Blissbook

How to Write Policies and Procedures

From team collaboration to technical writing and distribution, this is your complete how-to guide for company policies and procedures.

Blissbook

Welcome to your Policies and Procedures journey!

People: they're your company's best and most vital asset. As an HR pro, it's your job to help attract, retain, and support top-notch people, all while protecting your company. Despite the angst that often accompanies a handbook overhaul, it's possible to take care of policy business while showing your employees they're valued. Buckle up, folks.

This guide includes stories and expert advice from HR professionals and employment attorneys, all topped off with best practices for creating, championing, and communicating your policies and procedures.

> *Great companies don't hire skilled people and motivate them, they hire already motivated people and inspire them.*
>
> **SIMON SINEK**
> Start With Why: How Great Companies Inspire Everyone To Take Action

In this policies and procedures guide, you'll learn:

- Who to involve in the process
- What resources you'll need for success
- The steps to take with what people
- Tips for drafting, creation, reviewing, and printing
- How to acquire revisions and acceptance

We hope that, with patience and dedication, you can transform your handbook from potential irritant to a valuable instrument—one that helps onboard employees and keeps them on board.

Guess what?! There's a companion workbook to this guide – click here to download it!

Our policies and procedures guide is broken into six chapters:

Getting Started

Planning Your Handbook Project

Drafting Policies and Procedures

Revisions, Decisions, and Approval

Designing Your Policies and Handbook

Distribution and Sign Off

Let's get started!

1. The Prep Work

Getting Started with Your Policies and Handbook

> *As soon as a company has grown beyond the founders, and they're hiring that first employee, they need to have written policies in place. They need to communicate, 'Here's our culture. Here's our expectations.'*
>
> **KATE TYLEE HERZ**
> Counsel, Employment Services Group at Davis Wright Tremaine, LLP

It's time to update your employee handbook! Before you curl up into a ball or run for the hills, remember that *starting* a project tends to be the hardest part. By doing basic prep work before you begin, you will set yourself up for success.

As Lindsey Kucharski, former HR Manager, US & Latam at Blue Prism, explained "things have changed a lot since the 40-50 page binder." But, some things are still the same, such as your need to address changes in your industry, in your company, and in the role of a human resources professional.

But, where in the world ~~is Carmen Sandiego~~ do you begin? First, you need to determine the scope of the project you're undertaking – and go from there. Think big-picture and determine who and what you may need along the way. This includes defining **objectives**, considering potential **roadblocks**, deciding who to **involve**, and developing a **project plan** to share with stakeholders.

Need help with these 4 items? Use our companion workbook to get organized.

What's The Goal?

In the wee stages of the project, you'll want to identify key objectives for updating your policies and procedures. Here are a few common goals... or refer to the first page of your Policies and Procedures Workbook to check your own!

- Your existing policies need a review to ensure they are still compliant with updated laws.
- Your company is revamping policies such as parental leave, telecommuting, data privacy, or others to achieve business goals.
- You're hoping to better express your employer brand during onboarding.
- Your boring/legal-speak policies need freshening to make them more interactive and friendly for employees.
- Your company is going digital and figured it's a good time to review your content.

CASE STUDY: HANDLING MULTIPLE LOCATIONS

Bringing employees from all locations and divisions "together as one company" was Chanin's main goal and challenge. She needed a set of policies and procedures that supported the company as a whole and communicated who they were regardless of where an employee worked (across multiple states). Her team standardized many policies and then used Blissbook's personalized content feature to tailor specific content to specific audiences.

CHANIN CHRISTENSEN
SVP / HR Manager at Merrick Bank

As you list out your objectives, consider any potential roadblocks:

- Does a new change to a law significantly impact any of your policies?
- Do your benefits need to be updated?
- Will certain teams or departments be affected, and, if so, might they push back on the new policies?
- Do you need budget approval for new software, legal support, or additional staff support?
- Do you need leadership approval to even start the project?

By proactively considering obstacles, you can be prepared for challenges when they arise.

Consider what happens after your new policies achieve those goals, as well.

