eBook:

7 Proven Tips

For Modernizing Your Policy And Procedure Communication

COMPROSE

Everyone knows what to do.

Why we wrote this ebook

Throughout our 30+ year company history, we have witnessed over and over how clearly communicated systems, standard operating procedures (SOPs) and policies can transform business results. It's common to see dramatic improvements like 50% faster employee onboarding, 65% reduction in errors, lowered training and staffing costs, faster application rollouts.

Yet, too many organizations are missing out. Many view policy and procedure communication only as a "necessary evil" demanded by regulatory compliance but lacking practical benefits so they avoid all but the minimum effort.

Others seek the benefits, but their well-intentioned efforts fail because they are following outdated models and technology approaches.

See the topic "The Million Dollar Mistake We Want You to Avoid" on page 39.

In this ebook we share proven strategies that will improve your operations and help you avoid costly mistakes; building a MODERN communication system so employees can find what they need fast, understand what they find, and use the information to take the correct action.

Zavanta® by COMPROSE

COMPROSE is the maker of Zavanta, a cloud-based communication platform for Operating Processes, Policies, and Best Practices.

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Terminology

People use the terms policy, procedure, SOP, process, best practices, systems, standards, interchangeably. The terms often vary by industry. For example, some healthcare organizations use the word "protocol" instead of standard operating procedure.

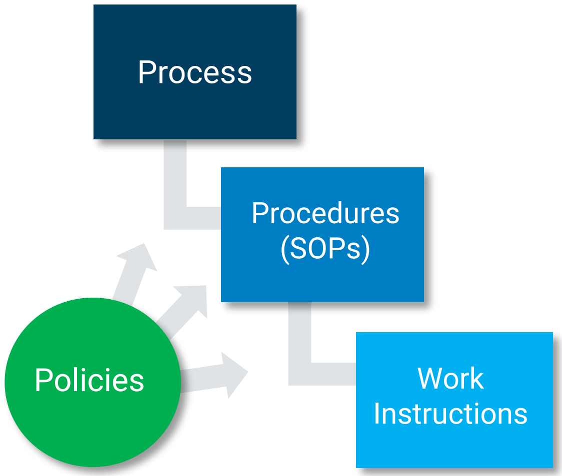
The diagram on Page 17 will give you more detail, but here's the short version.

Everything fits in two categories:

- Policy is a standard, guideline, statement of position. It has no steps. For example: "Pricing Policy".
- Process, Procedure / Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) and Work Instruction are all tasks. Processes describe the high level. Procedures are more detailed. Work Instructions are even more detailed. They all have step actions.

Some organizations refer to their processes and procedures as "best practices" or "lessons learned."

To keep things simple, in this eBook we use the term "policy" and then "procedure" or "SOP" for everything else. Shorthand for both: P&Ps.



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Why should you care?

Time, Money, Risk

Organizations that integrate clear P&Ps into everyday life realize improved quality, reduced training / turnover costs, and a more empowered workforce. (Results like: 75% error reduction, 50% reduction in employee onboarding time are NOT uncommon.)

So, the potential value is there, but there's strong evidence that most organizations never achieve it.

This is extremely disheartening considering the large amount of time and money most organizations are investing only to end up with content that is difficult to manage and doesn't meet business needs.

Why is this happening?

The traditional paradigms and monolithic documents don't work – especially at scale. Disjointed approaches -- duct-taping Word and document managers like SharePoint together -- gets messy fast, leading to waste, high costs, risk exposure, and lost revenue.

Unlike other kinds of content people USE this content to take action, make decisions, and in some cases even prevent a life-ending accident. So, its critical to get this right.

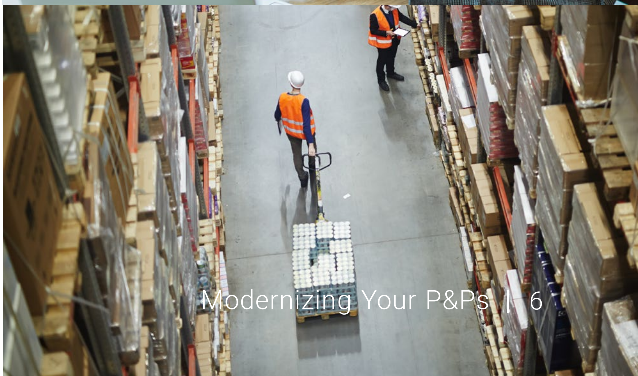
The traditional paradigms and monolithic documents don't work – especially at scale.

Audience-centric is the future

21st century P&P communication is not just about technology; it’s also about implementing a smarter content strategy.

Technology to automate the “work aspects” -- such as the review process -- has come a long way. That’s a good thing. But all the latest technology bells and whistles alone will NOT address underlying core problem that leads to usability and maintenance difficulties: the content itself.

Smart companies will seize this opportunity to do what they should have done years ago: clean up their content and implement a “smart” content strategy that can truly transform their operations – now and in the future.



The secret to modernization:

Structured Content

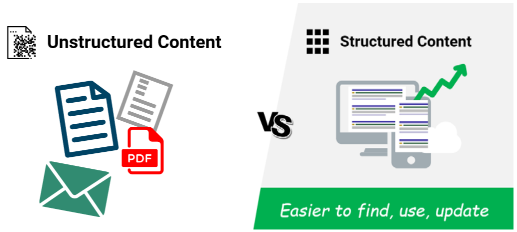
This core strategy makes it easier to implement all the tips in this eBook.

