A Guide for Preparing Office Procedures Manuals

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A GUIDE FOR PREPARING
OFFICE PROCEDURES MANUALS

by

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A GUIDE FOR PREPARING
OFFICE PROCEDURES MANUALS

George Fisher, Sp.A.
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This paper develops a guide for improved techniques in preparing office procedures primarily by enumerating the concepts of various authors pertaining to facets of a procedures manual. Examples are given illustrating the most common layouts which can be used effectively for a procedures manual, and explains when each layout may be the best method for a particular class of document or manual.

The paper also describes how to:

1. Develop a manuals program concept.
2. Plan the procedures manual.
3. Develop the contents.
4. Develop a document numbering system.
5. Write the procedures.
6. Use illustrations.
7. Use indexing for information retrieval.
8. Reproduce and distribute procedures manuals.
9. Manage, maintain and control procedures manuals.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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George Fisher
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INTRODUCTION

Background

The recession years, 1969-71, taught all organizations—industry, government, and academia—that budgets had to be watched more closely and revised more frequently than was the custom. When business is booming, it seems that money cannot be spent as fast as it is coming in. When business slows down, how fast can overhead be cut and income be maintained so the bottom line is solid black? Those same recession years demonstrated that methods had to be developed to operate organizations more effectively and efficiently to reduce costs of operation (32).

Costs Rising

To effect this required reduction in operating costs, one must recognize that increasing service worker productivity is one of the great new challenges facing today's business leader. A study by A. T. Kearney, Inc. (15), of clerical employees—the largest element of the white-collar work force—indicated that unparalleled opportunities are available to management; however, these opportunities remain largely untapped.

The study continues by stating (15:5-6) that:

More than 60 percent of the private sector, non-agricultural work force in the United States is presently engaged in supplying services as opposed to manufacturing products. In the next decade, 25 million service workers will be added to U.S.
payrolls. According to the Department of Labor, white-collar and service employment is projected to be 2.5 times that of the blue-collar work force by 1980.

Despite this explosion in white-collar employment, management attention, at least in most manufacturing companies, has been focused primarily on improving factory operations. This is clearly illustrated by Department of Labor reports showing that factory labor costs have increased only 9% in the past 10 years, while clerical and service operations have risen 42%.

Assuming present trends continue as projected, management can be duly concerned that corporate profits or the quality of service may deteriorate unless appropriate action is taken. For example, in areas of high clerical concentration, such as finance and insurance, the cost of white collar operations has increased dramatically from 1950 to 1970.

As interpreted from the wage and productivity index trends shown, in those 20 years, white collar workers received annual average wage increases of 6.3%. This dwarfed their productivity gains of 1.9% annually during the same period.

Jeanne Baldwin verifies the Kearney study by stating (33:106) that:

Between 1960 and 1970, the cost of clerical and service operations rose 42% while factory labor costs rose only 9%. From 1950 to 1970, white-collar workers received annual average wage increases of 6.3% which dwarfed their productivity gains of 1.9%. By 1980, white collar employment will be 2 1/2 times that of the blue-collar work force. As these trends continue, management attention must focus on ways to reduce the costs of office operations. Whatever the type of company or operation, all offices have one common denominator: all have large amounts of paper. Logically, action to reduce costs must center on ways to improve paper handling.
Use of Temporary Help

In conjunction with the "cost squeeze" and increased requirements for clerical personnel, management, of necessity, has turned toward using more and more temporary help. In this connection, Howard W. Scott, Jr., of the Kelly Services, Inc., states (34:21) that:

By 1980, the U.S. will have a work force in which white-collar workers will be in the majority (51.5%). As we continue to move away from a production-oriented economy, an increasing number of clerical workers will be needed. As turnover increases and flexible business hours and lifestyles gain popularity, business will have to depend more on temporary help.

As an indication of the size of the temporary-help industry in the United States, Essey states (32:67) that "in 1973 the industry does over $750 million of business." In this same article he also says that:

You probably are using the same procedure for cleaning your office at night. It matters not to you if the cleaning service used 52 different people during the year to clean your office or has the same person on the job the entire year, as long as the office is kept clean. Doesn't this same technique make sense in areas where you have trouble keeping people on the job?

The Kearney study also showed that 30 companies, of the 260 of the nation's leading companies responding, having the more successful cost-reduction programs, predominantly used methods/procedure improvement as a means for this accomplishment while the less successful did not. The study further indicated that the cost to maintain the required office staff analysts would be substantially less than the operational-cost reduction.
It is apparent from the above study that management, to be more cost effective, should use procedures manuals as one of the tools to reach this goal. This raised the question, Why didn't management make use of such a tool? Research revealed that one of the probable reasons procedures manuals were not extensively used is the fact that no comprehensive guide for the preparation of an office procedures manual appears to exist.