How will you handle **ad-hoc changes**? It's easy to plan for things that happen cyclically, like benefits enrollment, but what about an employment law change at the federal or state level?

How will you **update, distribute, and obtain acknowledgement** from all of your employees? This includes reminding 25+% of employees who ignore your initial request for acknowledgement.

How will you **manage an audit** to determine your company's compliance with federal and state laws or a specific IT certification (e.g. SOC 2)?

Ideally, you can conquer your objectives while establishing a process that satisfies your future needs. By investing the time now to consider eventual what-if scenarios, you can save your company (and yourself) a lot of frustration.

What Tools Are Available?

Updating your policies and procedures can be a daunting task, so technology can be a life-saver. Consider investing in software that helps you get through creation, review, publication, and distribution.

Helpful tools for policies and procedure generation:

- Collaboration tools for sharing, reviewing, and commenting on content
- Project management software
- Secure delivery software that allows for tracking reviews
- E-Signature software
- Photography, illustrations, and video
- Survey software to engage with employees

By taking care of these tasks early, you'll set yourself up to have what you need when you need it – including the support of people inside or outside your company.

What's Trending?

A little friendly research will provide insight into what others are doing and, more importantly, what will best align with your company and values. Research also keeps your company competitive in an ever-evolving job market. By staying familiar with the latest trends and offerings, you can confidently propose changes to established policies while providing a fail-proof rationale: **everybody's doing it; we're actually behind the times.**

CASE STUDY: DATA HUNT

Lindsey Kucharski wanted to recommend unlimited PTO for two of their locations, so she looked for data from other similar companies. She used that data to demonstrate that unlimited PTO was a fairly common practice within their industry, so a change to the PTO policy would help them attract and retain the best talent.

LINDSEY KUCHARSKI
Former Global HR Business Partner & HR Manager at Blue Prism

Great Resources for Up-to-Date Research

- Forrester
- JD Supra
- Law 360
- NELI
- Harvard Business Review
- SHRM and Local SHRM Chapters

The **California Law Certification Program** offered by SHRM was recommended by Jeni Strand, Senior VP of HR at AgCountry, as a great resource for anyone wanting to learn more about some of the most employee-friendly laws in the country.

Interview Your Employees

Employee interviews can provide a look into their perspective, offering another source of research. Engage members of marketing, recruiting, leadership, and other teams to develop a better idea of key culture-oriented messages. Evaluate the perception of your employer brand, considering the following questions:

- How do your employees, customers, vendors, and suppliers view your company?
- What's a new candidate's perception of your company?
- What nouns, verbs, and adjectives are used to describe your company?
- How can you interweave culture-focused messages into the guide to break up sections that may be lengthy or otherwise (*yawn*) uninteresting?
- Can you include inspiring quotes, statistics or fun facts to inject some life while underscoring a key policy?

If you don't have time to conduct interviews or if you'd like a broader viewpoint from many people in your company, you can always **try a survey**.

CASE STUDY: FAMILY LEAVE STUDY

Jeni Strand used a survey to learn more about employee needs, particularly relating to family leave. When she got the results back, it became clear that the company needed to build a policy that would better serve employees, whether they were welcoming a new baby or caring for aging parents.

JENI STRAND
Senior VP HR at AgCountry

After outlining your objectives, identifying useful resources and teammates, and evaluating the current landscape within your company and beyond, it's time to start planning.

2. The Step Work

Planning Your Handbook Project

Now that you've put in the prep work, it's time to focus on the tangible steps of your project. This means bringing in departments across your company and working on a project timeline.

> *Pick a few people you trust. Keep the team small.*
>
> **CHANIN CHRISTENSEN**
> SVP / HR Manager at Merrick Bank

Who Can Add Value?

You'll want to start with a small team in the beginning; we all know that saying about too many cooks in the employee handbook. Different perspectives can feel like potential obstacles, but instead, reflect on ways in which multiple viewpoints can result in more comprehensive, beneficial handbook.

Does IT need to support any software you select? If so, they'll probably have questions for the vendor you choose. If your organization is audited as a requirement for obtaining certain certifications (e.g. SOC 2), you may want to ask IT or finance about reporting requirements.

