the Policy</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CHAPTER 3 Identifying Your Processes</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Processes and Procedures</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Types of Processes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ballistic Processes</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Controlled Processes</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adaptive Processes</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Core Process Flows</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cash Flows</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing Flows</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design Flows</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Top Ten Business Processes</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CHAPTER 4 Mapping Your Processes</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding Process Maps</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Types of Process Maps</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SIPOC</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PDCA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Document Your “Plan”</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using Your Plan Is “Do”</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Check” Your Plan</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table of Contents
“Act” On Your Results ................................................................. 55
Plan-Do-Check-Act in Action ....................................................... 56
Process Mapping ........................................................................ 58
High-Level Process Map ............................................................ 58
Low-Level Process Map .............................................................. 60
Cross Functional/ Swim Lane Process Map ................................ 61
Document Map ........................................................................ 63
Activity/Value Stream Map ......................................................... 65
Workflow Diagram ..................................................................... 67
Rendered Process Map ............................................................... 69
Choosing a Process Map ............................................................ 70
CHAPTER 5 Turning Your Processes into Procedures ............... 71
Formatting Your Procedures ....................................................... 72
Control Block .......................................................................... 75
Header and Footer ..................................................................... 78
Procedure Metadata .................................................................. 78
Procedure Steps ........................................................................ 80
Effectiveness Criteria ................................................................. 80
References ................................................................................ 81
Records ..................................................................................... 81
Revision History ......................................................................... 81
Working with Microsoft Word ..................................................... 81
Margins ..................................................................................... 82
Header ...................................................................................... 83
Footer ....................................................................................... 85
Control Block .......................................................................... 92
Procedure Metadata .................................................................. 96
Procedure Steps ........................................................................ 99
Revision History Table ............................................................... 102
CHAPTER 6 Writing and Reviewing Your Policies .................... 103
Policy Review Process ............................................................... 104
Objectives ................................................................................ 104
Policy Achieved? ...................................................................... 104
Feedback ................................................................................... 105
Fixing Bad Policies .................................................................... 106
Describe the Policy Problem ...................................................... 107
Find the Policy’s Root Cause ...................................................... 107
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Pages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Writing Your Procedures</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Communication and Addressing Your Audience</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Active Verbs</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Active Voice</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sexism in Writing</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Organizing Your Thoughts</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rule of Seven</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number Usage</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reviewing and Approving Procedures</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Seven 'C's of Procedure Review</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Procedure Approval Process</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Creating Your Policies and Procedures Manual</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Distribution of the Manual</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Content of the Manual</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Defining the Format of Your Manual</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Design Features</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Style and Mechanics</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Manual Organization</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Foreword</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Table of Contents</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Policy and Procedure Statements</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Optional Sections</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Index</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Revising and Updating Policies/Procedures</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Automating Your Policies and Procedures</td>
<td>139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Controlling Your Procedures</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Document Control</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Record Control</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>File Control</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Summarize Policy Actions</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Identify Policy Roles and Responsibilities</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Develop a Draft Policy</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Review and Revise the New Policy</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Writing Policies from Scratch</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Company Rules</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A Policy in a Procedure</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Review and Revise the New Policy</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Summarize Policy Actions</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Identify Policy Roles and Responsibilities</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Develop a Draft Policy</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Review and Revise the New Policy</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Writing Policies from Scratch</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Company Rules</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A Policy in a Procedure</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table of Contents
How to Write Policies and Procedures