Lack of Guides

Karl Schricker, President, Manuals Corporation of America (MCA), who is one of the leading procedures manuals consultants, verified the lack of such a comprehensive guide and the need for one.

The fact that there is no comprehensive guide for preparing office procedures became all the more perplexing since innumerable books, periodicals, articles, and studies have extolled the necessity for office procedures. Consequently, the conclusion was reached that a guide for preparing office procedures manuals was required and will be extremely beneficial to all types of organizations.

Purpose

The purpose and objective of this paper is to develop a guide for improved techniques for preparing office procedures manuals. The development of such a guide will be accomplished primarily by compiling, through library research, the concepts of various authors pertaining to facets of a procedures manuals guide.
DEFINITIONS

To assure that the writer and reader of this paper are communicating, the terminology to be used is defined as follows:

Communication. A process involving the sorting, selecting, and sending symbols to help a reader elicit from his own mind a meaning similar to that contained in the mind of the communicator (1:6).

Effective Communication is purposive symbolic interchange resulting in workable understanding and agreement between the sender and receiver (2:3).

Format. The page(s) of the manual are designed for positioning of constant information. Format also includes the physical housekeeping details such as the binders, dividers, organization (contents), and numbering system (3).

Manual. (1) An orderly collection of written instructions, directions, facts, or data pertaining to the affairs and activities of an organization, business, job, or method (3).

(2) An orderly compilation of any or all of the following—organization charts and/or data, policy statements, procedure details, standard instructions, or standing orders, that pertain to the activities of the organization, which is maintained as a book (usually loose-leaf), or on magnetic tape, microform (microfiche in particular), or video-tape for quick and easy reference (3).

(3) According to Wylie (4:94), Webster defines a manual as a "handy compendium of a large subject; a handbook." The term
"manual," as used in the office, refers to the written record of information. . . . Manuals make available to the employees instructions pertaining to their jobs, the regulations concerning accepted standards, and general information concerning the company.

**Method.** Method implies a regular, orderly, logical procedure for doing something (5:926).

**Procedure.** (1) A series of logical steps by which repetitive business action is initiated, carried forward, controlled, and finalized. A procedure spells out what action is required, who is required to act, and when the action is to take place. Its essence is chronological sequence. The implementation of a procedure translates it into results or actions (3).

(2) A formal instruction which controls the mechanics by which clerical routines are performed; including equipment, forms and forms flow, sequence of operations, and working conditions (16:1).

**Routine.** (1) The name given to the paths or sequence of operations followed by paper work as it passes through the office. In the preparation of routines, the paper work must be routed step to step (4:76).

(2) The *American Heritage Dictionary* defines routine as a prescribed and detailed course of action to be followed regularly; a standard procedure (6:1131).

(3) An established way of handling a special class of recurring events (3).

**Style.** A customary (predetermined) manner of presenting printed
(or written) material, including usage, punctuation, spelling, typography, and arrangement (30:1280).

**System.** An orderly arrangement of elements or routines into a complete whole. It may consist of a number of procedures, each one of which is designed to indicate specific courses of action—the detailed methods, the means of communication, the application of forms and reports, etc. (3).

**Definitions summarized.** According to Haga (3): **Method** emphasizes procedure according to a detailed, logical, ordered plan; **System**, broader in scope, stresses order and regularity affecting all parts of a relatively complex procedure; **Routine** stresses procedure from the standpoint of detail and rather rigid sequence and involves only the mechanical skills necessary for unvarying practice; and **Procedures** are documentation of routines. This guide has as its outcome a systematized plan for routine office procedures.
NEED FOR MANUALS

Communications Media

As organizations grow and administration becomes more complex, the need for procedures manuals becomes more acute. A big problem facing advocates of better (not bigger) manuals is the relatively minor importance given this means of communication by too many executives. Although one of management's major responsibilities is to control employee's performance as it relates to the operations, functions, and the mission of the organization, many managers ignore manuals as a helpful communications media when their organizations become too large for personal contact (11:1).

Hendrick (7:240), in discussing The Manual as a Tool of Communication, states:

Essentially, procedures manuals represent one means of communicating management decisions concerning organization, policies, and procedures. In modern management the volume and frequency of such decisions are increasing.