P&P content (*vs. reports, marketing content, bulletins, etc*) has unique characteristics:

- There's a lot of it (*some organizations have 1,000 + SOPs*).
- It's constantly changing.
- The audience is diverse (*employees inside offices/in the field, auditors, management; new hires/veterans*).
- Uniformity is an absolute must-have.

A structured content system (*sometimes referred to as component content management system (CCMS)*) is based on the practice of capturing content in a very structured way -- not freeform – and breaking content up into logical modules or "chunks," stored in a database.

Content is chunked so that it's easier to find, consume, update, translate, track, and re-purpose for different uses and audiences.



A recent study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of Adobe found that 80% of respondents whose organizations use a CCMS reported it eliminates regulatory compliance, financial, and workforce risks while creating and delivering content.

Source: "Component Content Management Systems: Supercharge Long-form Content For Personalized And Consistent Experiences"

Tip
#1

FOCUS ON THE DESIRED OUTCOME

[Warning: May require mindset change]

It's all about performance.

People often get so consumed with the “work aspects” of writing up P&Ps, they lose sight of WHY they are developing them in the first place. Everyone is told “let’s get this DONE so we can get back to our "real" work”.

When you lose sight of the "why", the real value is never communicated to the team, let alone management! This mindset is common in situations where there is no link to economic value.

Benefits we've seen:

- 50% reduction in new employee onboarding
- 65% reduction in errors
- 120 new locations opened in one year

Just shifting your thinking about policies and procedures can mean the difference between having an effective "system" for continuous improvement and hundreds of pages of documents that no one wants to read.

Instead of documents, create a "good Policy and Procedure Knowledge System" that is purposely designed to improve performance, products, and service.

- What is the performance outcome you want?
- What operational problem will this solve?

Everything you do from here should serve this end goal. At the end of the day, someone ought to be able to use the system to achieve the desired outcome -- with minimal supervision.

If you're not achieving the desired outcome, keep working on improving your P&P system.

If you follow this approach, you will naturally create content that gives your audience what they need and the way they want it.

Examples:

Create a "Patient Safety System" that is designed to reduce errors and engage family members.

Design a rock-solid "Change Management System" that truly aligns IT with your business users.

Case Study:
75% reduction in order processing time

When a wholesale parts supplier took on a new product line, their Operations Manager was getting called with questions about every order. Orders were delayed. Everyone was frustrated. **Solution:** Create order processing policies and procedures designed so that everyone involved could handle their part without having to ask each other for help or call the Manager. Another goal was to enable a staff member to cover for another staff member if they were out sick. **Desired Outcomes Achieved:** Freed up time, fewer billing errors, 75% reduction in order processing time.

Tip
#2

DIVIDE BUT LINK POLICY TO PROCEDURES

Mixing Policy & Procedure confuses people.

The strategy for your business might be outstanding—genius-level even — but unless your employees can understand what it is and how to implement it, nothing good can come of it.

When creating 21st century P&P communication, it's important to understand how policies differ from procedures and why you need both information types.

Employees have different questions:

Policies answer the question:

What do I need to know? (guidelines, standards)

Procedures answer the question:

How do I do this task? (how tos)

Common mistakes to avoid:

Creating Policies without corresponding Procedures.

Policies describe what you want to happen; your standards, guidelines.

Creating policies by themselves is a good start, but it's equivalent to saying something like: "It is our policy to be an equal opportunity employer," or "It is our policy, etc., etc." That's it.

Impact: It's then up to the employees to figure out how to make that happen on their own. This is risky at best, and can often be disastrous.

Stand-alone procedures out of compliance or not synced with policies.

"How to" questions must get answered somehow. Word-of-mouth isn't scalable. Emails and Post-it notes often spring up at the corporate, department, or individual level.

Impact: If your work procedures aren't captured and cross-checked with stated policies, your organization will at best be out of sync with itself, and at worst, be noncompliant with legal, regulatory, or internal controls.

Achieving business objectives requires having both policies and procedures accessible to employees. Most regulations require both.

Hardwiring Policy and Procedure together causes maintenance problems. Regulators don't like it either.

Everything all mixed up together.

In an effort to address the pitfalls above, many organizations intermix their "whats" and "how tos"—often creating ginormous, labyrinthine volumes of hybrid policy and procedure information. Employees have to wade through an avalanche of detail to find answers to simple questions.

It's counterproductive and can lead to big penalties. When everything is all mixed up together, finding quick, clear answers to any question can be nearly impossible.

Putting Policy and Procedure together in one document.

Typically, there is not a one-to-one correspondence between Policy and Procedure.

Hardwiring them together in a single document can lead to maintenance problems later and makes it impossible to sort, track, filter on Policies vs. Processes, vs. Procedures.