Will your new policies have an impact on sister companies, subsidiaries, departments, or parent companies? If you're a global company, you may want to involve HR from another part of the world. By including HR colleagues from other locations or divisions, you have the opportunity to consider the needs of all employees.

The Right People At The Right Time

As you identify potential collaborators, consider when to involve them. To give your project the greatest potential for success, working with these people at the right time is critical. For example, you'll likely want to engage **executive leadership** early to let them know about policy changes and your proposed solutions, but you may also need to get budget approval for any outside counsel or software.

ATTORNEYS / LEGAL

Engaging your attorneys early may prevent a rewriting frenzy later. While your attorneys review your existing handbook and flag areas that may invite litigation, you can gain buy-in for your recommended changes and identify areas to highlight your company culture.

MARKETING / DESIGN / COMMUNICATIONS

In the initial planning stages, you may also want to talk to someone responsible for the brand, which can cover everything from visual design to editorial guidelines. To publish a guide that your employees will actually read, you'll want to write it in the company voice and use a tone that's conversational but still appropriate for communicating company policies.

Your marketing team can also provide recommendations and resources for copywriting and visual design. They can work with you to translate legal-speak into more digestible copy, and provide summaries about your company, your policies, and the reasons employees should care (your mission, purpose, cause, values, vision, etc.). With enough notice, your marketing team can plan their workload to support you when you're ready.

EXTERNAL HELP

Sometimes it's not feasible to have internal support for writing or visual design, so there are other options you can consider. For example, **a design, branding,** or **communications agency** can help you create a friendlier, more engaging handbook; plus, there are always freelancers who are eager to take on a new client. By providing them with your brand and editorial guides, they can add some magic to all your hard work. Some policy management platforms (like Blissbook!) can even provide this as a service.

LEADERSHIP

You can add emotional depth to your guide by including a brief statement from your CEO. It's common practice for CEOs to provide a shareholder statement at the beginning of annual reports, so why not have your CEO write a short letter to your employees to serve as an introduction to your policies? Consider stories like why the company was founded and the importance it plays in the lives of employees, customers, and the community. If you're looking for inspiration on how to build such a build such a message, our other eBook: How to Write a Culture-First Employee Handbook, is an excellent resource.

Also, don't feel like everything has to be in writing. Instead of a letter from your CEO, try a video where the CEO speaks directly to your company. This is a great way to show your employees how much they are valued, and it sets a tone that's likely to be different from any other handbook they've seen. Companies who build the right culture find that they don't need to write page after page.

CASE STUDY: PROCESS FROM LINDSEY KUCHARSKI

When it comes to creating policies, many from scratch, Lindsey Kucharski has learned a lot about what works. Having been through it multiple times, she recommended the following process:

- She starts by writing the first draft of any policy, then she engages her team to review.
- From there, she looks for legal buy-in to make sure the policy works to protect the company.
- Then, if she has an internal communications or branding team, she looks to them to provide recommendations on tone.
- After that, she'll bring in executive stakeholders to provide feedback.

LINDSEY KUCHARSKI
Former Global HR Business Partner & HR Manager at Blue Prism

What’s The Plan?

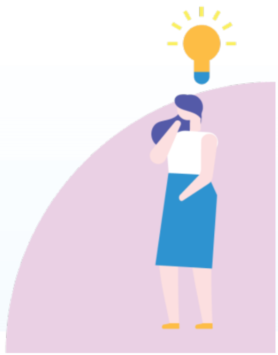
Once you’ve defined your needs, who to involve, and your timing, you’re ready to develop your project plan. Some find it easier to start with the final product in mind, building backwards from the end state to the first discussion. By using a project management program, you can easily adjust timelines and communicate changes to all stakeholders. Since your handbook may take several months and require support from various departments, setting and communicating delivery dates will help keep your project on track.

Common milestones for an employee handbook overhaul project:

- Build the project foundation with leadership approval, vendor approval, and paperwork
- Implement, draft, and get new content approved (the lengthiest part of the project!)
- Prep for distribution with your IT department
- Implement design with your marketing or design team
- Launch!

