NAVEX GLOBAL™
The Ethics and Compliance Experts

THE DEFINITIVE GUIDE TO POLICY MANAGEMENT

Assessment tools, best-practice tips, considerations, and more

SUMMARY

If you are looking for a deeper understanding of how to effectively and efficiently manage your organization's employee handbook, code of conduct, and policies and procedures, *The Definitive Guide to Policy Management* is your go-to resource. No matter where you are today in your understanding of policy management, or how effective your current system may be, this guide will close the gaps in your understanding and offer new and practical perspectives and insights.
A definitive guide can be a lot to take in, so we have divided ours into three areas of study, each suited for a different user profile. Whether you wear one, two, or all three hats in your organization, these divisions will help you quickly access the information you seek.

CONTENTS

VISIONARY

For the visionary seeking a deeper understanding of policy management, the first area of study examines the purpose of policies and provides an elevated perspective on policy management to help you determine the best course of action for your organization.

Policy Management Redefined: Forget What You Thought You Knew

1.1 THE PURPOSE OF POLICIES

Policies are the backbone of your business. At their best they are a dynamic body of shared knowledge used to strengthen, support, and protect your company's success. Ensuring that you have the necessary policies and procedures in place—and enforced—will help you accomplish your organization's strategic vision while protecting its people, reputation, and bottom line.

> "Policies and procedures are the strategic link between the company's vision and its day-to-day operations."
>
> Ingrid Fredeen, Vice President, Advisory Services, NAVEX Global

Your company's vision, mission, and values serve as a clearly visible "north star" for policy development. Policies drive the various facets of corporate culture—ethical, social, professional, and legal. They should reflect and support the organization's vision as well as its desired attitudes toward performance, including a culture of compliance.

Supporting the organizational vision by creating, maintaining, communicating, and training on your policies requires a significant effort. If your team becomes buried by onerous administrative tasks, you and they may have a tendency to begin regarding policies like some employees do—as a necessary evil and an inconvenience. Your team cannot afford to think this way; they must champion the idea that policies can and do change behavior, alter decision-making, and serve many vital purposes within the organization.

10 PURPOSES OF POLICIES

1. **To convey the organization's mission and enable the execution of its strategy**
2. **To ensure that employees clearly understand expectations and consequences**
3. **To influence employee behavior and decision-making**
4. **To create a positive and respectful workplace**
5. **To foster credibility and trust with customers and business partners**
6. **To improve productivity and business performance**
7. **To meet all legal standards required to operate**
8. **To protect the organization, its people, its reputation, and its bottom line**
9. **To avoid litigation and mitigate risk**
10. **To prevent, detect, and respond to criminal conduct**

Training employees on the critical importance of company policies can have a positive impact on their perspective and attitudes toward policies and influence their behavior. One of the most effective ways to communicate the importance of policies is to promptly investigate allegations and enforce policies when violations occur. When employees observe company policies being swiftly and consistently enforced, it sends a clear signal about management's attitudes toward policies and the consequences of their violation. It is critical that executives set the tone from the top about the value and the importance of abiding by company policies.

1.2 HIGH STAKES

In 2012 more than 4,000 federal rules were scheduled and more than 3,000 existing labor laws existed on the books. In the past 15 years, employee lawsuits have risen 400 percent, with half of those suits won by the employee.

The stakes are high when it comes to having the right policies and maintaining them. With the continuous growth of legal and regulatory requirements, complex business operations, global expansion, and employee litigation, it is certainly no surprise that companies need a well-thought-out approach to policy implementation and management. But what may be surprising to many is that a recent survey indicated that 66 percent of companies felt they had little or no control of their policies.

Are you one of those companies? Below is a short poll to help you consider the strength of your organization's current system.

Did You Know?

The average court award for employee lawsuits was $493,000 before punitive damages and attorneys' fees, and out-of-court settlements average $311,000.

Can you answer *yes* to the following questions?

1. **Do you know the last time your complete business policies came under review?**
2. **Are each of your policies reviewed periodically by Legal to ensure compliance with current laws and regulations?**
3. **Do you know who creates your policies as well as the standards and the methods used to implement and enforce them?**
4. **Do you maintain meticulous attestation records indicating that your employees have read and understood the policies that apply to them?**
5. **Can your employees find the most current version of any assigned policy in less than three minutes?**

If you cannot readily and definitively answer *yes* to these questions, your organization could be exposed to significant risk.

The following two case examples highlight the importance of keeping policies current, reviewing their content, and documenting how often employees are trained on or reminded of a given policy.

CASE STUDY 1

In 2009 a large restaurant company was fined more than $1 million for gender-based discrimination under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

The company had a longstanding policy (established in 1938) that banned the hiring of men as food servers. The company maintained the same policy for 39 years following the enactment of Title VII, until the discrimination charge was filed in 2003. It stands as an extreme example of failing to review and update policies but a powerful one nonetheless. An examination of Equal Employment Opportunity Commission cases reveals countless similar examples of organizations penalized for failing to update "longstanding" policies.

On the other hand, organizations that approach policy management strategically and exercise ruthless discipline with respect to their policies will yield returns in organizational alignment, corporate culture, and ultimately their bottom-line results. Not only that but when incidents occur or regulators come knocking, your organization will be prepared.

CASE STUDY 2

In 2012 the US Department of Justice (DOJ) declined to prosecute Morgan Stanley when employee Garth Peterson violated the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act (FCPA). The following DOJ statement explains the decision:

"Morgan Stanley's internal policies, which were updated regularly to reflect regulatory developments and specific risks, prohibited bribery and addressed corruption risks associated with the giving of gifts, business entertainment, travel, lodging, meals, charitable contributions and employment. Morgan Stanley frequently trained its employees on its internal policies, the FCPA and other anti-corruption laws. Between 2002 and 2008, Morgan Stanley trained various groups of Asia-based personnel on anti-corruption policies 54 times. During the same period, Morgan Stanley trained Peterson on the FCPA seven times and reminded him to comply with the FCPA at least 35 times. Morgan Stanley's compliance personnel regularly monitored transactions, randomly audited particular employees, transactions and business units, and tested to identify illicit payments. Moreover, Morgan Stanley conducted extensive due diligence on all new business partners and imposed stringent controls on payments made to business partners."

In addition to maintaining existing policies, assessing and keeping up with the pace of change in your particular business environment should be a priority. Given the staggering pace at which business conditions evolve, policies and procedures must reflect current realities. Asking some key questions will help ensure that your policies are aligned with constantly—and rapidly—changing business conditions.

Keeping Up with the Pace of Change: Questions You Can Ask

Workforce

Has the nature of your workforce changed?
Has the way your employees do their jobs changed?

Operations and Business Structure

Have there been changes to products, services, or delivery methods?
Are you now outsourcing certain jobs?
Have certain departments taken on additional responsibilities or oversight?
Have your operating budgets changed?
Are you offering customers new ways to pay?

Leadership

Do your policies reflect shifts in direction resulting from new leadership?

Technology

Do your policies reflect technologies currently in use?
Do employees use their own tech devices to perform their job functions?
Is your business technology keeping pace with your customers' technology?

Compliance and Legal

Are your policies completely in accord with new laws and regulations?
Is your policy language clear and explicit?
Have employees attested to these policies with electronic signatures?

Not having policies is akin to driving without automobile insurance. It is both against the law and extremely risky. No matter how safe a driver you are, at times you will be unable to escape the bad driving of others. In organizations it is only a matter of time before someone makes a mistake. If appropriate conduct has not been outlined, published, and communicated, the accountability and the liability of the action will fall on the organization.