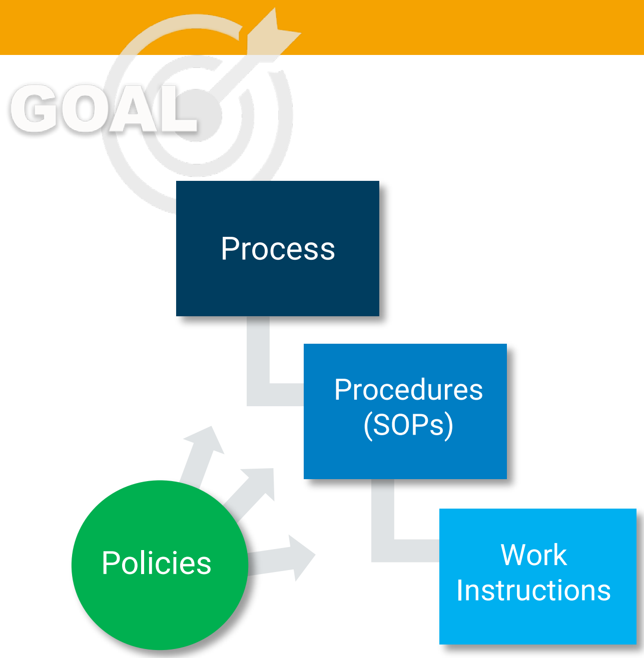
If you or your team is unclear about the difference between Policy and Procedure, the next section will help.

Dividing and linking is the answer

An organizational scheme that always works

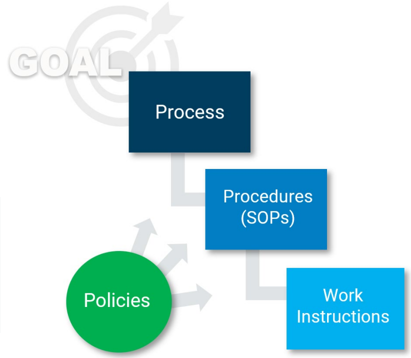
For best results, divide and conquer. Use policy documents to answer the "What do I need to know?" questions, use procedure documents to answer the "How do I do something?" questions, and then cross-link them.

- This framework accommodates the way people seek answers in daily situations, leading to faster, more accurate actions and better decisions.
- Content is vastly easier to maintain and manage.



Operations Mapping Methodology Copyright (c) COMPROSE

Definitions



A **Goal** is a measurable business outcome such as % error reduction, reduced time, etc

A **Process** is the highest level description of a task or series of tasks. It gives the big picture and overall work flow of a multi-step task.

Processes answer the question: How does a particular function or area of your business work and what happens. Providing employees this view helps them see how everyone works together and how their role fits in.

A **Procedure** (sometimes referred to as an SOP or Protocol, Best Practice) is more detailed than a process, but not as detailed as a work instruction.

Answers the questions: what happens, in what order, who does what to whom and how.

A **Detailed Task / Work Instruction** is typically carried out by one person from start to finish, in one sitting.

Work instructions change more frequently than processes and procedures. They should be separate, but linked to the other elements.

Policies are separate but should be linked to processes and tasks. A policy is a guideline or the official position with respect to a topic. Policies do not contain steps or actions. Think of policies as the result of "what should happen" if you take the right actions.

Tip
#3

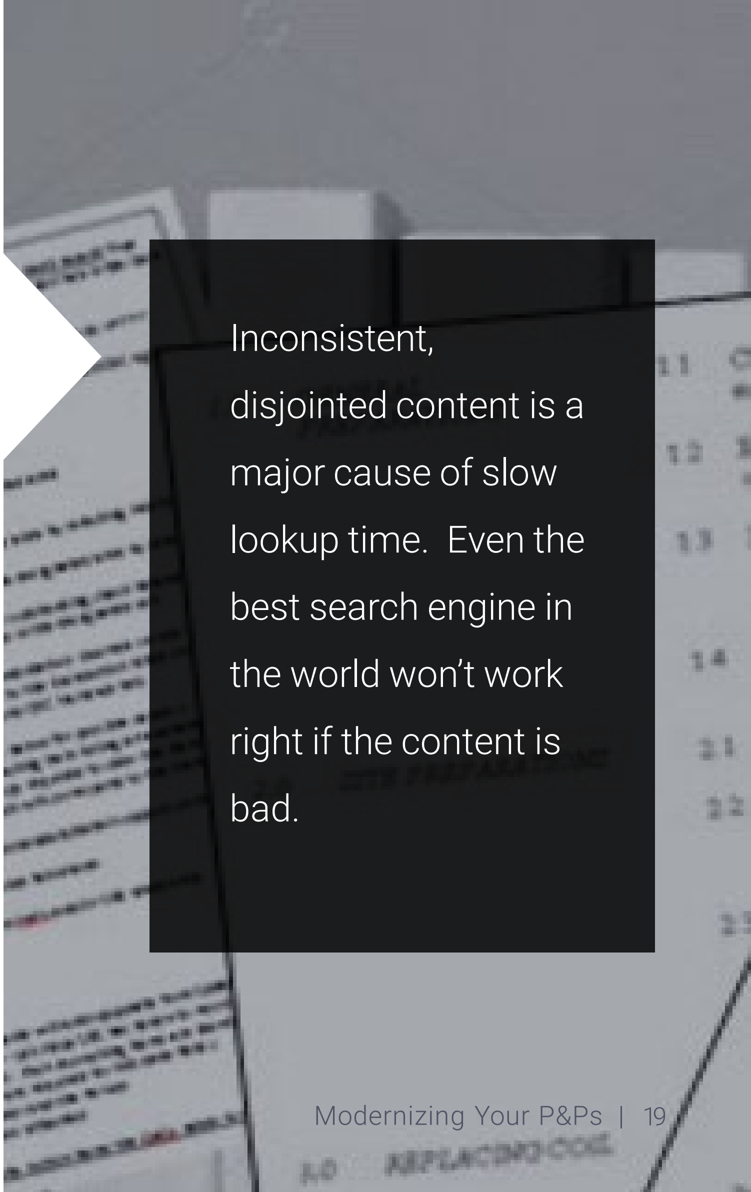
AVOID INCONSISTENCIES

The most common complaint we hear...