Need more? There's a detailed milestone timeline template in the free companion workbook!

3. The Depth Work



Drafting Policies and Procedures

Remember, for the sake of efficiency, seek attorney feedback on your policies early in the process. This will help you prioritize your work, starting with the most critical policy changes so you can initiate the feedback process while you work on more minor tweaks.

When you write a new policy or procedure, follow this general template:

1. Identify the key information the policy or procedure must convey.
2. Consider why the policy or procedure was established.
3. Customize the content from steps 1 and 2 so that it is well-organized and reflects your brand.
4. Review the text, looking for ways to make it friendlier to your audience (i.e. why does the policy or procedure improve the workplace?).

By communicating the value behind a policy, you empower employees to understand the need for the policy and its ultimate benefit. Cynthia Gore did this when she communicated her company's work-from-home policy.

> *Having an up-to-date handbook can serve as a valuable defense in a lawsuit. It's really important to have written a policy and that it's clear what that policy is.*
>
> **CYNTHIA GORE**
> Head of HR Operations and Talent Acquisition at Mercedes-Benz USA

How to Write a Policy

Now, that you're ready to jump in with both feet (or both pens), here are some tips to keep in mind when writing policies:

- Be specific and provide all necessary details for the policy.
- If you're writing a policy that's required by law, do your employees a favor and translate the legalese into conversational language.
- Determine if there are any exceptions, limitations, or restrictions that need coverage. If so, list those after the policy.
- Avoid ambiguous language. If a policy is prohibitive, then avoid verbs like "may" or "should." These words imply that the employee has a choice in following the policy. At best, your employees will probably skim the policies, so be as clear and concise as possible.
- Read your content backwards or out loud and look for words that can be deleted. Brevity improves clarity.
- Use simple sentences in standard structure (subject + verb).

While writing your policy, you may inadvertently drift back into legalese. Flag these sections for revision for a more conversational tone that reflects your brand. For ease of understanding, it's best to write at a sixth-grade level; Microsoft Word has tools for determining readability.

Your Policy's Audience

It's important to understand your audience for each policy because employees will wonder whether it applies to them and under what circumstances.

Some policies differ per audience, such as:

- Information for employees in different states
- Information for employees in different departments or teams
- Information for different title types

Make the differentiation clear across these types. You can also look for policy management software that makes it easy to personalize policy content to individuals and groups (like Blissbook!).

CASE STUDY: DISTRIBUTING HANDBOOKS

Chanin needed to build and distribute handbooks to several hundred employees spread out across four different locations.

By using Blissbook, she can publish the handbook, and only employees in New York can see what's applicable to New York. This reduces the amount of information any one employee has to review, and it also ensures that everything they read pertains to them.

CHANIN CHRISTENSEN
SVP / HR Manager at Merrick Bank

The Policy's Introduction

Once you've ironed out the policy details, you may want to add an introduction. Give employees a brief summary of what the policy is about, why it exists, and why they should care. Be as conversational as you can, writing in the same language you would use in a one-on-one conversation.

Why didn't we talk about the introduction first? For many, writing a summary can be challenging because of the amount of information there is to convey. If you are struggling to summarize your points and stay true to your company brand, write the policy before you write the intro. If you write the intro after digging into the policy, you'll have a better idea of how to briefly articulate what it is and why it matters.

You're serving dual purposes of making sure you're in compliance with the law and giving employees a roadmap of the relationship.

KATE TYLEE HERZ
Counsel, Employment Services Group, Davis Wright Tremaine, LLP

Related Policies

Employees want an easy reference to related policies, which is another benefit of an electronic format. By linking to related policies within the context of a particular point, you make it easy for employees to find information themselves, reducing the number of questions you're likely to receive.

How To Write A Procedure

When writing procedures, keep the same conversational tone. If you can help employees understand a procedure visually, use an infographic, flowchart, or other image. Not only can this add flair to your policies, but visual elements can be helpful for comprehension and memory.