1.3 POLICY MANAGEMENT REDEFINED

Policies, procedures, codes of conduct, and employee handbooks have existed for ages, but the art of "policy management" as a business practice is relatively new. In large part the prevailing understanding of policy management solutions available today has been shaped by solution vendors. Unfortunately, many vendors limit the scope of policy management to the challenges their solutions can favorably address. In so doing they ignore important aspects of policy management.

A simple vendor definition of policy management might sound something like this: "Policy management is all the practices associated with managing your organization's policies from draft to implementation, including the collaboration, communication, storage, and documentation at key stages of the life cycle."

Policy management redefined applies the lens of the visionary, the practitioner, and the strategist at the same time: *Policy management is the art of enabling and empowering your organization to achieve its strategic vision by implementing safeguards that facilitate day-to-day operations by preventing, detecting, and responding to risks.* Later in this guide, you will learn about how a vision statement or declaration document helps lay the groundwork for policy creation (see Section 2.2: Laying the Groundwork for Policy Development).

Modern policy management takes into account the elevated purpose of policies and the critical role they play in protecting an organization. Effective policy management—with strong, well-managed policies integrated across the business—sets forth standards for individual and business conduct that result in improved performance and enhanced corporate culture.

Once transformed, your policy practice will fulfill multiple functions:

- **Communicate your company's vision, mission, and strategic plan**
- **Articulate and build the desired culture**
- **Drive standards for individual and business conduct**
- **Shape, guide, optimize, and protect performance at every level**
- **Help ensure regulatory compliance**
- **Minimize risk by reducing litigation and liability**

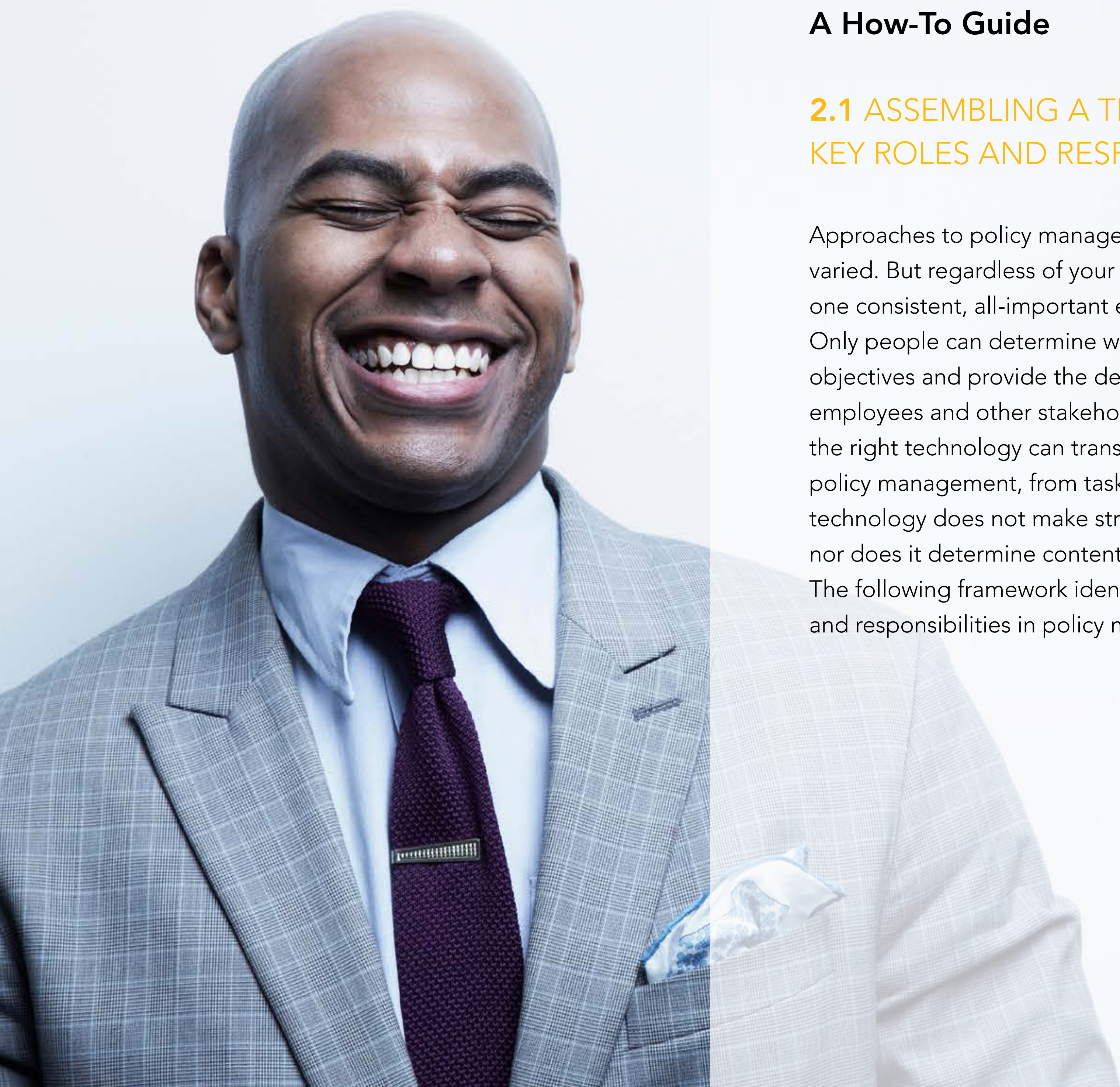
Ultimately, organizational leaders have a responsibility—legal, financial, and ethical—to make policy management a priority. But to get there—to transform your policy management practices—there are seven key steps:

1. **Assembling a team and assigning key roles and responsibilities**
2. **Laying the groundwork for policy development**
3. **Learning how to write effective policies**
4. **Managing policies throughout the life cycle**
5. **Assessing your current approach**
6. **Comparing alternatives for improvement**
7. **Determining a course of action and implementing it**

The remainder of *The Definitive Guide to Policy Management* is designed to help you understand each of these steps in greater detail. Section 2 provides practical how-to steps for getting started, writing policies, and managing the policy life cycle.

PRACTITIONER

For the practitioner who is in the trenches day in and day out, the second area of study provides instructions on how to get started, lay a foundation for success, and effectively manage policies at every stage of the document life cycle.



Policy Management Practices: A How-To Guide

2.1 ASSEMBLING A TEAM: KEY ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Approaches to policy management are many and varied. But regardless of your approach, there is one consistent, all-important element: people. Only people can determine whether policies meet objectives and provide the desired safety net for employees and other stakeholders. And while the right technology can transform the nature of policy management, from task-based to strategic, technology does not make strategic decisions nor does it determine content. Your people do. The following framework identifies the key roles and responsibilities in policy management.

FORMING A POLICY OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

A Policy Oversight Committee of senior leaders and other key policy stakeholders is responsible for developing and implementing policies, procedures, and controls throughout the organization. The committee ensures alignment with the organization's vision, mission, and values at the heart of its business. These leaders also set a tone of enterprisewide respect for policy practice by making policy management a priority worthy of time and resources.

Who Should Sit on the Policy Oversight Committee?

Generally speaking, a Policy Oversight Committee comprises individuals representing the following groups:

- **Senior leaders with governance responsibilities who monitor and approve policies**
- **Leaders representing key areas connected to policy implementation, including Compliance, Legal, Risk, Information, Security, Quality, and Human Resources**
- **Leaders of broad employee segments affected by the policies**
- **Policy administrators with oversight of the policy and procedure process**

"Someone has to be given responsibility for managing the centralized process. It can't be an untended garden; it's a labor of love to do a great job managing policies."

Ingrid Fredeen, Vice President, Advisory Services, NAVEX Global

The Policy Oversight Committee delegates roles and responsibilities to any number of individuals and groups of policy stakeholders.