Hendrick (7:240) further states:

Progressive enterprises have come to regard their organizational structures, policy statements and procedural practices simply as elements of administration that can and should change as often as required to capitalize on new business opportunities and to meet competition. This concept of management has increased the need for and changed the role of (procedures) manuals. Emphasis is now placed on using the manual to communicate information concerning "change."

Matthies (8:9) also stresses the role of the procedures manual as a tool of communication when he wrote:
The procedures in the manual show the major "highways" within the organization for getting action. Statements of work make it clear which department is responsible for doing what work. The systems (procedure) manual brings much knowledge into sharp focus. And it can then be communicated.

Purpose and Use of Manuals

Purpose

The purpose is threefold: to make instructions definite, to provide an authoritative reference in answer to questions pertaining to procedure, and to improve administrative control. The manuals are not prepared for the benefit of management, but for the benefit of the employees and the assistance of management. Unless they are accessible for the employees' use, much of their value is lost. Manuals have been described as "records of operating procedures." It is not enough to record what each employee is to do. The manual, to serve its most effective purpose, should indicate the relationship with other employees and define responsibilities (4:94).

Use

The use of the procedures manual by employees is to assure that all concerned are kept informed of changing management attitudes and established management practices.

A standard practice is a fixed procedure that has been arrived at by scientific study, has the weight of executive authority, and is to be used without variation in performing the function for which the standard has been set.
Standards can be applied to procedures, output, costs, and equipment. A standard can usually be set for anything that is measurable, or for anything that is of a routine, repetitious nature. Standards are management's decisions at any time on any given subject; so that, when similar situations arise, there will be a guide to aid in the determination of the solution, with results that will be uniform. The record of the standard practices forms the operating manual (4:95).

Matthies (8:11), when discussing the uses for a systems manual, states:

A manual is just a place to put systems documents. The only reason you place these documents in the manual is to help people find work information they need when they need it. . . . There are so many plans in the organization, so many different ways of working, so many policies, that the average person cannot remember them all.

Advantages and Limitations

Much of our folklore has been passed from family to family, from generation to generation, by word of mouth. Many fantastic tales have been added in the telling. On the other hand, some of the achievements of the ancients were lost because of the absence of any means of recording. Is the situation any different in organizations today when important facts, decisions, and organization details are not recorded? When employees are left to their own devices in performing their functions, personal variations in methods will result in variations of performance. There will be no uniformity.
According to Wylie (4:95),

Among the advantages of recording standards and having them accessible are the following:

The procedures manual:

1. Provides an aid in training employees.
2. Relieves management of the necessity of decisions on similar routine work.
3. Makes the results uniform.
4. Facilitates measurement of production.
5. Assists in settling disputes as to procedure and responsibility.
6. Assists in improving organization relationships by making the procedures definite. The psychological advantage of definite duties, responsibilities, and lines of authority cannot be over-emphasized.
7. Provides a basis for development work and facilitates improvement.

Ross (16:2) delineates the purposes or objectives of a Procedures Program as:

1. Assuring compliance with company policy.
2. Providing uniformity in practice.
3. Reducing operational errors.
4. Shortening training period for new employees.
5. Expediting interchange of employees between various jobs.
6. Eliminating snap decisions about important systems changes.
7. Assisting in maintaining good organization.
8. Eliminating oral procedures instructions.
Hendrick (7:241) in discussing "potentials and limitations of manuals" summarizes an American Management Seminar as follows:

Representatives of 80 companies agreed that there are 10 basic benefits to be derived from the use of company manuals. Discussion of these benefits leads to an appraisal of each, as shown below:

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<th>Excellent</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. Flow of management information</td>
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<td>2. On-the-job reference guide</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Indoctrination</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Uniformity in interpretation and administration of policies</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Coordination of activities</td>
<td></td>
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<td>x</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Elimination of unnecessary duplications</td>
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<td>x</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. Constant review and improvement of policies and procedures</td>
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<td>x</td>
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<td>10. Internal auditing of policies, procedures, and controls</td>
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Hendrick (7:241-242) further comments on the above 10 points by indicating that:

1. Flow of management information. A complete flow of such information requires that data be communicated up and down the line of organization. Manuals may be used to communicate down the line. Other means, however, must be sought out for communicating upward.

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2. On-the-job reference guide. Experience has demonstrated that management personnel have need for almost daily reference to written policies and procedures in the normal course of administrative operations.