For the parts that need to be straight-up text, keep in mind:

- If an employee will use a procedure to follow a policy, write it in the order it should be executed, when applicable.
- If a procedure can be followed in any order, use design elements or alphabetical order to make it easier to find specific actions at a later date.
- Include necessary forms, guides, or other resources employees will need to follow the procedure. If you're distributing your policies digitally, it should be easy to link to any of these documents stored in the cloud.

Once your procedures are written, take another look to remove excess text. Can something be replaced with an image or an infographic? You can always flag content and ask your designer for suggestions later. The more visually engaging your handbook is, the more likely it is that employees will read and remember it.

Things to Remember

Disclaimers

An employee's job is not guaranteed by simply following your company's basic rules and regulations. Your standards should be higher and, because of that, your collective policies and/or employee handbook are not a contract. This is especially important in at-will employment states.

At some point in your handbook, you should say this plainly. Don't lead with this, though, because it can throw off the feel-good vibes created when you start with engaging culture content like your mission, vision, and values. Feel free to title the disclaimer in a non-threatening way (such as "about this handbook") at the end.

Something like this will suffice*:

> This handbook is designed to familiarize you with our company and provide you with information about our brand, policies, guidelines, and programs, all of which affect your life here at Acme Incorporated. Please keep in mind that it is not intended to be 100% comprehensive, and it is not meant to address every application of, or exception to, the general policies and procedures described. If you have any questions about any topic covered within, please contact your manager or the people department.
>
> This handbook is not a contract for employment, express or implied, and it does not guarantee any fixed terms and conditions of your employment. Your employment is at-will, and you or we are free to end the employment relationship at any time, with or without cause and without prior notice.
>
> Last, the policies, procedures, and benefits described within may be altered or discontinued from time to time. Although we will try to communicate changes with you when they occur, a policy may be changed or eliminated without notice.

**Consult with your legal counsel, we are not lawyers and this is not legal advice.*

Content Not To Include

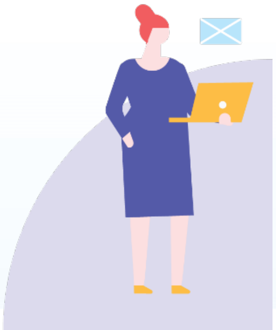
Since your employee handbook should not be confused with a contract, you'll want to keep some content separate from your handbook. Don't include any policy or content that could unintentionally turn your handbook into something a judge or jury could confuse for a contract.

You also want to exclude any content that's usually customized on a per-employee basis. Examples are:

- Non-compete or confidentiality agreements
- NDAs (Non-Disclosure Agreements)
- Trade secrets
- Inventions
- IP agreements

4. The Yep Work

Revisions, Decisions, and Approval



Hopefully the time you spent hyping up your new handbook [and updated policies to colleagues will now pay off. Still, you can expect some friction once others are providing feedback, so this may be a good time to switch to decaf.

Getting conflicting feedback from multiple viewpoints is challenging, particularly when you're trying to balance protecting the company legally with preserving the company's culture. You can reduce confusion and project delays by using software that makes it easy for everyone to collaborate, discuss, and suggest changes.

Particularly, as you get closer to the final product, you may want to involve new people with fresh eyes. If they can review past comments and changes, they can see the evolution of the handbook and understand why a section is the way it is – without having to ask you directly. Think of all the emails, instant messages, conference calls, and one-on-one discussions that have happened thus far. Now imagine having to do all that and justify every decision to someone seeing the handbook for the first time. A new perspective will almost always improve your end result, but you'll want it to be easy for people to get up-to-speed without having to ask you.

> *We needed something that brought us all together as one company.*
>
> **CHANIN CHRISTENSEN**
> SVP / HR Manager at Merrick Bank

Get Your Delivery Method Approved

Before you're knee-deep in content, be sure you've determined how your handbook will be delivered. Your distribution method may provide you with additional tools you can use to communicate your point. Live your brand – even while building your policies.

Hey! If you haven't already, download the free companion Workbook to see a checklist of to-dos related to each delivery method.