Often, when an organization decides to document their policies and procedures, they assign different people to the task who then fire up MS Word or Excel and start writing.

They write about this, write about that, and soon they end up with one big mess. How often we've heard the complaint: "every document is a new experience!" or "our policies and procedures are a mess."

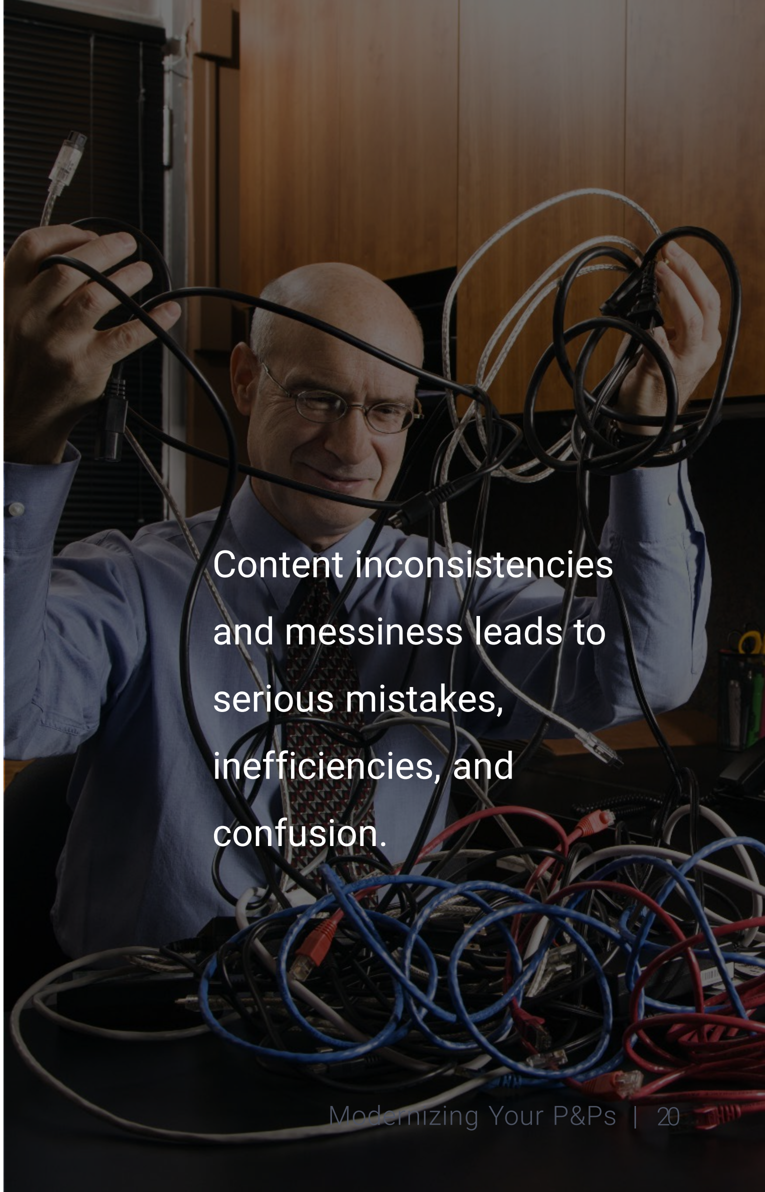
Over time most organizations end up with inconsistencies in terminology, formats, and level of detail.



Inconsistent, disjointed content is a major cause of slow lookup time. Even the best search engine in the world won't work right if the content is bad.