Document control administrators

(also known as policy coordinators) are system controllers in charge of all system functions, particularly when a company uses policy management software. The best document control administrators are effective trainers and skilled facilitators because they are responsible for guiding others through the policy creation process.

Document owners and authors

monitor the implementation and the life cycle of the policy from the time it is enacted. The owner is typically the same as the author, although separate people who work closely together may be employed to author and then own the policy. Document authors write a policy and manage the various stages of its revision. It is essential that the author is well versed in issues relevant to the policy (especially laws and regulations) and capable of producing a clear, direct, complete policy document.

Reviewers

are assigned by the document owner and have the option to accept, reject, or revise a policy under review. Reviewers evaluate existing and new policies during all stages of the policy management life cycle.

Approvers

have similar responsibilities to reviewers, but they also have the authority to give final sign-off when a policy meets the criteria to be enacted. A reviewer may or may not also act as an approver.

Additional stakeholders

are often called upon by the document owner or author to take part in the development process, including research, brainstorming, and the creation of policy outlines. These additional contributors may include subject-matter experts, employees affected by a given policy, or nonemployees who are integrally linked to operations (such as government agencies, creditors, or unions). There are also additional roles to consider:

Proxy authors write documents on behalf of a document owner who may be too busy but needs to maintain ultimate responsibility for the document.

Collaborators are content or subject-matter experts who can help write sections of the document pertaining to topics that are unfamiliar to the document owner.

Translators translate documents into other languages before they are approved.

Brainstorming Committees can be helpful to the process with the use of surveys, small-group meetings on specific topics, and policy management software.

Other responsibilities include distributing policies and managing the promotion or awareness efforts around the policy release. Policies that represent areas of particularly significant risk to people or the organization should be carefully implemented with training programs, include assessments to measure comprehension, and require attestation of readership by employees. Finally, someone on the team needs to bear ownership of maintaining critical documentation for audit and reporting purposes.

DOCUMENTING THE POLICY DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

BEST PRACTICE

At every stage of policy development, it is critical that you maintain records documenting the participants and their roles in the process. This includes setting milestones and deadlines to ensure that each participant brings the expected level of expertise to the table.

With a clear understanding of policy management roles and responsibilities, you are now ready to lay the groundwork for policy development. Next we discuss the importance of a meta-policy, key terms, and how to prioritize your policy creation and review efforts before you begin writing.

2.2 LAYING THE GROUNDWORK FOR POLICY DEVELOPMENT

As with any management practice, you should have a strategic approach that serves as a foundation for every step that follows. The first step should be a vision statement or declaration document that serves as a reference point for policy creation. If you have polices or procedures that do not support your vision, they should be eliminated or modified, or your vision should be modified to reflect them.

BEST PRACTICE

The Declaration Document

The following is an example of a declaration document formerly used by PolicyTech.™

Vision Statement

Defines success for your organization

Our vision is to be the leading global provider of policy and procedure management software and to increase business efficiency and profit maximization for our clients.

Mission Statement

How you will accomplish your vision

We will accomplish our vision by developing and supporting user-friendly, flexible, and comprehensive policy and procedure management software.

Quality Policy

Also known as core values or guiding principles—the attributes that you believe to be essential to fulfilling your mission and realizing your vision

At PolicyTech™, IMAGE is everything.

- Instant customer service
- Manageable project implementation
- Appealing product design
- Genuine concern for customers and employees
- Expert and friendly staff

The Meta-Policy: Creating a Policy on Policies

Among a Policy Oversight Committee's chief tasks is creating a policy on policies, sometimes called a meta-policy, that establishes the approach to the policy life cycle from creation, review, and approval to distribution, tracking, and updating. Defining consistent guidelines and processes for creating and managing corporate policies is critical to having policies that consistently work toward the achievement of your vision.

A meta-policy explains, in general terms, the factors that should be considered when creating and implementing new policies. This overarching policy may also prescribe where a policy is stored, the duration that a policy remains active, when it must be reviewed, and instructions for standardized formatting.

A strong policy management framework includes a Policy Oversight Committee, a policy on policies, and overarching guidelines for policy development.

"A policy should not be able to get into the central repository unless it follows the meta-policy, so you have that nice circle of control."

Lisa Hill, President, PolicyScape Consulting, and Co-Chair, OCEG Policy Management Group

Policy Management Glossary

As you get ready to draft policies, it is important to understand some key terms that often cause confusion. Here are some fundamentals.

policy
A document that contains several related policy statements

policy statement
An overarching, broad-stroke statement of what an employee or other resource will do (but not how to do it)

processes
General outlines that describe the steps needed to accomplish a major function, objective, or task identified by a policy

procedures
Detailed step-by-step outlines that describe how to accomplish the tasks needed to support a process or policy

quality record
Information generated that measures the quality of the completed process or procedure

Prioritizing Documents

As a rule of thumb, policies are necessary when they define organizational values or mandates, address regulatory obligations, or manage potential risk or liability. Keep in mind that too many policies burden the organization and too few expose it to unnecessary risk. It helps to prioritize which policies you will develop (or revise) first. The following questions should be considered as you prioritize your policy development efforts. This list could be used to prioritize the order in which you tackle policy creation or updates, or it might be used to identify policies that can be consolidated or eliminated altogether.

20 Questions for Prioritizing Policy Development Efforts

1. Does the document communicate executive direction such as vision, mission, values, or objectives?
2. How critical is the document to achieving your vision, mission, values, and goals?
3. How integral is the policy to the success, support, and enablement of daily operations?
4. How urgent is the need for written directions on this particular subject?
5. How unclear or complex is this issue to the average employee?
6. How often will employees refer to the document?
7. Is the policy integral to establishing or shaping your culture?
8. How many employees are affected by the policy?
9. What are the potential consequences of not having the policy or of its being outdated?
10. Is this policy critical to workplace health or safety?
11. Could the lack of this policy result in harm to people?
12. Could the lack of this policy halt or slow operations?
13. Is the policy required or recommended by local, state, or federal law?
14. Have recent events necessitated changes to or creation of a policy?
15. Is the policy required for regulatory compliance?
16. Is the policy required for a certification audit?
17. How probable or likely is an incident or violation of this nature to occur?
18. How serious would the ramifications be if an incident arose and no policy existed or a policy was outdated?
19. Would the policy resolve existing challenges?
20. Might the lack of the policy lead to reputational damage or misrepresentation by an employee?

5 Tips to Ensure That Policies Meet Long-Term Compliance Goals

1 **Align policies with compliance, assurance, and risk governance objectives.**

2 **Align and update policies based on shifts in the regulatory environment.**

3 **Define who is accountable throughout the policy life cycle.**

4 **Ensure that employees understand and adhere to policies.**

5 **Identify and address gaps in compliance and policy exceptions.**

With clearly defined roles and a strong framework in place, you are ready to begin writing and editing policies. Follow your priorities and work toward your policy objectives. Continually evaluate whether your policy development efforts are in alignment with the organization's strategic objectives.

2.3 THE POLICY MANAGEMENT LIFE CYCLE: HOW TO WRITE EFFECTIVE POLICIES

"Creating policies is not—nor should it be—a routine. Processes may need to meet highly specific regulatory requirements, create a corporate ethos, or back up social responsibility statements."