PRINT

If your handbook will be delivered in a printed format, you'll want to include information like your company name, logo, chapter titles, page numbers, and other metadata such as version and publish dates at the beginning of each policy or even on every page; you never know who will stumble upon it and when.

ELECTRONIC DOCUMENT / PDF

If distributing the handbook electronically, link to a document instead of attaching it to an email. Although the document itself will be static, a link can ensure that, when clicked, employees are accessing the most up-to-date version. You'll still need to communicate when changes are made, but this eliminates some of the issues that accompany printed documents. Since employees will view the document on a computer, you can incorporate links to other files or resources. Take advantage!

EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK OR POLICY MANAGEMENT SOFTWARE

This is the recommended form of delivery, as it's efficient, reduces risk, and provides the best employee experience. Plus, depending on the software you choose, you can use video, gifs, read-more buttons, or other design elements to make your policies less of a drag for employees to read and sign (electronically, we hope).

5. The Pep Work

Designing Your Policies and Handbook

Now Comes The Fun Part. Hip-Hip-Hooray!

You've put in all the hard work developing your policies and procedures content. Now you can focus on making your handbook look and feel as much a part of your company as the employees who show up every day because they believe in your mission. By focusing on design, you'll make your employees feel how much they matter to your company. Good, easy-to-digest design also shows potential judges or jurors just how important your company policies are and how you've done everything you could to make it as easy as possible for an employee to read and understand them.

CASE STUDY: UTILIZING YOUR MARKETING DEPARTMENT WITH CHANIN

Chanin saw the importance of communicating the company brand to prospective employees because low unemployment was making companies more competitive. She enlisted the help of their marketing department so the company could be more appealing to applicants within the highly competitive Fintech industry.

CHANIN CHRISTENSEN
SVP / HR Manager at Merrick Bank

This is when the earlier goodwill you earned from your marketing team can pay off, particularly if they're already prepared to support the project.

Here are a few ways that you can work with them:

- Engage your designers and challenge them to find creative ways to break up blocks of text.
- Ask them to find ways to communicate visually to replace copy.
- Have them identify text they don't understand or find boring.
- Ask for suggestions on how to make your policies better. They are supporters, not critics; their specialized input can take your handbook to the next level.

If you had the help of one of their copywriters during the drafting phase, great. If not, see if you can get help now to build a better narrative that takes readers from your culture to your policies. A copywriter can also provide suggestions on headlines that reflect your company's personality while grabbing the reader's attention. You don't need to rewrite all of your policies – in most cases, sprucing up the introductions is enough. A little pep goes a long way.

The design phase is where you can take a step back from the hard work of protecting the company and supporting employees. Now the focus shifts to how employees experience your policies. While you continue to navigate and negotiate your way through the remaining content approvals, have your designers and writers make your handbook easy on the eyes.

If you're using a policy management platform or software provider to host and distribute your handbook, ask for help with design and copywriting. If they're like Blissbook, they'll be able to provide this as a service. Because they focus on these projects all the time, they'll be able to go faster than your marketing department (think 3 weeks instead of 3 months).

A Couple Photo Note-Ohs

If you choose to use photos of your employees, **get a photo release** from each person. You don't want to be forced to review and update your handbook every time an employee leaves the company.

Although custom photography is a great way to connect with your audience, we know this might not always be in the budget. In that case, there are some great free stock photography options out there:

- www.unsplash.com
- www.pixabay.com
- www.pexels.com
- www.pxhere.com
- www.affecttheverb.com

As they say, a well-placed picture can break up a thousand words.

6. The Accept Work

Distribution and Sign Off

I always tell my clients more communication is better. You want to make sure that your workforce always understands what's going on, which is probably the biggest reason you need policies and procedures in a handbook.

TERESA BULT
Administrative Partner and General Counsel for the Firm at Constangy, Brooks, Smith & Prophete, LLP

Once your handbook is ready for distribution (woohoo!), it's time to set it up for the best possible reception. You may want to solicit your communications or marketing team again to help build your communication plan. Your approach will be driven by how drastically the company policies have changed from the previous version.

What to say? There are email scripts a-plenty in our free companion Workbook. Check it out!