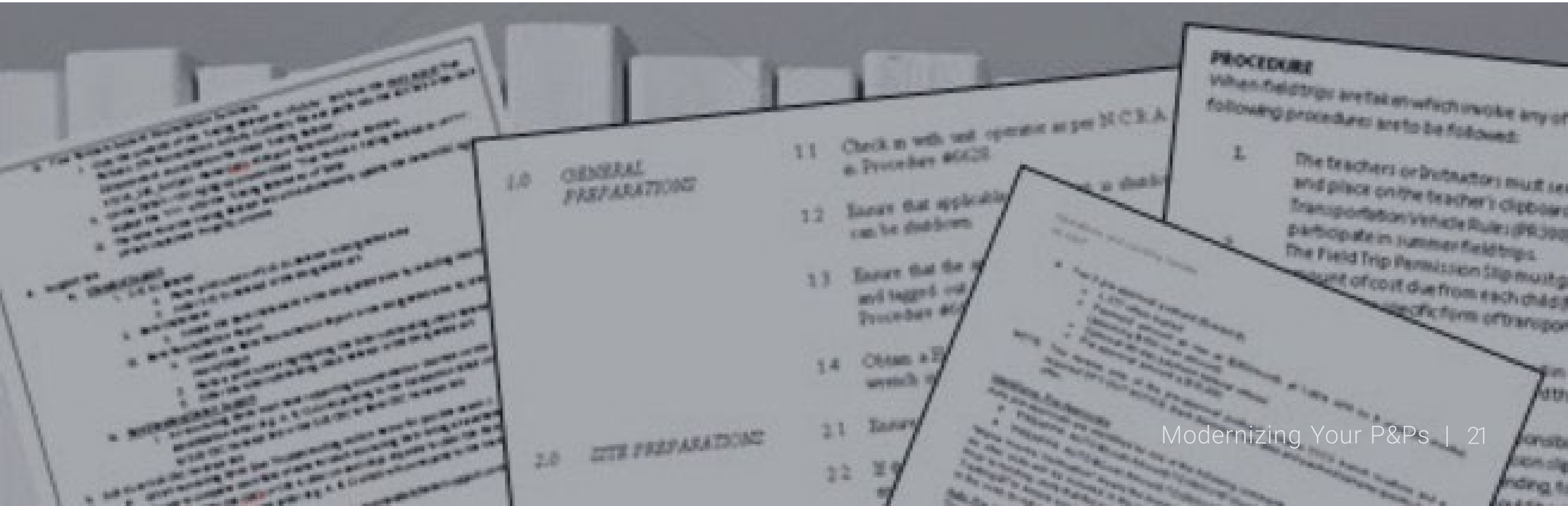
Top 6 signs your content is "messy"

1. Policies and procedures are scattered in emails, Word, and PDF files.
2. Procedure steps are overly complex, or important steps are missing. (*Roman numerals, really?*)
3. Terminology such as job titles and department names vary across documents.
4. Readers have to pinch and squeeze to read content on a mobile device.
5. Employees in the field are using the wrong version.
6. The classic: policy mixed with process knowledge.



Inconsistencies and “messiness” happens when people are using the wrong tools for the job.

Many have the misconception that Word templates can enforce standardization. A Word template only goes so far. The author is still basically operating in an unstructured environment. Its too easy for authors to “do their own thing.”



Here's how to AVOID hours and hours of cleanup and re-work – *forever*.

The smarter, 21st century approach is to spend a little more time at the beginning setting the right structure and standards and AVOID all the cleanup and re-work later.

Use an authoring system that has the following:

- Pre-built structure (that can be customized for your organization) as well as standardized Pick Lists
- Quality controls BUILT IN
- Performance support for authors (needed guidance on Policy & Procedure development best practices)
- Auto-formatting that eliminates time consuming clerical tasks

* Our Zavanta software has these features built in. Visit https://www.comprose.com to learn more.

Tip
#4

AVOID REDUNDANCIES

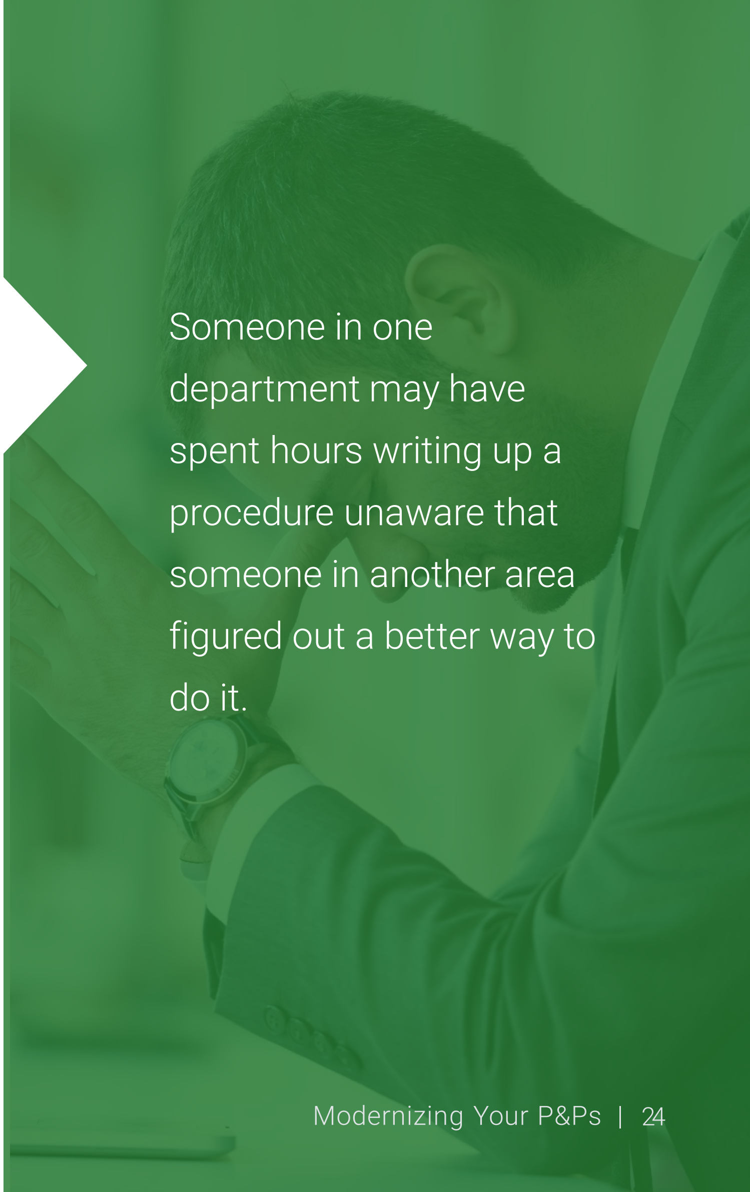
Give your audience content they can trust

Redundancies cause people to mistrust your content.

