A perspective on your handbook

Fun Fact:
Reading 15 minutes a day puts you in the Top 1% of Learners in the world.

Tom Thomas

Handbook vs Procedure Manual

**HANDBOOK**

- The handbook familiarizes employees with basic college policies and programs.
- Outlines the general expectations of the college.
- Provides general overview of how the college/your department operates.
Handbook vs Procedure Manual

PROCEDURE MANUAL

- Procedure Manual details specifically how work should be done.
- Procedure Manuals are much more detailed and department specific (recreation, intercollegiate sports, recruiting and travel, fitness center, etc.).
- Details processes to meet expectations.

Handbook vs Procedure Manual

- The handbook is your rulebook.
- The Procedure Manual is your playbook.
- They serve different purposes but work in tandem with each other.

Handbook vs Procedure Manual

**Handbook**
- All purchases must be made through approved official department purchase orders.

**Procedure Manual**
- Authorized personnel may complete purchase orders (PO).
- PO’s must include detailed description and exact cost of items.
- PO’s must be approved by the AD before purchase.
Why a Handbook?

• Advantages?

• Purpose?

• Protection?

• Benefit to employers and employees?

A REFERENCE

Why a Handbook?

• A REFERENCE
• MOTIVATION/INITIATOR
• CONFIDENCE
• CONSISTENCY
• PROTECTION
As a Reference

• Need information, go to the handbook.
• With a handbook, everyone knows the rules of the workplace.
• When an employee breaks a rule, you can refer to the handbook. It helps make enforcement and discipline easier.

As a Motivator

• A handbook might include information about history and goals.
• A handbook can give employees a sense of being a part of something larger.
• It can build a sense of pride, keeping employees excited about the department and the success of the campus.
CONSISTENCY

Consistency

- A handbook helps ensure that people across the organization understand operation and handle issues consistently.
  
  It should provide a consistent framework for people to follow.

Consistency

- A handbook shouldn’t be an “Instructional guide” on how to manage or deal with every conceivable issue.
- Consistent framework will be a positive hallmark of your tenure.
Protection

- In most states, winning an unemployment claim requires proof that the employee was on notice of a certain rule and had been warned that violating the rule would lead to disciplinary action.

- A well-written handbook may be key to a successful defense of unemployment, improper termination, or other legal claims.

Handbooks

WHAT’S INCLUDED?
What's Included?

- Welcome and introduction.
- Purpose of handbook.
- Mission statement.
- Statement of priorities.
- Background information about the department and college.

What's Included?

- Benefits - (HR information).
- Suggestion and complaint procedures.
- Workplace rules and policies.
- Standards of conduct.
- Employee's role and responsibilities.

What's Included?

- Employer's role and responsibilities.
- Hours of work.
- Lunch periods and breaks? Ha!
- Overtime policy.
- Attendance and punctuality.
What’s Included?

- Time card information.
- Payday.
- Wage and performance reviews.
- Resignation or termination info.
- Summary and acknowledgment disclaimers (reviewed by your legal counsel).

Protection

- Handbooks can create unintentional Employment Contracts.
- If you’re not careful in the wording in your handbook, it may be considered a binding contract.
Protection

SO, WHAT DO WE DO?!?!

Avoiding Claims

- State that the handbook serves as a guide and is not a contract. It doesn't promise, directly or indirectly, a term of employment.
- Make sure that the handbook is carefully worded to avoid binding language and reserve the right to revise the handbook at any time.

Include a Disclaimer

- Include a concise piece of language that clearly says that your handbook is not an employment contract.
- This Handbook does not represent contractual terms of employment. It should serve as a guideline of policies which may be subject to periodic review and change.
**Effective Publishing Methods**

- Select the size, shape and format of your handbook.
- If it is too small, it will probably get lost.
- If it is too big, it will probably be put somewhere out of the way and rarely consulted.
- Typical handbooks range from 5” x 7”, to 8 ½” x 11”.

**What about the language and style?**
Effective Writing Style

This is an official document for your employees and you want them to read and comprehend it.

• Make it easy to read, but not too informal.
• Keep sentences short in length.
• Limit discussion of any subject to one page or less.
• Use drawings, charts, and cartoons as much as possible.
• Leave plenty of white space on each page.

Effective Writing Style

• Limit the size of the handbook. Don't make it complicated.

• Use a personal rather than an informal style. (Instead of saying "Employees will be paid on a bi-weekly basis," say "You will be paid every two weeks").

Effective Design Style
Effective Design Style

- Do you want the cover to be colorful?
- Do you want to include the college or department logo or motto on the cover?
- Do you want the printing limited to black and white, or do you want different colors of ink?
- Do you want colored paper for the pages?

Effective Design Style

- Do you want drawings or photographs in your book (Make sure they are good quality and print well)?
- Do we highlight what we want people to see (what we think is important)?
Publishing Options

• Forgo paper altogether by providing your handbook in an electronic form.

• Use a format that everyone can read, but that only you can edit (pdf).

Handbook Ideas and Examples

Cortland State Athletics

Washington College Athletics

Wooster College Athletics

Handbook Ideas and Examples

Addendum and/or Exhibits

New Employees

Orientation
Welcome Packet
Checklist
Mentor Program

Exit Interview Tasks
Final Considerations

• A handbook should be tailored to your organization and should reflect how you conduct business.

• Handbooks that contain typos, are copied askew, are out of date, contain inapplicable policies and look sloppy or unprofessional send a message that you don't really care.

Final Considerations

• No handbook works if employees do not have easy access to it and you cannot “prove” an employee received and understood that he or she was required to abide by it.

• Include a signed acknowledgement form that your handbook was received, read, and understood.

Final Considerations

• Refer to the handbook yourself, at department meetings and in individual meetings with your employees.

• Modeling this type of behavior will lend a sense of acceptance to using the handbook.
Final Considerations

• Review your handbook regularly and refer to your human resources office for compliance.

• Review changes, as they are made, with your entire department.

• Have your athletics direct report (ADR), HR, and legal counsel review and approve your handbook.