—Ben Kerschberg, *Forbes* magazine

The Six Stages of the
Policy Management Life Cycle

1 **Create**
2 **Review**
3 **Approve**
4 **Distribute**
5 **Track**
6 **Update**

The Basic Elements of a Policy

What Every Document Needs

Policy title to simplify references to the policy

Rationale that briefly states why the policy exists or why a new policy is replacing an old one—with a focus on how the policy benefits the company and the user

Definitions, including key words and terms, to guard against ambiguity and misinterpretation

Scope statement that stipulates whether the policy is limited to individuals in certain roles or with certain responsibilities or whether it applies more broadly to departments or the entire organization

Related documents that provide context and background, including links to those documents

Key dates to identify when the policy was written, implemented, or altered

The First Stage in the Policy Management Life Cycle: Create

Policy creation is the first of six stages in the policy management life cycle. The first stage focuses on how to write a policy draft—specifically, the important elements of a policy, the process, the writing style, the look and feel, and legal considerations. Section 2.4 we discuss the subsequent stages in the life cycle.

The Writing Process

1. Research

Before beginning to write, the policy owner—and writers assigned to the policy—should gather relevant information from a broad range of perspectives, both internal and external.

Internal

- Employee feedback
- Risk assessment
- Incident reports in the case management system
- Quality/compliance feedback
- Governance feedback

External

- Legislation
- Regulations
- Customer feedback
- Best practices
- Example policies from other compliant organizations

2. Brainstorm

Key stakeholders and subject-matter experts may meet to discuss and further define a policy or procedure's purpose, presumed audience, strengths and weaknesses, metrics for evaluation, and impact on other policies and procedures.

3. Outline

After researching and brainstorming the content with stakeholders and subject-matter experts, it is time for the owner or author to take the information researched and brainstormed and create an outline. The outline should reflect the different perspectives and feedback shared by stakeholders and subject-matter experts.

BEST PRACTICE

Consistent Terminology

Part of achieving clarity is using consistent language and terminology. Terms such as *web*, *Internet*, and *online* are often used interchangeably. Your IT people know the difference; make sure those on the Policy Oversight Committee do, too. Pick one term for what you mean and use it consistently throughout all company policies.

Writing Style

Policies should be direct, without room for interpretation, but they should never come off as hostile or condescending. Policies should be written in the same professional voice, regardless of the target audience.

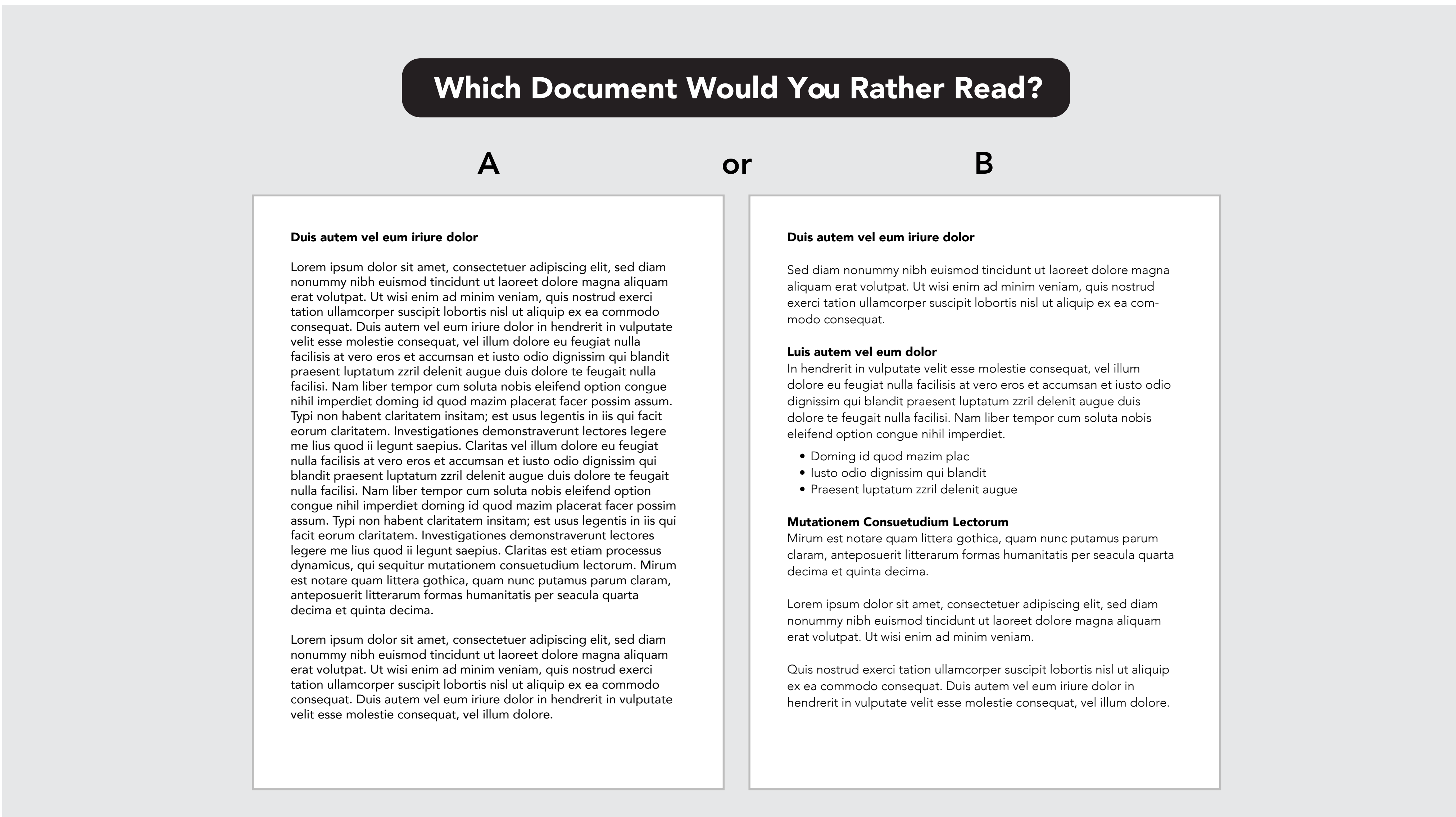
The importance of clarity cannot be understated. Conflated, convoluted, circuitous statements thick with jargon will impress a point on no one. Policy content must be unambiguous, grammatically correct, and error-free to be certain that the policy means what it says and says what it means.

Below are some suggestions and legal considerations for writing style.

- Make sure wording is clear, precise, and easy to understand.
- Ensure that policies and procedures are complete, in proper order, and accurate.
- Do your best to know the applicable laws and regulations—and make sure the policy complies.
- Consider the informal and unwritten rules as well.
- Policies and procedures must be worded carefully. For example:
    - Avoid promissory language. The word *will* means that you are committed to that position or action. The word *shall* is the strongest legal commitment you can make.
    - Watch out for “weasel words” such as *can*, *may*, *must*, *ought*, *could*, *should*, and *might*.
    - Watch out for absolutes such as *always* and *never*.
    - Never use wording that restricts the organization’s ability to act or that unwittingly forms a contract.
    - Reserve the right to make changes.
- Be prepared to enforce whatever you write. If you write something without intending to enforce it, you are better off not writing it.
- Clarify who is required to read and follow the procedure.
- Make sure you are clear about who is responsible for each step in the procedure.
- Be specific about the consequences of noncompliance.
- Consider if the procedure is written in a safe, reasonable, and fair manner.
- Do not allow policies to become obsolete or inapplicable under a regulatory or legal regime.
- Always remember the policy and procedure motto: *say what you mean—and do what you say!*

Formatting: Looks Matter

It is important to use a standardized format for policies. Formatting discrepancies are confusing. They can give the impression of being outdated or disconnected from one another. If you really want readers to become engaged in the document, you must be cognizant that people are attracted to clean, well-designed documents just as they would be to an effective advertisement. White space is appealing, so don't try to cram too much text into a small amount of space, or you will find people tuning out the message.