This tip is closely related to tip #3.

Over time, especially when many people are involved in the development process and don't have visibility to what everyone else is doing, it's easy to build up redundancies and duplication.

This is especially common when policies and procedures are mixed together in the same document.



Someone in one department may have spent hours writing up a procedure unaware that someone in another area figured out a better way to do it.

Case Study:
The impact of inconsistencies

One community bank we worked with sent us their policy and procedure content for review. They had already been cited by their auditor for deficiencies with their Policies and Procedures.

We noticed many gaps and redundancies. One specific example: the list of their account eligibility guidelines was written several times, embedded in different documents. Every time we saw it, it was different! Errors like this result in inconsistent work practices and content maintenance nightmares.

Prioritize upfront planning

If you are doing a redesign or starting from scratch:

- Take inventory of all content assets.
- Note duplications.
- Make sure policies and procedures are broken out into separate documents and that it's easy to categorize documents and identify document relationships.
- Any information that is utilized or referenced by several processes should be broken out into a separate document and then LINKED to related content.

Implement a content management system that lets you search and report documents by the categories that apply to your organization: by content type, process, job title, team.

Tip
#5

GET READY FOR THE MOBILE WORLD

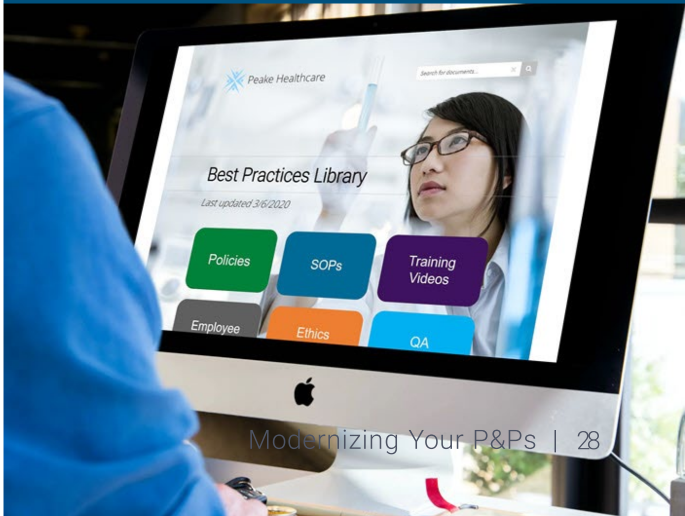
(simply putting PDF files on a shared drive isn't going to cut it)

Go online the right way.

Communication channels have evolved, yet most organizations are still using formats for their policy and procedure communication that were designed for an 8.5 x 11 piece of paper.

Your workforce, especially the younger employees who grew up with digital devices, will expect a better experience than scrolling through 100-page Word documents or looking up information in an old-style manual that's probably already obsolete.

Modern organizations are moving to an online Policy and Procedure Knowledge System.



The benefits of going online are many:

(*and it's not just about saving trees!*)

- Central organization
- Easier version management
- Employees have access to everything they need 24/7, no matter where they are located.
- Updates go out to thousands of employees in seconds (*no more replacement pages!*)
- Faster lookup (navigation, hyperlinking, search engine)
- Opportunity to link SOPs and policies directly into applications employees use, including Learning Management (LMS)
- Automated attestation
- Opportunity to incorporate sound and video
- Real time usage analytics for managers

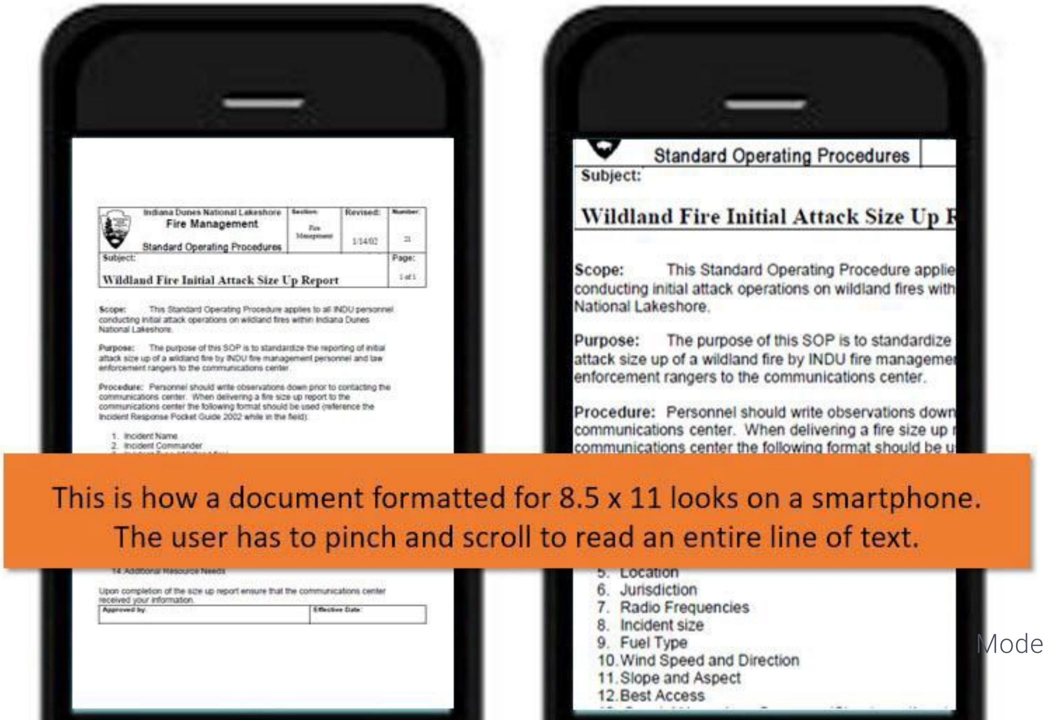
Simply putting Word or Excel documents online “as is” is a big mistake, frustrates users and slows them down.

