

GUIDE

A BEGINNER'S

GUIDE TO

POLICY



MANAGEMENT

PowerDMS

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Introduction

New to policy management or trying to make your organization's policy management process more efficient? This guide will walk you through creating, organizing, and distributing policies and procedures. You'll learn best practices and steps for making sure every employee receives and understands the information they need to help your organization succeed.

How to Develop a Stellar Policy

The first step in policy management begins with the content of your policies. If the content of your policies isn't comprehensive and reflective of your agency's core values, every subsequent process in policy management will be more difficult.

Whether you're setting out to write a brand new policy or you have already established a decent starting point, these tips should be a helpful refresher in re-aligning your team with policy management best practices.

1. Develop a planning process

As you get started, it's important to determine the stakeholders involved and what everyone's role in policy planning entails. Establish a workflow for how you'll gather ideas, revise and finalize the policies, and disseminate them to your staff.

Once you have the workflow in place, gather all the chief decision makers for a roundtable discussion. This meeting creates an opportunity to collaborate on your organization's stance or position concerning all relevant subjects or issues. You may wish to involve staff members from different departments and levels of your organization to make sure everyone can agree on expectations that will apply to all personnel.

2. Construct an outline

Before you start writing, establish some foundational principles that will be present in all of your organization's policies. Here are some helpful questions to discuss:

- What values describe our team?
- What are our organization's primary mission and purpose?
- What is unique about working here?

Your organization's core values and principles should be the driving force behind every policy you create. Once your policy writing team is in unison regarding values and purpose, you're ready to begin authoring the policies.

It's helpful to create an outline to make sure your policies cover all relevant regulations and operations. First, make a list of all policies that address federal or state rules, regulations, and laws. Next, create an outline that hones in on expectations and acceptable behavior.

If you've encountered any negative or damaging incidents in the past, a policy is a perfect place to incorporate specific guidelines to prevent similar situations in the future. Try to make your outline as thorough as possible. Incorporate everything from workplace cell phone usage to sexual harassment.

3. Communicate a clear message

As you draft your organization's policies, try to use language that's easy to understand. Employees need to be able to follow policies to know what's expected of them and how to do their jobs correctly. Therefore, use common terminology that speaks directly to your personnel.

Avoid using complicated jargon or confusing sentence structures. Make your policies as clear and precise as possible. Also, make sure to provide a direct correlation that flows naturally into the procedure to show how employees should carry out or adhere to the policy.

4. Continually revise

Once the first policies have been drafted and received the thumbs up from upper-level management and your legal team, you're ready to send your plans out to the rest of your staff. But always remember that policies should be living, breathing documents.

Take time to regularly review and revise each policy, and add to your organization's library of policies as new issues and innovations arise. It's always better to have more policies than you need as opposed to running the risk of not having a sufficient amount in place.

The more subject areas you cover, the greater the chances of decreasing risk and increasing compliance. So even if it seems daunting and overwhelming, power through and create, create, create.

The aforementioned tips will help you create stellar and comprehensive policies that will streamline operations and establish clear expectations for employees.

Are you ready to implement your policies? Check out our [Policy Management FAQs](#).

Top 5 “Must-Haves” for Effective Policies

Poorly constructed or poorly managed policies can do significant damage. Ineffective policies can result in unproductive processes, disorderliness, injuries, or lawsuits. On the other hand, effective policies keep your organization running smoothly, keep employees safe, and minimize liability risks.

However, even the best policies don't do much good if no one follows them. So how do you successfully implement your policies and procedures? **Here are a few simple tactics to help make implementing policies as efficient and painless as possible:**

1. Be clear, concise, and to the point

Policies are simply not the place for flowery language and high-level jargon. Make sure your organization's policies are worded and structured in a way that is easy for employees to comprehend.

Simple, clearly worded policies help ensure all personnel fully understand expectations. It doesn't do any good to overwhelm readers by including unnecessary information.

Keep each policy short and to the point. Try to make sure you cover all your bases but hone in on what employees need to know.

2. Stay consistent

Contradictory policies and procedures open the door for trouble. If policies say opposing things, employees will not know which one to follow. This inconsistency may result in confusion and inefficiencies.

Consistent expectations and rules must be established to set the tone of the workplace and show the values representative of your organization. For example, if a zero-tolerance drug policy is in place, the message should be clear to all personnel that drugs will not be tolerated, whether in or out of the office. It is imperative that similar policies include the same strong wording to reiterate those areas that are strictly enforced.