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Fortunately, you don't have to be a graphic designer to create engaging documents. Here are some tips for improving a layout:

- Break up sections with headings and subheadings.
- Use bullets or numbers to define a list.
- Include images, tables, flowcharts, graphs, and quotes.

Policy management software helps control the look and feel of policies by providing and restricting document creation to templates you have created or uploaded, to ensure consistent formatting across the organization.

The following page is a basic template example.

NAVEX GLOBAL™
The Ethics and Compliance Experts

{Title}

Introduction paragraph could go here. Text goes here. This is where one could type a complete paragraph describing the introduction. Text goes here until you have a complete paragraph of text to work with. Text goes here and lots more text goes here until you have a complete paragraph of text to work with. Text goes here until you have a complete paragraph of text to work with.

Main topics could go here:
Text goes here until you have a complete paragraph of text to work with. Text goes here until you have a complete paragraph of text to work with.

- Text goes here until you have a complete line of text to work with.
- Text goes here also.

11 Commandments of Policy Formatting and Writing

Thou shalt…

1. Use the same template for each policy so that employees know where to look for key information.
2. Limit policies and procedures to one or two pages. If more pages than that are required, consider dividing up the policy or procedure into smaller topical areas.
3. Put new policies or procedures on a separate page instead of front-to-back. While putting policies and procedures in a booklike format may require fewer printed pages, it will confuse readers and look intimidating. It is not effective.
4. Use bullets and lists to organize information. This makes the document easier to follow.
5. Make sure the title describes the policy or procedure and distinguishes it from similar documents.
6. Keep sentences short. A good rule of thumb is a maximum of 21 words. One study showed that sentences with 33 words or more lost two-thirds of the readers.
7. Keep paragraphs short. Long paragraphs are intimidating and hard to read. Four or fewer lines is optimal, if possible.
8. Keep lines short. Text lines that run on forever are hard to follow. If possible, consider formatting the policy to 30 characters wide.

Thou shalt **not…**

9. Use long words. Long words hurt readability. A good rule for words of three or more syllables is to use them sparingly—if at all.
10. Write in the passive voice. Use active verbs to make the reader more accountable and the writing more interesting and easier to comprehend.
11. Use vague modifiers such as *proper*, *relevant*, *appropriate*, *timely*, *normal*, *sizable*, and *small*. These modifiers create more questions than answers. Be specific. For example, when explaining size directions, you wouldn't say, "build a large fence." Rather, you should give specifics such as "build a 6-foot-high fence."

With a policy draft completed, it is time to circulate the document among key stakeholders for review and feedback. Section 2.4 takes you through the remaining stages of the policy management life cycle: review, approval, distribution, tracking, and updating.

2.4 MANAGING THE POLICY LIFE CYCLE

Best Practice: Administrator Accountability

To ensure that policies align with your governance principles and the meta-policy, a document control administrator should oversee the entire policy life cycle for all policies, including drafting, reviewing, and editing policies before final approval, distribution, and training.

Review and Approval: Embracing a Continuous Process

Policies proceed through a number of iterations before they are published. Rarely, if ever, does the first draft of a policy meet the criteria for approval. In fact, this should not be the goal. To develop a strong, effective policy system that supports, advances, and protects your business, policy development must be viewed as an ongoing process that requires careful attention, time, and resources.

With a draft complete, the owner submits a document to the reviewers. Reviewers ensure accuracy, completeness, and alignment with the pre-established guidelines of the meta-policy. If necessary, reviewers provide suggestions on how to improve the process or procedure, recommend ways to better communicate ideas in the document, and identify and correct errors.

The review cycle can be laborious. Reviewers may have differences of opinion, miss deadlines, or fail to provide feedback at all. The policy owner has to work with them to collect and consolidate feedback, reconcile disagreements, and make requested changes. Some documents require several rounds and varying levels of review. For example, first-round reviewers might edit the document for content and readability, second-round reviewers might ensure legality, and third-round reviewers might look at strategic alignment.

Once reviewers have signed off on a document, it is forwarded to those with the authority to approve it for publication. The approval stage can also result in a few iterations, but typically by this stage most major changes have been made and only minor changes are necessary. Upon approval, the policy is official and part of the company's greater body of policies. Approval also transforms the policy into a legal document in the eyes of the law. But simply creating, reviewing, and approving a policy is only half the battle—you still need to distribute, track, and, when necessary, update it.

BEST PRACTICE

LEGAL REVIEW

The organization's legal experts should review policies to ensure that they reflect current laws and regulations. Every one of your company's policies should hold up under legal and public scrutiny. If a policy seems only marginally defensible, you are inviting liability, litigation, and risk by implementing it.

Distribution

You cannot simply publish a policy and expect employees to read it, understand it, and refer to it as needed. Employees must be notified, reminded, and directed where to find policies and any actions required.

Before rolling out new policies, the document control administrator will develop a dissemination strategy to advise employees that policy changes are forthcoming and, if necessary, prepare them to adjust to those changes.

Audience

Keep in mind that not every policy needs to go to every employee. Determining the relevant "audience" can help prevent policy overload caused by overwhelming users with information that doesn't apply to them. Too much information can be confusing and may lessen an employee's retention of policies that are required.

Methods of Distribution

There are three common methods of policy distribution:

- Printed copies (binders or manuals) delivered physically to the employee
- Electronic copies hosted on an intranet, shared drive, server, or hard drive, with manual e-mail notifications for delivery
- Electronic copies hosted on policy management software, with automated e-mail notifications and reporting

Three Methods of Distribution: Pros and Cons

	Pros	Cons
Printed copies	• You make a personal impression about how important the document is at the time of delivery. • While handing out the document, you can answer questions people may have. • People have a copy of the policy or procedure for easy reference. • The policy is tangible and visibly present.	• The method is time consuming. • There is a cost of manual distribution in employee time. • There is a cost for paper and binders. • Hard copies are often filed or discarded. • Changes require a new handbook for each employee. • Maintaining hard-copy policies discourages frequent updates. • Obtaining signatures on thousands of documents can be impractical, if not impossible.
E-mailed copies	• Appropriate staff members receive a digital copy to which they can refer. • Distribution is much faster than hand delivery or shipping. • The cost of printing or photocopying is reduced and in some cases eliminated.	• It may be difficult to find where a document is stored or saved. • There is a risk of employees referring to outdated document versions. • Extensive tracking is needed to confirm that e-mails are sent to the right people, especially new hires. • Using e-mails as proof that documents were read may not stand up in court (see *Campbell v. General Dynamics*)
Software	• Readers are automatically assigned to procedures based on roles, job titles, or their departments. • New employees receive instant, ongoing notification of required readership tasks based on their job description. • Employees are required to attest electronically that they have read and understood the document. • Quizzes can measure individual reader comprehension. • Real-time reports show who has read which documents. • Employees can easily find policies at any time, at any location, with advanced search capabilities.	• The cost of software may be a factor. Compare costs by downloading our free ROI Case Study

Ongoing Accessibility

Distribution should inform users how to gain speedy and continuous access to policies through a central repository. Access is critical to ensuring effective implementation across the organization. When employees cannot quickly find what they are looking for, they will give up and do what they think is best—or they will ask someone else, who may not truly understand the policy either. Neither option leads to a standardized quality of services or product.

The following are some recommendations, depending on the type of system you will be setting up.