3. Indoctrination. Indoctrination cannot be accomplished merely by giving the new employee a manual, no matter how well designed it may be. The manual will help, but it must be supplemented by a reference to selected subjects of primary interest to the new employee, and by personalized indoctrination techniques.

4. Supervisory and executive training. Effective training requires repetition and reference to case histories, both of which must be avoided in manuals if they are to be effective reference tools.

5. Clarification of organization structure and responsibilities.

6. Uniformity in interpretation and administration of policies. There is no substitute for putting organizational and policy subjects on paper.

7. Coordination of activities.

8. Elimination of unnecessary duplications. In the process of preparing a manual, substantial progress will probably be made in coordinating activities and eliminating duplications of functions.

9. Constant review and improvement of policies and procedures. Assuming that manual data is referred to and adhered to, thinking will be stimulated toward improving operations, particularly when supervisory personnel are requested to recommend a change in policy or procedure when their experience indicates that current instructions contained in the manual are impracticable.

10. Internal auditing of policies, procedures, and controls. Systems and auditing work is invariably more effective and is accomplished more expeditiously when manuals are available to guide those doing this work.
Karl Schricker's views on the advantages of the procedures manual not only include those previously attributed to Wylie and Ross but additional concepts as well. Schricker (10:65) lists the following as the advantages of a procedures manual:

1. Use as a training guide. Helps train the new-hire and prepare employees for better positions. Also helps employees do a better job.
2. Use as a reference source: also a reference source easily kept current.
3. Defines duties, responsibilities, and authority.
4. States and clarifies policies.
5. Facilitates communications.
6. Formalizes operations of company (organization).
7. Preserves policy and procedure through personnel change.
8. Strengthens supervision and assures supervisor of having current instructions.
9. Instructs management on what is actually being done in the company or organization.
10. Serves as basis for improvement, expansion, or merger.
11. Written policy helps sell the hard-to-convince.
13. Facilitates introduction of better method by providing complete data on the present method.
15. Provides means for uniform introduction of entirely new work.
16. Has a historical value, especially when needed to support or substantiate adherence to federal, state, or local statutes.
17. Provides means of proper authorization for changes in procedures.
18. Brings to light duplication of effort.
19. An aid to better scheduling of operations and work flow.
21. Gives the user a sense of confidence.

Professor Haga (3) in explaining the problem arising from lack of an office procedures manual, attributes the following as "costs of operating without manuals":

1. High-positioned personnel do low-cost work.
2. High training costs for new personnel.
3. Difficulty in alternating employees.
4. Duplication of work and effort.
5. Omission of necessary procedures.
6. Inconsistency in procedures.
7. Time lost in determining what to do.
8. Wrong action taken.
9. Answering questions requires time of at least two people.
10. Incorrect information given in answer to questions.
11. Many individual files of incorrect, inadequate, and obsolete procedures maintained.
12. Correspondence and communications costs increase.
13. Supervisor never gives the same answer.
14. Supervisors differ in their answers.
15. Employee's decision made to suit his convenience or benefit.
According to Kendall (9:21):

The System Users Manual facilitates efficient delegation of authority; the department manager knows how his subordinates will handle a situation, while the employees themselves are more willing to accept responsibility since they can rely on written procedures. Thus, it relieves management from many repetitive routine decisions. Work measurement and performance audits are also facilitated by the manual.

Matthies (8:10-11) succinctly capitulates the above viewpoints as follows:

Assuming that your manual communication system is effective . . . useful . . . what are some of the things it will do for your organization?

It can do these things:

1. It provides statements on the policy of the organization that anyone can apply.
2. It tells the one best way to work.
3. It tells the one best way to work together.
4. It reduces errors in decision, that would be due to ignorance at the operating level.
5. It tends to bring consistency or purpose to all operations.
6. It reveals . . . to all who need such a revelation . . . the organization structure and its responsibility pattern.
7. It tends to bring correct interpretation of procedures, instructions, and policies.

On the other hand, many procedure manuals are not useful. They are written from the viewpoint of the systems man. Or some manuals are developed to please the top bosses. Yet these executives are not the people who need the manual the most. Therefore, when your procedures manual does not serve those it should serve, then it

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becomes just a bundle of "puff sheets." . . . If the manual is only useful to you, the system man, or to your bosses, then you have not produced a really useful systems (procedures) manual. The poor manual is the writer's manual (8:11-12).

Even though the above extols the need for procedures manuals they should not be considered as the "end unto themselves" because it is not economical nor feasible to have procedures covering all aspects of operations within an organization. Nor can procedures ever fully replace good management practices or good judgment.