3. Practice teamwork

Effective policy creation and management requires teamwork. Before distributing a new policy, gather input and approvals from leaders from different departments and levels of your organization.

This feedback will help identify information that you need to add or revise, reduce mistakes, and eliminate any duplication. Sharing responsibility among a team will help you create the strongest possible policies for your organization.

Setting up some form of workflow process will simplify and streamline collaborations.

4. Provide easy access to all personnel

Many organizations disseminate policies by just handing a policy manual to a new hire and then watching them sign a confirmation sheet shortly after.

This method can leave employees ill informed. They may lose the policy manual or not be able to access the policies when they need them. Switching to a paperless policy management software will allow your staff to access vital information on their own time from any computer or mobile device.

This accessibility improves everyone's job functionality and peace of mind by providing complete clarity on everything from gym reimbursement to payroll policies.

5. Analyze consistently

Policies need constant attention. Policy management is an ongoing process, not a one-time project. Be sure to analyze and revise your organization's policies on a routine basis.

The policy review is a crucial element that deserves the same focus and attention as financial analyses and job-performance evaluations. Set a tentative schedule for revisiting policies and procedures, and avoid waiting until the last minute.

Well-executed policies enable your organization to run more smoothly. Establishing clear, consistent expectations also contributes to the overall success and happiness of your staff.

Why Do I Need to Manage Policies and Procedures?

With so many time and budgetary constraints, policy and procedure management may not seem like a high priority.

However, a lack of high quality, consistent policy management can leave your organization open to risks such as lawsuits, which can end up costing more time, money, and resources in the end. Sound policy and procedure management is a worthwhile investment for many reasons, including:

1. Sustains company culture

Policies and procedures not only outline your organizational structure, but they also cultivate and maintain your company culture. Ultimately, policies serve as the glue that holds the organization together.

Good policies are grounded in your organization's core values, and thus set the tone of the overarching vision of how your organization should run. You should include everything from dress code to break-room etiquette.

It puts everyone on the same playing field and creates unison. However, not every member of your personnel will agree with every policy and procedure. Therefore, creating opportunities for feedback, within reason, can help sustain a close-knit culture. Gathering feedback gives your staff a voice and shows them that management values their opinions and suggestions. Good policy and procedure management processes make it easy for you to distribute policies to employees and gather feedback.

2. Mitigates risk

Well-managed policies and procedures help protect your organization. They're pillars of your organization that keep you compliant with things such as labor laws and regulations within your industry. They help your employees know the proper procedures to avoid risky behavior.

But good policy management can also help your organization mitigate long-term risks. An effective policy management program can help your organization document any risk-exposure incidents that occur and evaluate

3. Fosters compliant mentality

Employees are more likely to comply with policies when they understand what you expect of them and have access to the information they need when they need it. An arsenal of clear policies and procedures helps create a more compliant environment.

In turn, compliant personnel are typically more at ease and acutely aware of their boundaries. They know what is and isn't acceptable in the workplace (and out of the workplace, when representing the company).

Policy management allows your organization to communicate clear-cut guidelines that personnel must meet. This accountability creates unity and compliance by eliminating any doubt concerning roles, statuses, departments, etc.

4. Highlights pitfalls in the system

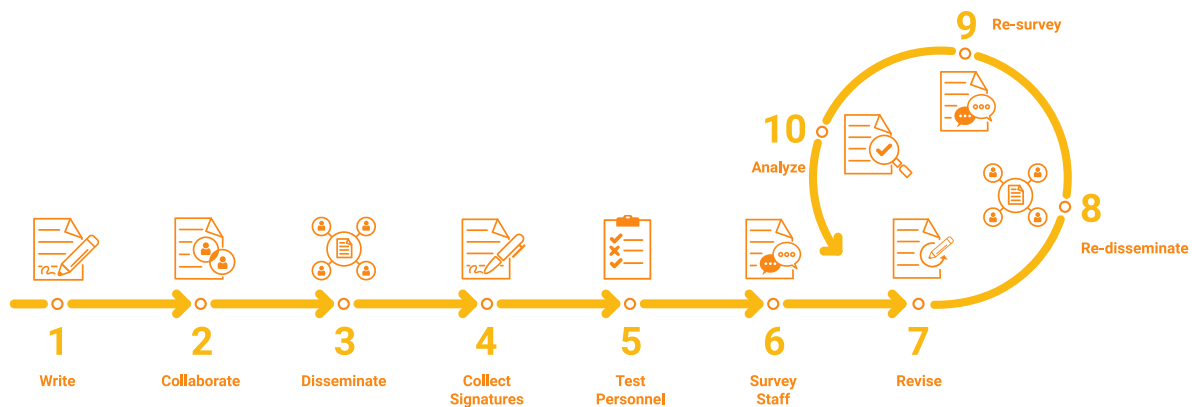
Without an efficient policy management system, it's easy for documentation to slip through the cracks, which inevitably translates to accountability issues. A good policy management platform lets you keep track of the entire management process.