Paper/Binders	Intranet/Network Posting	Software
• Have a set of binders in each department. • Try to keep in that department only the documents that apply to those employees. • Maintain a current table of contents for each department in each binder. • Make sure titles of documents are self-explanatory so that employees can find them (with most-searched-for words at the beginning of the title, if possible). • Exchange newly approved policies or procedures for outdated ones as quickly as possible to avoid different employees following different, possibly conflicting, procedures. • Remove outdated copies from binders and archive them. • Archiving is best done in a secure area. A fairly large bookshelf that can hold many binders is required. • Keep tables of contents in archived binders current in case of audit or lawsuit. • Keep archived policies and procedures for at least seven years (some suggest much longer for sensitive policies). • If you have regulatory guidelines with which you must show policy compliance, it helps to create a spreadsheet with each document linked to each regulation with which it complies.	• Design a site or folder structure that is easily navigable. • Although it may require posting duplicate documents in different folders or pages, it will be easier for employees if you can guide them to a folder or page that is customized for them. • Ideally, you will have a search tool. • Make sure the title contains relevant key words so that employees can search for and find it. • Add new documents as approved. • Make sure you remove all outdated copies. • Create a policy that your IT team will agree with, where they post new policies or procedures at a certain time on a daily or weekly basis. • Maintain a binder/bookshelf structure similar to that for a paper-based system because you will need to keep hard copies of all approved policies and procedures. • Use a spreadsheet to link to regulatory guidelines.	• Ensure that the software is easy to navigate (or it won't be used). • Make sure documents can appear in multiple folders so that you can point staff to just the one that applies to them. • Have a powerful search tool, by title, key word, and full-text. • Software should automatically publish new policies when approved and notify relevant employees. • Software should have a compliant electronic signature system to avoid having to keep hard copies outside the system. • Software should automatically archive old policies when new ones are approved. • Software should link documents to regulations and be easy to retrieve by regulation.

Whichever method you choose, having a centralized policy management system that enables you to automatically search, catalog, and archive documents will minimize your frustration and risk.

"Policies are the vehicles that communicate and define values, goals, and objectives so that culture does not morph out of control. But the policies must also be well managed so that they are both effective and efficient tools to help the organization stay on the path it chooses."

Michael K. Rasmussen, JD, OCEG Fellow, CCEP, GRCP, CISSP, Chief GRC Pundit, GRC 20/20 Research, LLC

Training

It is important that you have an effective process for educating employees about the policies and procedures they are responsible for following.

To solve this problem, IT research and advisory firm Gartner suggests a five-step closed-loop process:

- Educate employees.
- Monitor employees' activities.
- Take action when policies are misused.
- Explain the steps that were taken and why.
- Re-educate employees about changes.

With Gartner's recommendations in mind, there are several methods for training employees on new policies and procedures and assessing their comprehension:

- Quizzes
- Staff meetings
- In-service training
- Online training

Although training is extremely important, education may quickly fade if it is infrequent or if the employee cannot easily find and refer back to the original policy or procedure.

Ongoing Tracking and Updates

The policy owner is responsible for monitoring the policy's implementation and life cycle from the time it is enacted. In the last two stages of the policy management life cycle, it is important to establish and document methods to track conformance with the policy and its continued relevance.

Policies can become quickly outdated, as laws, technology, work habits, and social factors change. From the legal and quality standpoints, outdated policies and procedures can be a liability, so policy development must be a continual process.

Policies should be reviewed once a year to determine the need for revision. The review should ensure that policies stay relevant, accurate, and current with the business and still solve the problems they were meant to address.

The update period is also an appropriate time to decide when new policies might be needed to further support existing polices or when reauthorization or retirement of a policy is necessary.

When reviewing policies, it is important to maintain version control to make sure that only the current version of a policy is accessible to employees. Failure to do so can lead to employees' making decisions based on outdated or incorrect information. Additionally, outdated documents should be archived for easy access in case of an audit or investigation or for building a legal defense.

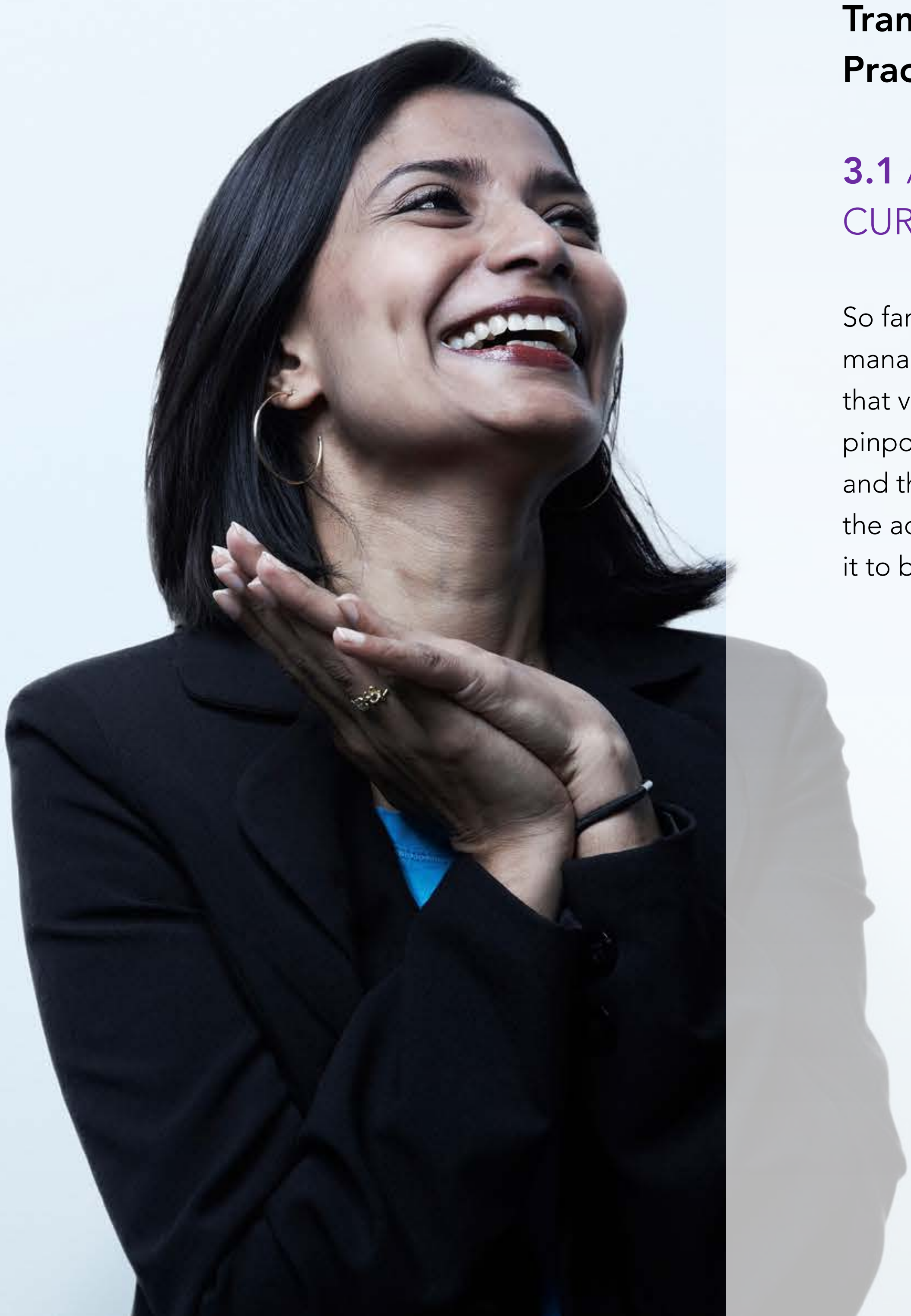
So how do you keep them fresh and timely?

- One method is to track policies and procedures in a spreadsheet. You could make a list of all the policies and procedures you are in charge of, when they were written, and when you should update them next.
- Another method is to schedule policy and procedure reviews on an electronic calendar with alerts.