Consider the following situations:

Your policies have remained the same with only minimal changes, but you wanted to create a handbook more aligned with your company brand.

Great! Since there isn't anything that's likely to upset employees, you can send out an invitation to a company town hall or add an agenda item to a standing town hall and make the announcement to lots of cheers and praise.

Your policies have remained the same, but some procedures have changed, which may cause confusion for some or all employees.

If confusion is to be experienced only by a specific group of people, consider starting with a town hall announcement, but offer a follow-up discussion for the groups most significantly impacted. Send invitations to discuss the changes more thoroughly with those people, then provide an email recap to all individuals, including a link to the recorded discussion for those unable to attend.

Some policies have changed, and those changes may distress employees.

This is where the old adage, “tell them what you’re going to tell them, tell them, then tell them what you told them,” comes into play. Start with the invitation to the town hall with mandatory attendance. Then, during the town hall, first convey why changes were necessary before explaining the extent of the changes. Then, communicate how employees may be affected and when. Invite employees to discuss the changes with their managers or the HR team and provide an opportunity for a follow-up discussion if needed.

Afterward, send an email recapping the discussion, providing the handbook for their review, and directing them to the specific area that covers the change. Don’t forget to remind them of the why again to increase their willingness to understand the need for change.

CASE STUDY: HANDLING AN UNPOPULAR REVISION

Cynthia knew that the revision to the company bonus policy might be unpopular. To ensure employees understood the reason behind the change and what it would mean to each one, her team provided a communication strategy that coincided with benefits enrollment, conducted multiple webinars with the opportunity for employees to ask questions, and sent out a reminder before the change would be visible in their next paycheck. They were transparent through the whole process, which reflected a key company value and was appreciated by the employees.

CYNTHIA GORE
Head of HR Operations and Talent Acquisition at Mercedes-Benz USA

Employee Acknowledgements

When it comes to collecting sign offs on the handbook, you'll want to provide enough time for employees to review, ask questions, and offer suggestions for improvements. It has taken a lot of time and effort to get to this point, so it's natural to want to close this last part of the project ASAP and move on to all the other projects demanding your attention. However, reading and signing the handbook is not likely to be on the top of your employees' priority list (no matter how awesome you made it), so you'll want to provide a reasonable window of time. **Thirty days is a common threshold for allowing employees to read, ask questions, and agree.**

If you're distributing a print version of the handbook and physically collecting signatures, you may need to rely on team managers to ensure that their employees respond in a timely manner.

If possible, use electronic signatures; it's easier for everyone. With an electronic version of the handbook, employees can quickly locate information they need and reference it later. Plus, they have a version they can easily review when a situation arises. Adherence to policies and procedures is key, so it won't help anyone if employees can't find the handbook six months down the road or if the version they do find is outdated.

Your company will be better protected if employees have an always-accessible electronic handbook that maintains records of employee acknowledgements. Embrace technology and make your life easier.

No More Work

(Until Next Time!)

Building brand new policies or updating outdated ones may not be the most exciting part of your job, but it's extremely valuable. This part of your role touches every person within your company. When you think about the employee experience, HR is crucial to providing competitive benefits, flexible working conditions, and an organized workplace. By putting thought into what must be communicated to protect the company and how that message is experienced, you have an opportunity to build a handbook full of policies and procedures that are meaningful and engaging to employees.

When discussing potentially challenging policy updates with our thought leaders, Cynthia Gore spoke about an experience at her previous company. Upcoming legislation would impact employee classification (hourly versus salaried), a substantial change for many employees. After an extensive review, the company made the decision to raise the wage levels of those employees who would be affected and, even though the legislation enactment was delayed, they stuck with their decision to raise wages.

Though the process was difficult, the pride in Cynthia's voice when she spoke on it was evident, and we think her story is a great one for all companies.

> *It was a great exercise. It was tough because it impacted the business quite a bit, and we could have made the decision to change our minds, but we didn't. Because it was the right thing to do.*
>
> **CYNTHIA GORE**
> Head of HR Operations and Talent Acquisition at Mercedes-Benz USA

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