Some allow you to access the complete document history, track employee signatures, and efficiently manage collaborations. Many software solutions also let you set reminders for document updates. This helps eliminate pitfalls that may have been in place and makes it easier to maintain compliance.

Managing policies and procedures may seem like a hassle at times. But in the long run, investing time and resources in policy management can make your organization stronger, more efficient, and more compliant.

How Do I Manage My Policies and Procedures?

Managing policies and procedures is no easy feat, but it's not impossible. It can be helpful to scale it down to the basics and simplify the process. Here are 10 steps to effectively manage your policies and procedures, and simultaneously achieve compliance.



1. **Write policies and procedures with your organization's mission in mind.**
2. **Collaborate on policies and procedures and involve all stakeholders.**
3. **Disseminate policies and procedures to all staff members who are affected.**
4. **Collect signatures to ensure receipt.**
5. **Test personnel on policies and procedures to ensure understanding.**
6. **Gather feedback from staff to iterate and improve.**
7. **Revise policies and procedures based on relevant feedback.**
8. **Re-disseminate updated policies.**
9. **Re-survey staff on policies and procedures.**
10. **Analyze policy compliance and repeat steps 7 through 10 as necessary.**

Depending on the size and scope of your organization, these steps could take a few months or a few years. In any case, following these steps will set you on the right path toward compliance.

Policy Management 101: The Five Steps to Success

Policy management is not just a necessary evil. In reality, quality policy construction, dissemination, and continuous management are crucial to any organization.

Whether it's a memo on the newest construction task taking place in the office or an update to a hand-washing procedure, every internal document has the same higher purpose: to keep the organization running smoothly and its personnel safe and happy.

You probably already have a collection of policies and procedures for your organization. They may exist in filing cabinets, PDFs on an intranet system, or documents floating around via email. But how are you managing them – if at all? And what about the content you know needs to be written, but you just can't find the time (or an appropriate platform on which to author them)?

Luckily, policy management software exists to help you through this process. Policy management software is the easiest and most efficient way to manage your policies and procedures. Here are five steps that will get you started on moving toward a better future with your policy management.

1. Make a list of your unique needs

Plenty of tools exist that can make your professional life easier while keeping you in compliance. But for what exactly is your organization looking? Maybe you just need a straightforward program that will let you upload and author documents. Or perhaps it goes further – you need a software that will allow you to gather electronic signatures. What about knowledge assessments, or a system that works directly with an outside organization to prove compliance with third-party standards? Making a list of your specific needs will help guide you to the right software.

2. Consider your options and make a purchase

Once you've made a list of what you need, do a little research. Google some relevant keywords that pertain to your needs, or even shoot a little higher with industry-specific searches (for example, "FDA compliance" or "nonprofit policy management"). See what websites offer something you can take away (like a whitepaper or eBook), which

give you the most bang for your buck, etc. Don't be afraid to ask questions of any sales representatives who contact you – that's their job.

3. Start compiling – or brainstorming

The current state and format of your policies is a significant factor in what this step means for you. If you already have all the documentation you need in one of the aforementioned formats (paper, PDF files, etc.), just upload them and make sure you stick to a consistent naming convention. If there are policies you need to author, then hopefully you chose a software that allows you to do that.

4. Disseminate

Enjoy time saved, as well as money saved on paper, by sending out your policies to those employees who need to read and sign off on them electronically. If necessary, attach tests for employees to take to ensure maximum knowledge retention.

5. Keep up with it

Set expiration dates on document signatures. These reminders will ensure no one's compliance slips through the cracks. It will save you from having to manually sort through a never-ending stack of papers or sets of separate PDF files.