The challenge with both of these methods is that policies may be missed. A million things are clamoring for time and attention, and policies and procedures are often put on the back burner. You may find it more efficient to use software that will help keep you and the organization's policy authors on top of this daunting but critical task.

STRATEGIST

For the strategist constantly assessing performance and looking for a better way of doing things, the third area of study provides an assessment of current policy management practices, outlines the pros and cons of alternative approaches to managing policies, and makes a clear case for implementing a policy management software solution that centralizes and standardizes policy management across the enterprise.



Transforming Policy Management Practices

3.1 ASSESSING YOUR CURRENT APPROACH

So far we have defined a new vision of policy management and outlined best practices for realizing that vision. With the destination in mind, it is time to pinpoint where you are today and discuss the tools and the approaches that will enable and accelerate the advancement of your program to where you want it to be.

In this section we ask a series of questions to assess your current policy management program and practices and your use of software to standardize and automate key processes. Although this is not meant to be a comprehensive assessment, we have broadly evaluated the key areas of policy management. You can use the results to address specific areas of your program, prioritize improvements, and build a case for policy management software.

See How You Are Doing with Policy Management

Policies	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Undecided/ Unsure	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree	We Use Software to Help with This
1 **Policies** We have policies and procedures that communicate leadership vision, define our standards of conduct, and reflect our risk profile.	○	○	○	○	○	○
2 **Consequences** Our policies set clear expectations about appropriate conduct and consequences for violating policies.	○	○	○	○	○	○
3 **Enforcement** Alleged misconduct and vioations are investigated, and policies are promptly and consistently enforced.	○	○	○	○	○	○
4 **Perception** Our employees view our policies and procedures as integral to our daily operations and the achievement of our mission.	○	○	○	○	○	○
5 **Culture** Our organizational culture reflects our standards of conduct and commitment to compliance.	○	○	○	○	○	○

Policy Look and Feel	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Undecided/ Unsure	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree	We Use Software to Help with This
6 **Meta-policy** We have a policy on policies that provides clear guidelines for the look and feel of policies as well as for processes for policy creation, formatting, and life-cycle management.	○	○	○	○	○	○
7 **Templates** We use templates to preserve a consistent look and feel across policies.	○	○	○	○	○	○
8 **Content** Policies are written in plain, concise language and are visually accessible.	○	○	○	○	○	○
9 **Properties** Document properties (i.e., title, version, owner, dates, review interval, and roles) are maintained on each policy.	○	○	○	○	○	○
10 **Links** We link policies to related policies, training materials, and applicable laws and regulations. Our links are monitored to avoid broken links or ones that reference old versions of documents.	○	○	○	○	○	○

continued on next page

	Policy Life-Cycle Management Practices	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Undecided/ Unsure	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree	We Use Software to Help with This
11	**Assessments** We periodically assess our risks to gauge compliance with applicable laws, regulations, requirements, and contracts.	○	○	○	○	○	○
12	**Workflow** We have standardized processes for writing, reviewing, approving, and distributing policies in a timely manner.	○	○	○	○	○	○
13	**Overseer** We have one person (document control administrator) responsible for overseeing the entire policy management life cycle for all of our policies.	○	○	○	○	○	○
14	**Documentation** We maintain meticulous records of all policies, statuses, dates, changes, versions, attestations, exceptions, and enforcement actions.	○	○	○	○	○	○
15	**Organization** Policies are partitioned, categorized, tagged, and labeled for distribution and access with a particular audience in mind so that they can be found easily by the appropriate employees.	○	○	○	○	○	○
16	**Writing** We have clear processes and guidelines for those responsible for writing or contributing to a policy document.	○	○	○	○	○	○
17	**Review** Policies are reviewed and edited by the appropriate stakeholders, internal or external subject-matter experts, and Legal. Changes are documented and consolidated into a single document.	○	○	○	○	○	○
18	**Approval** Prior to being published, policies must be approved by the appropriate personnel (executives, department heads, subject-matter experts, and Legal).	○	○	○	○	○	○
19	**Distribution** Employees are notified of new or updated policies and are sent periodic reminders as deadlines approach. Policies are published and displayed where employees can readily view or access them.	○	○	○	○	○	○
20	**Feedback** Questions, comments, and feedback on policies are collected and documented.	○	○	○	○	○	○
21	**Updates** All policies are periodically reviewed and updated on time, according to a schedule.	○	○	○	○	○	○
22	**Version control and archiving** Policies are labeled with a version number, and old versions are promptly archived.	○	○	○	○	○	○

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Policy Awareness and Access	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Undecided/ Unsure	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree	We Use Software to Help with This
23 **Awareness** Our employees know where to go to find policies when needs arise.	○	○	○	○	○	○
24 **Accessibility** Employees have 24/7 access to policies and procedures from any location.	○	○	○	○	○	○
25 **Applicability** At a glance, employees can see all policies that apply to their role and any actions required.	○	○	○	○	○	○
26 **Search** Robust search capabilities make finding a policy quick and easy. Search is not limited to document titles or exact text matches.	○	○	○	○	○	○
27 **Security** Our policies are visible only to employees with a need to know.	○	○	○	○	○	○

Tracking	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Undecided/ Unsure	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree	We Use Software to Help with This
28 **Attestation** Employees are required to signify that they have read and understood policies. The process of obtaining employee signatures is not cumbersome to management or the employee.	○	○	○	○	○	○
29 **Comprehension** Employees are trained on policies, and comprehension of policies and procedures is evaluated through quizzes, surveys, or other means.	○	○	○	○	○	○
30 **Reporting** We can easily generate reports measuring employee readership, attestation, comprehension, policy notifications, exceptions, and policies in various stages of the life cycle.	○	○	○	○	○	○

Scoring Guide

Tally up your score according to the point scale below.

	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Undecided/ Unsure	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree	We Use Software to Help with This
	+2	+1	0	–1	–2	+1

Program Grade	A = 53 to 60	B = 46 to 52	C = 36 to 45	D = 26 to 35	F = –60 to 25
Software Grade	A = 23 to 30	B = 20 to 22	C = 17 to 19	D = 14 to 16	F = 0 to 13

3.2 COMPARING APPROACHES: WHY BUY POLICY MANAGEMENT SOFTWARE?

For organizations with struggling policy management systems or processes, failure to make changes presents serious operational and legal risks. It can also represent misalignment among governance, strategy, and execution. While incremental changes in people and processes may shore up certain areas, they are, ultimately, simply bandages on serious wounds. Sometimes even sweeping changes to the people and the processes that govern your policy management practices may not adequately address the root causes of most policy management failures.

With an automated solution the obvious choice, a common question is:

Should I build a solution that meets our very specific needs, or should I buy a policy management solution?

Policy management challenges result when systems lack centralization, automation, standardization, distribution, and tracking. These systems include manual approaches that still use printed manuals or binders, an intranet, computer desktops, hard drives, USB drives, e-mail, and outdated or inefficient software. None of these tools fully addresses the litany of challenges associated with a lack of centralization, a lack of automation, and limited distribution.

Effective management of even a single policy can require significant effort. Managing and coordinating the work of subject-matter experts, reviewers, and approvers; publishing in a timely manner; ensuring that readers can access the appropriate documents; and evaluating readership requires organization, documentation, attention to detail, discipline, and frequent communication. When this effort is multiplied by each and every important document in your organization, even the most talented manager will fall short and need the help of additional personnel and systems.

Without automation, controlling processes is an overwhelming task; human error is inevitable, and the end result can be costly. Failure to fully implement policies can hurt operational efficiency and lead to outdated polices. The lack of an audit trail is even more problematic—opening the door to legal liability. The bottom line is that no matter how proficient you are at managing processes around policy management, the size and the complexity of the task requires automation to create a centralized, standardized, and controlled environment.