Most documents created with word- processors are designed for one channel only: print. They lack navigation aids and don’t work well on small screens.

As a result, even when a user finds the document they want, they are forced to scroll and read the entire thing to locate the content they really want.

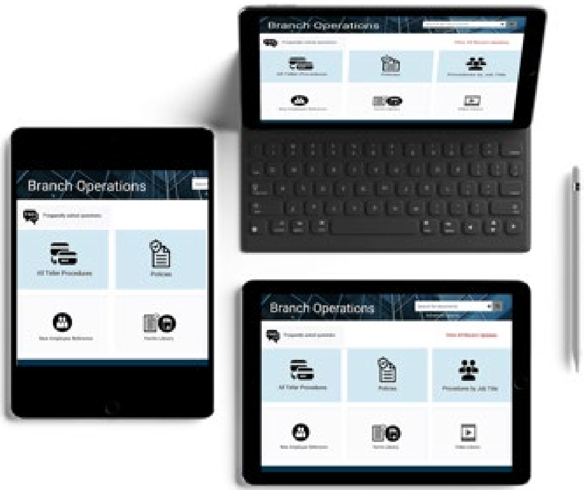
Going responsive will mean that some formats people are used to are going to become obsolete.

The world is going mobile, which means employees will be consuming information on smaller screens. If you're still producing old-style static documents, moving into this world will require massive conversion efforts.



Tips for creating "mobile-friendly" content

- Use a development system that generates “responsive” content and enables you to quickly preview it. Responsive output automatically resizes itself to fit on any size screen.
- Check that your site and internal document navigation changes appropriately to fit the screen size. (Navigation methods that work on large monitors may not translate well on small screens.)
- Make sure content is 508 compliant, meaning that content is accessible for people with disabilities.
- Avoid wide formats and tables that become unreadable on small screen or that require a lot of pinching and scrolling to view them.
- Make sure large images automatically shrink and resize to fit the screen.



Even if online is your primary communication channel, you may still need paper in some situations.

Some of your workforce may not have access to a computer, tablet or smartphone.

There may also be times you need to send information to a stakeholder who doesn't have access to your online system.

The ideal solution is to use a structured content system that separates the content from the format so that content can be re-purposed automatically for print and online without re-formatting.

Tip #6

GIVE EMPLOYEES EVERYTHING THEY NEED

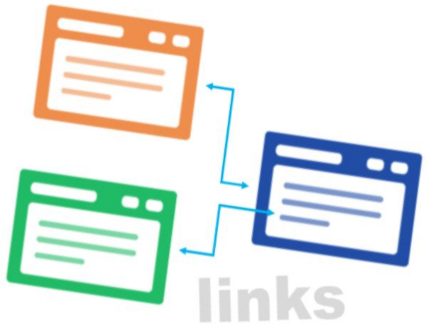
What additional information might employees need to achieve the desired outcome?

This is where it's time to think beyond traditional P&P documents. Policy and Procedure content is the foundation of your system, but don't stop there.

Your knowledge system might include: FAQs, Job Descriptions, Podcasts, Infographics, and a Company Dictionary.

Why not include contact links to the "resident expert" on a topic so that employees can quickly contact them?

In the online, web world there are no limits to knowledge integration once you understand the power of LINKING. Include links to external sources, helpful references.