The Importance of Following Through

For many people, the word policy has a negative connotation. It's true that policies and procedures exist to prevent adverse incidents from occurring. Unfortunately, it doesn't always work that way. Accidents happen, and then policies have to be enforced.

That's the word that gives policies and procedures their real negative connotation: enforced. No one likes the idea of being forced to do something.

However, in spite of the negative connotations, enforcement is key to effective policies and procedures. There have to be logical consequences for violating policy, and, when necessary, clear processes for investigating an incident and disciplining the responsible parties.

In other words, for your organization's policies to be effective, you have to be willing to follow through on implementing and enforcing them.

The first item on your policies and procedures checklist is to send out the most current documents for your personnel to sign off on. But true follow-through with policy management requires much more than that.

Electronic signatures and policy organization are important, but they shouldn't be the only compliance tasks on your checklist. People don't get hurt at the workplace because they forgot to sign off on a policy. Most of the time, incidents and accidents occur because of a lack of follow-through on the policies and procedures.

So how can you ensure your staff follows through on the steps toward compliance? Here are some ideas to get you started:

1. Implement training courses

Training is one of the main ways to ensure that personnel truly understand and know how to apply policies and procedures. In-person and online training can help ensure that your staff is gaining the knowledge necessary to perform their jobs in a safe, efficient manner.

Online training courses allow you to teach policies through other mediums such as videos, audio files, practical applications, and more to ensure a holistic skill set. Online training options are also self-paced and flexible, allowing employees to learn at their own pace instead of taking time out of operations for classroom training.

2. Test that knowledge

Do you ever wonder whether an employee actually understood the document they signed off on, or if they were just trying to get it over with?

This indifference might not seem to matter at the time of signing, but when it comes time to apply something that employee was supposed to have learned, it could mean the difference between a preventable situation and a safety hazard which, in turn, could turn into a lawsuit.

Find a paperless policy management solution that allows you to create unique tests that you can send alone or as accompaniments to policies and training courses. Tests can help you identify which information employees know well, and which areas may need more training.

3. Make information readily accessible

Last but not least, it's a good idea to make sure your personnel can easily access policy documents, training records, tests, and other materials that they need.

Implement a policy management system with a dynamic search capability so users can find information quickly and easily. Personnel is much more likely to take in and retain information if it's easily available to them – without having to shuffle through stacks of paper.

Policy Management FAQs

There's always more to learn about policy management and best practices. **Here's a list of frequently asked questions:**

1. I'm new to policy management – where do I begin?

First of all, start with your organization's mission statement. Next, find any codes or laws that your team needs to strictly adhere to (depending on your industry and location). Determine which type of language will resonate well with your staff.

Then, construct an outline of all policies that need to be implemented and categorize them according to department vs. the organization at large. Finally, make a checklist to ensure you account for all inclusions.

2. Whom should I involve in the process?

For quality assurance purposes and to lessen the burden on one person (e.g. the compliance or policy manager), it's best to form a team to ensure your policies cover all areas. This team can vary in size depending on the size and capacity of your organization.

The most helpful team will be composed of staff members from multiple departments to allow for the highest degree of insight.

3. How can I enhance the policy and procedure management process?

Send policies and procedures through a workflow process to gather feedback. Encourage participants to scrutinize the wording and structure to make sure policies are easy to understand and also fall in line with the organization's directives and goals.

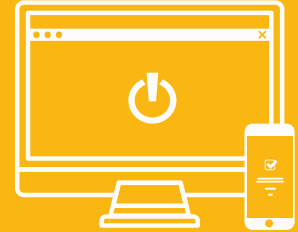
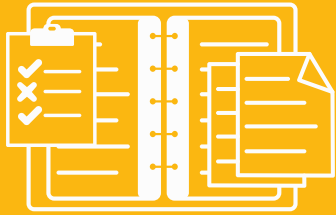
You may also wish to add tests to the review process to guarantee readers thoroughly understand the policies and

procedures currently in place, along with the expectations that are set forth. Ultimately, the test results will clarify which policies may need to be revisited and fine-tuned.

4. Is there a way to simplify?

Thankfully, yes, there are many ways to simplify. Investing in a policy management software is one of the easiest ways to eliminate wasteful printing while saving both time and money.

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