Why Invest in Document Management Software? ........................................ 142
  Security ........................................................................................................ 142
  Savings ........................................................................................................ 142
  Efficiency .................................................................................................... 143
  Compliance .................................................................................................. 143
Difference between Procedure Management and Document Management
  Software ....................................................................................................... 143
  Workflow ..................................................................................................... 144
Bizmanualz OnPolicy Software .................................................................... 147
  OnPolicy Features ....................................................................................... 148
  Benefits of OnPolicy ................................................................................... 149
A Closer Look at OnPolicy .......................................................................... 149
  Home Screen .............................................................................................. 149
  Documents Screen ....................................................................................... 151
  Documents Details ....................................................................................... 152
  Stages of Workflow ..................................................................................... 154
  Reader View ................................................................................................... 154
Appendix A Sample Procedure .................................................................... 155
  IT Project Management Procedure ITSW102 ................................................ 155
Appendix B Job Descriptions ....................................................................... 161
  WRITING JOB DESCRIPTIONS ................................................................. 161
    Purpose ....................................................................................................... 161
    SCOPE ......................................................................................................... 162
  Written Communication ............................................................................... 163
    Non-discriminatory language ..................................................................... 163
    Active voice ................................................................................................. 164
    Action verbs ............................................................................................... 165
    Plain English ............................................................................................... 165
    Brevity ......................................................................................................... 165
  FORMAT AND CONTENT ............................................................................. 166
    Job Title ...................................................................................................... 166
    Effective Date ............................................................................................... 166
    Department .................................................................................................. 166
    Summary of Functions ............................................................................... 166
  ESSENTIAL DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES ......................................... 167
    Group Several Tasks into a Single Responsibility ..................................... 168
    Writing results-oriented job statements ............................................... 169
Responsibility Statements ................................................................. 169
Delegated Responsibilities .................................................................. 170
Organizational Relationships .......................................................... 170
Reporting Relationships ........................................................................ 171
The Organization’s Environment ....................................................... 171
QUALIFICATIONS .................................................................................. 172
Mandatory requirements ......................................................................... 172
Key selection criteria ............................................................................. 173
Developing Selection Criteria .............................................................. 174
PHYSICAL DEMANDS ........................................................................... 175
WORK ENVIRONMENT ........................................................................ 176
Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) .............................................. 177
Job Performance ...................................................................................... 177
Section 503 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 .................................... 178
Job Descriptions ..................................................................................... 179
Reasonable Accommodation ............................................................... 179
Accessibility ............................................................................................ 181
Sample Job Descriptions ......................................................................... 181
INDEX ................................................................................................... 189
ABOUT THE AUTHOR ........................................................................... 191

Table of Figures

Figure 1 Policy Deployment Process ..................................................... 2
Figure 2 Process Procedures Journey Workflow ................................. 6
Figure 3 Dinner Process Steps ............................................................. 24
Figure 4 Document Pyramid ................................................................. 27
Figure 5 Process Procedures Relationship Chart ................................. 40
Figure 6 Revenue Process ................................................................. 41
Figure 7 Three Core Process Flows ....................................................... 45
Figure 8 Diminishing Returns Curve .................................................. 48
Figure 9 Ten Core Processes ............................................................... 50
Figure 10 SIPOC Diagram ................................................................. 53
Figure 11 PDCA Cycle ................................................................. 54
Figure 12 PDCA Process Approach .................................................. 56
How to Write Policies and Procedures

Figure 13 Process Map Symbols ................................................................. 58
Figure 14 Order to Cash Process Map .................................................... 59
Figure 15 Credit Approval Flowchart ...................................................... 61
Figure 16 Credit Approval Swim Lane ..................................................... 63
Figure 17 Credit Approval Document Map ............................................. 65
Figure 18 Credit Approval Activity Map ................................................ 67
Figure 19 Credit Approval Workflow Diagram ....................................... 68
Figure 20 Rendered Process Map ............................................................ 69
Figure 22 Procedure Format ................................................................. 73
Figure 23 Procedure Format pg2 ............................................................ 74
Figure 24 Control Block ..................................................................... 75
Figure 25 Procedure Header ................................................................. 78
Figure 26 Procedure Footer ................................................................. 78
Figure 28 Procedure Metadata .............................................................. 79
Figure 29 MS Word Margins Menu ....................................................... 82
Figure 30 MS Word Page Setup ............................................................ 83
Figure 31 MS Word Header drop down ................................................. 84
Figure 32 MS Word Border dropdown ................................................ 85
Figure 33 MS Word Footer Dropdown .................................................. 86
Figure 34 MS Word Footer Design ....................................................... 87
Figure 35 MS Word Quick Parts dropdown ......................................... 88
Figure 36 MS Word Field Names .......................................................... 89
Figure 37 MS Word NumPages ............................................................. 90
Figure 38 MS Word Border Dropdown ................................................. 91
Figure 39 MS Word Table Dropdown .................................................. 92
Figure 40 MS Word Table Tools ........................................................... 93
Figure 41 MS Word Tables ................................................................. 94
Figure 42 MS Word Cell Height ............................................................ 95
Figure 43 Document Control Block ..................................................... 96
Figure 44 Procedure Metadata ............................................................ 97
Figure 45 MS Word Table Borders ........................................................ 98
Figure 46 MS Word Styles .................................................................. 99
Figure 47 MS Word Create Style ........................................................ 99
Figure 48 MS Word Style Formatting ................................................... 100
Table of Contents

Figure 49 MS Word Style Font ........................................................................... 100
Figure 50 Procedure Outline .............................................................................. 101
Figure 51 Procedure Revision History ................................................................. 102
Figure 52 Primary Procedure Steps ..................................................................... 117
Figure 53 Secondary Procedure Steps .................................................................. 117
Figure 54 Making Coffee Procedure .................................................................... 118
Figure 55 PDCA Procedure Format ...................................................................... 119
Figure 56 Review and Approve Workflow ............................................................. 145
Figure 57 Release Workflow ................................................................................ 146
Figure 58 Document Compliance Workflow .......................................................... 147
Figure 59 OnPolicy Home Screen ...................................................................... 150
Figure 60 Documents Tab ..................................................................................... 151
Figure 61 Documents Screen ............................................................................... 152
Figure 62 View Documents .................................................................................. 153
Figure 63 Edit Document ...................................................................................... 153
What is a procedure?