Build or Buy?

There are a number of factors and risks to consider with a build-your-own approach.

- Building a policy management system is a labor-intensive process that requires significant development and administrative resources over a considerable period of time.
- The capital cost of building a customized solution is the highest of any alternative—and thus bears the highest risk.
- The ongoing resources required to support and maintain the system come at a significant cost that is often greater than expected.

- The implementation time for building your own policy management software is by far the longest of any of the alternatives.

- Built solutions often lack specialized capabilities of a system specifically designed for managing policies, such as workflow flexibility, extensive audit-trail capabilities, attestation, quizzing, tracking, advanced search, tagging, version control, and security.

- Leading policy management systems have been around for more than a decade and have been through years of iteration and refinement. Organizations building from scratch will have a long road ahead to get the system just the way they want it.

- Getting additional features or capabilities approved and prioritized in the queue of IT projects after the initial project is complete can be a challenge.

- Many organizations struggle through implementation and maintenance of homegrown solutions only to later abandon the effort and the investment in favor of a more desirable and affordable purchased solution.

In the end, the cost of training, maintenance, and management time, let alone the inconsistencies in document creation and categorization, as well as the legal ramifications make building your own system a risky venture.

By comparison, commercial policy management software is an economical, efficient, effective, and safe approach to solving the complex and diverse challenges of policy management. For most organizations, realizing the full potential of the policy management function will require an automated policy solution.

3.3 CHOOSING TO AUTOMATE: THE VALUE OF POLICY MANAGEMENT SOFTWARE

With the right automated system, the impact on your policy practice can be broad and deep, providing both human and financial efficiencies.

"Policy management software addresses the challenges of managing a litany of policies within business boundaries—enabling employees, giving them the expectations and boundaries, and doing so in a way that protects the organization from harm."

Michael K. Rasmussen, JD, OCEG Fellow, CCEP, GRCP, CISSP, Chief GRC Pundit, GRC 20/20 Research, LLC

In choosing a software solution, your goal should be a powerful, scalable, flexible, feature-rich system that provides your organization with the following key advantages.

Store all policies in a central, accessible, and secure location.

A policy management system houses all of your policies and enforces key standards and processes for policy development. Employees can access policies at any time, from any place, on any computer or device with Internet access.

View a dashboard of documents, tasks, and reports.

View at a glance how many documents you have in each stage of the policy life cycle. View documents by type, department, sub-department, template, category, topic, regulation, participant role, or any other custom taxonomy.

Signal the importance of policies and improve awareness.

A dedicated policy management solution increases employee awareness and policy visibility and also reinforces the integral role that policies play in the preservation of values, culture, day-to-day operations, and the achievement of long-term objectives.

Standardize and centralize the document creation process.

The beauty of policy management software is that anyone can easily create a policy. A document creation wizard takes the document owner step-by-step through a controlled development and process. Consideration is given to templates, document properties, settings, personnel involved, role assignments, and security. As soon as document authorship begins, the automated communications kick in to enable consistent and efficient collaboration.

Organize and categorize your policies.

Categorize documents by departments, topics, regulatory guidelines, or any other structure you use to delineate access to your documents. As your business changes, simply change the taxonomy or categorization without breaking folder hierarchies, directories, or links.

"To create a policy management repository, an organization needs a policy management tool as opposed to a general document management system."

Lisa Hill, President, PolicyScape Consulting, and Co-Chair, OCEG Policy Management Group

Find documents quickly and easily.

Search for policies by department, custom categories, the alpha-bar, title search, full-text, key word tags, reference numbers, or all the above. Use the advanced search dialog to apply any or all search methods and to display relevant search results with applicable search terms highlighted.

Streamline communication.

Creating policies requires the involvement of multiple stakeholders across various departments. Automated notifications periodically remind stakeholders of task deadlines until they are complete. When documents are published and scheduled for distribution, automatic notifications are sent to specified employees to read and attest to the documents. Reminders increase in frequency as deadlines approach and escalate if deadlines are missed. Automation enables more-frequent communications, saves time, shortens review and approval cycles, and keeps policy development and implementation on track and on schedule.

Create and edit documents in real time with Microsoft Word and Excel.

When authors, reviewers, or approvers open a Word or Excel document, Microsoft Office integration opens the users' web browser to the version of the application installed on their computer, enabling them to do everything they can do in the desktop application. Employees can write, edit, track changes, and make updates in real time without the need to download documents to their desktop and re-upload. All changes made to documents by any employee are tracked, recorded, and available in reports. The result is an audit trail of all changes made to policies or procedures.

Automate version control and archiving.

Display only the approved version of a policy that is current. Older versions are automatically archived when updates are made. New versions are automatically given a new version number. Automatic communications notify employees of policy changes and required actions. When an employee reads or acknowledges a policy, the system records the version number.

Maintain a consistent look and feel across all policies and procedures.

Create templates within the system or upload templates to give policies a familiar look and feel that will enable employees to quickly and easily find what they need.

Maintain a system of record for reporting and audit.

Maintain a system of record that tracks the status, implementation, understanding, and enforcement of policies, including when employees receive a policy communication or access a policy, the version they accessed, whether or not they attested, the results of a quiz or survey, edits made to drafts, approvals, and all key dates associated with any like activities.

Certify that employees have attested to policies.

When documents are published or updated, automatic e-mail notifications and reminders can be enabled to require actions by employees. Employees may be required to read, attest, view a training video, take a quiz, participate in a survey, or provide feedback. E-mail notifications link to the policy in the system. Employees review policy documents in the system and submit attestation at the click of a button.

Restrict access and hide policies from view.

Password protection makes policies available only to those with login credentials. Security levels on policies and role- and permission-based policy accessibility restrict document visibility to those with a need to know. Sensitive or inapplicable documents are hidden from view altogether.

Link to related materials.

Within policies, link to forms, other related policies, training materials, web courses, or other web-based pages or programs. Eliminate time spent looking for related documents and forms and enable the creation of policies that are focused and concise.

Map policies to regulations and requirements.

Mapping policies to obligations, risks, controls, legal requirements, regulations, and contracts helps you ensure compliance coverage where specific requirements apply as well as quickly and easily access policies for specific requirements in an audit. Policy mapping also helps identify missing policies or clauses as well as promptly make updates when legal requirements change.

Implement policies effectively.

Embed training videos in policies, link to a learning management system for externally hosted training videos, measure policy comprehension, and encourage information retention by implementing quizzes. Follow policy implementations with surveys that measure adoption, exceptions, violations, and enforcement actions. Collect and store comments on policies and more.

Schedule and manage tasks.

Manage employee deadlines by creating tasks and automatically sending reminders. Schedule document review intervals, and let the system remind you when to update policies. Notify and periodically remind authors, reviewers, approvers, and readers of deadlines. Automatic escalation notices loop in managers when deadlines are not met.

Leverage scalability.

The capabilities, security, and capacity of the system scale to meet increasingly complex requirements and workflow.

Enjoy commercial support.

One of the major benefits of buying policy management software is that you have access to consultants with years of experience to help you implement your system, train employees on how to use it, and provide ongoing support. When questions arise, you no longer have to ping IT and wonder when your request will be prioritized in the queue.

CONCLUSION

With these advantages, the value of automation includes both human and financial efficiencies. A powerful, scalable, flexible, feature-rich system enables your organization to manage polices across the life cycle, adding speed, efficiency, and oversight while reducing the overall cost of policy management. Ultimately, your organization will not realize its true potential without effective management and implementation of policies and procedures. Policy management software is present at nearly every stage of the policy management life cycle and is the key to developing and implementing documents effectively.

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