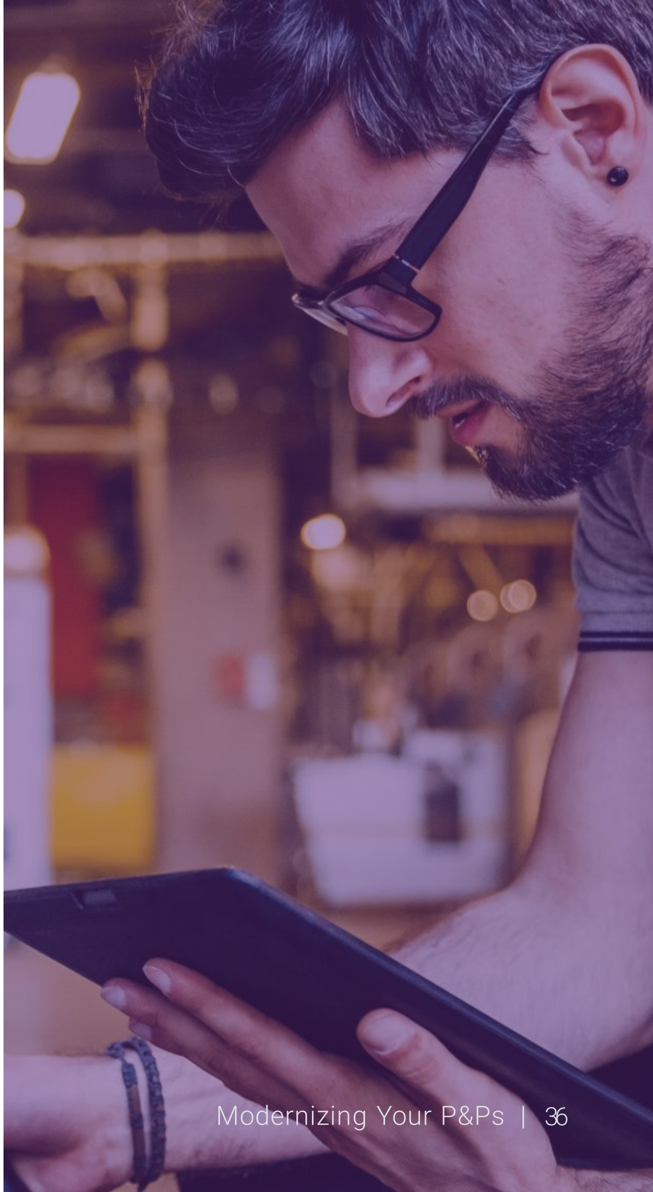
Link Procedures directly into work

Adopting a structured content model opens up all kinds of possibilities to give employees the right content at the right time.

Imagine if employees had access to the specific “how to” content at the moment they were performing a task?

- Link instructions directly into work. One click, no searching!
- Link policies and procedures into your LMS.
- Insert procedures into HR and CRM systems.
- Embed relevant content into call center scripts.

The applications are limitless.



Tip
#7

CREATE A SYSTEM THAT ENGAGES

Give employees a communication system they will want to use.

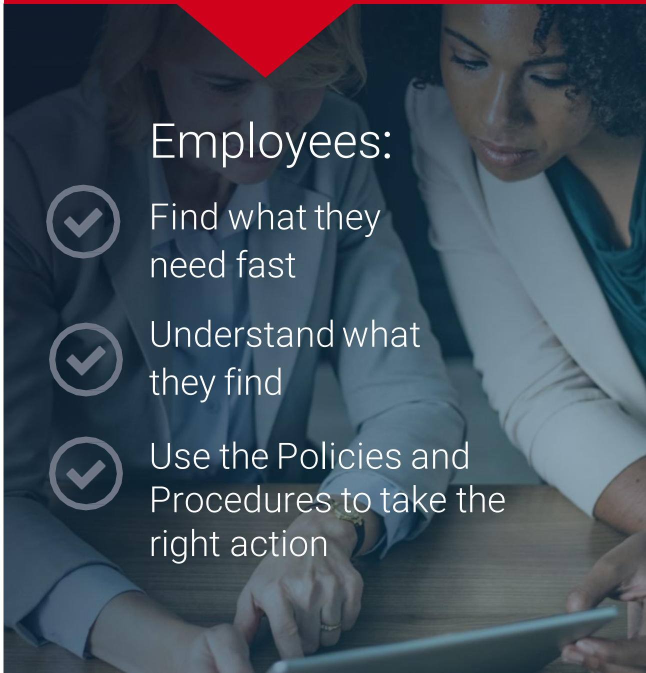
Who says policies and procedures are boring?

Instead of static documents that cause peoples' eyes to glaze over, smart organizations are focusing on employee experience by creating content that is engaging and easy to consume.

In today's web world, it's easy to include videos, audio, photos. Make it easy for them to contribute their suggestions and questions with feedback forms.

Create content that is easy to scan. Build navigation paths that help readers find what they need but that also let them explore related topics, tips, and best practices.

Bottom line, this is what makes a GREAT P&P system:



Employees:

- Find what they need fast
- Understand what they find
- Use the Policies and Procedures to take the right action

Summing it up:

The million dollar mistake we want you to avoid

A large global corporation wanted to capture "lessons learned" across the organization so everyone could function more effectively. Noble goal! So they invested over a year of valuable IT staff time and spared no expense to create a "knowledge management" system using MS Sharepoint that would serve as a central repository.

They created a slick modern interface and a detailed categorization system. They imported thousands of their accumulated documents into it.

The CEO was impressed. Mission accomplished!

But not so fast!

When employees in the field clicked on a link and opened up a "best practice" they were confronted with the same old stuff: pages and pages of large text blobs, no navigation. Content pieces were disjointed.

Consequently, employees didn't use the system and went back to the old tribal knowledge culture. The organization wasted significant time and money because they missed the underlying problem— bad content.

The moral of the story

Technology to automate the "work aspects" and make P&P content accessible online are all good things. But beware of promises that the latest "shiny new object" is going to fix or help you avoid content maintenance and usability problems.

Implementing a 21st century approach means giving top billing to content QUALITY and an audience-centric strategy.

Good content, that answers employees' questions *quickly* and empowers them to always take the right action, trumps everything else.

Different people have different questions. Your P&Ps need to give them the answers.

Want to learn more about a proven system to modernize your policies and procedures?

Zavanta is a Policy and Procedure standardization platform that automates all content life cycle phases.

It's structured content model makes it easier to create, find, consume, update, translate, track, and re-purpose policy and procedure content.

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