A “procedure” is a term used in a variety of industries to define a series of steps, taken together, to achieve a desired result.

Figure 1 shows where procedures fit in the deployment of a company’s strategy. Procedures explain how to accomplish a task, realize a policy, and help the company achieve its strategy. A procedure is sometimes called a work instruction. If you are preparing an ISO 9001 quality management system, then the term procedure is used to describe a process, whereas a work instruction is used to describe something more basic like a specific step in a process. For example, how to fill out a form. Procedures are known in other ways too.

Procedure Definition

A procedure is a series of steps, taken together, to achieve a desired result. It is a particular way of accomplishing something as in a repetitive approach, process or cycle to accomplish an end result. To make an effective process procedure we need to ensure that each repetition of the process has the ability to achieve the desired or planned results.
You may hear people ask about the SOP for purchasing new equipment. In this context an SOP is a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP). In other words, what are the steps for purchasing new equipment? These steps could be a checklist or ordered list, which we may also call a Work Instruction. These steps may include effectiveness criteria or controls to ensure the process is effective.

Can you purchase anything you want or are there controls like a budget, quality standards, approved vendors, or engineering specifications? Customers of the Purchasing Procedure are entitled to consistent service delivery based on established and accepted procedures—not on any one worker’s personal values, and not varying from one geographic area to another.

**Compliance Procedures**

Procedures are required by compliance standards such as ISO in quality, Sarbanes-Oxley for public company accounting, or the Joint Commission in healthcare. We also use procedures to train new employees on a process in order to obtain more consistent results. Procedures are used to document company knowledge to ensure important information is retained. We also use procedures in process improvement to document the future state of a process after we improve it so that we may communicate the new steps to others.

Over time, procedures improve and evolve into “best practices”. Sometimes these are called Good Manufacturing Practices or GMP for short. A GMP is an SOP that has evolved into a best practice. The medical device and pharmaceutical manufacturing industry refers to a procedure as a GMP in their quality system.

**Policies and Procedures**

Procedures are often associated with or supported by other documents like policies. What’s the difference between a policy and a procedure? The policy is the goal statement and the procedure is the description of how to achieve the goal. So basically, every procedure should be associated with a policy.
Other procedure supporting documents may include:

- Process Maps
- Business Manuals
- Job Descriptions
- Reports, Forms, and Checklists
- Business Objectives
- FMEA, Control Plans, Quality Plans

**Employee Policy Manual**

If you are writing a company manual or employee handbook, you will define policies necessary to comply with various laws and regulations as well as your own company standards. These employee manuals include policies and sometimes also include procedures too.

As you grow you will require more than an Employee Handbook. Your Employee Manual will grow into a full business manual. Keep growing and each individual department will write their own policies and procedures manual. Larger company’s write online policies and procedures because it is easier to communicate them to all employees at once.

Bizmanualz produces a full range of easily editable Microsoft Word templates covering your most important business departments:

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- Financial Procedures for managing cash
- Computer & IT Procedures for maintaining networks
- Sales & Marketing Plans for growing revenues
- Human Resources Policies to minimize employee liabilities
- Security Planning and Disaster Recovery to prepare for emergencies
- ISO 9001 Quality Manuals for customer satisfaction
- Policies and Procedures Supplements for industries
So What Is a Procedure?

By now, I hope we have answered “what is procedure.” A procedure is a way that you achieve consistent results. Procedures can be called a Standard Operating Procedure, SOP, GMP, work instruction or a best practice. Procedures are often required for compliance.

Your Workers will have greater confidence that their actions are supported by management, underlying statutes and regulations by following established procedures.

Your customers are entitled to consistent service delivery based on established and accepted procedures—not on any one worker’s personal values and not varying from one geographic area to another.

Your stakeholders pay for the mistakes, errors, or failures that result from inconsistent performance to established procedures.

Procedures are helpful for training and procedures help to retain important information. If your company desires greater consistency, improved customer satisfaction, or better compliance then you will want to put policies and procedures in place.

Scope of this Book

The rest of this book will explain how to put procedures in place. We will follow the process procedures journey (figure 2). First, we will look where procedures fit in within the context of the whole management system. Next, we will look at the building blocks of your procedures, your processes and how to map them out.
This is followed by how to turn your processes into procedures with tips on how to make your procedures more useful. Lastly, we will end with putting procedures together in a manual or online. We will cover the entire process procedures workflow.