Industry's Viewpoint

The article "A Manual for System Users" by Raymond Kendall (9:20), even though addressed to the importance of providing documentation for the user of the data processing system, is equally apropos to the necessity for office procedure manuals. The following are quotations from Kendall's article:

An Indiana bank found it important for systems users to receive adequate documentation because it was the user departments that were responsible for and paid for the data-processing systems. A manual was developed to help the user departments to understand the systems, to perform required operations, and get the results for which they paid.

The manual establishes a communication bridge between system users and systems personnel. It saves time, reduces confusion, and gives all personnel involved the confidence necessary when changing over to a new system. The manual serves as a training guide for new personnel and as a reference guide for those who are already in the user organization. It improves morale by demonstrating to the user department and employees involved how their tasks fit into the whole system.
Systems users are not dependent upon systems personnel for instructions but can perform their own work efficiently and accurately.

To gain an insight in the use and effectiveness of office procedures, a sampling of opinions from personal interviews was made of a cross-section (seven) of organizations based in Kalamazoo, Michigan. The organizations used in the sample were The Upjohn Co., an international drug manufacturer; Brown Co., a paper products manufacturer; Clarage Fan Division, Zurn Industries, Inc., a manufacturer of industrial fans and other equipment; First National Bank & Trust Company of Michigan; Bronson Methodist Hospital; Manpower Inc. of Kalamazoo, a national supplier of temporary manpower; and Peter Eckrich & Sons, Division, Beatrice Food Corp., a manufacturer of food products.

Interviews with officials of the above organizations indicated the following:

1. Only some of the organizations had a policy which encouraged the development of office procedures.

2. The organizations that had a procedures policy levied the development of office procedures on the respective supervisors. As a consequence, the availability of procedures varied from a hit-or-miss operation to an extensive procedures system. In addition, none of the organizations interviewed had established standards or guidelines for the preparation of their procedures.

3. None of the procedures manuals contained an alphabetic index. However, the officials agreed that having an index would facilitate their use and benefits.
4. Most officials were surprised at the lack of, and/or sparsity of, office procedures within their respective organizations.

5. Those organizations having office procedures did distribute them on a need basis.

6. All officials agreed that having a guide for preparing office procedures and the establishment and enforcement of an office procedures system would be very beneficial and make their operation more cost effective.

Ms. Diana Hall, Manager of Manpower Inc. of Kalamazoo, stressed the fact that if the organizations using the temporary manpower services had office procedures, the temporary help could perform more effectively. This was also the opinion of Ms. Barbara Digon, Employment Supervisor, Brown Co., Kalamazoo.
MANUALS PROGRAM CONCEPT

Key Points for Developing Effective and Efficient Manuals

The Manuals Corporation of America (MCA), at a seminar (12), listed the following 16 key points for developing effective and efficient manuals:

1. Establish need.
2. Determine if manual is worth the cost and effort.
3. Think Manuals Program concept.
4. Evaluate MCA's 28 Manuals Program Requirements and determine applicability of each.
5. Give Format and Layout eye appeal.
6. Write in styles appropriate for manuals.
7. Keep user in mind at all times.
8. Design your manual; don't merely write it.
9. Apply graphics.
10. Develop and institute the necessary controls.
11. Get feedback, then follow-up.
12. Keep manual up to date.
13. Develop a good, accurate, and uncomplicated Information Retrieval System.
14. Be sure contents are accurate, factual, and complete.
15. Be alert to new and better ways of preparing and designing manuals.
Manual Program Requirements

The MCA, at the above-mentioned seminar (12), expounded on the fact that there is more to developing procedures manuals than writing. It was the corporate staff opinion that when setting out on an assignment directed toward the development of a new or revised procedures manuals system one should evaluate the following manuals program requirements:

1. Appendix
2. Assigning Manuals
3. Audits
4. Binders
5. Bulletin Auxiliary Program
6. Contents
7. Data Origination
8. Data Review Schedules
9. Dates
10. Distributing Documents
11. Editing
12. Filing Requirements
13. Follow-up & Feedback Surveys
14. Format
15. Graphics
16. Information Retrieval
17. Introduction
18. Layout
19. Manual-Assignment Accountability
20. Manual-Processing Procedures
21. Manuals Management
22. Numbering Documents
23. Preparing Documents
24. Program Controls
25. Receipt (Acknowledgement) Control
26. Reproduction (Printing)
27. Revision Processing
28. Writing Styles

The above listed requirements are in alphabetical order because the relevance of each may change from assignment to assignment. In addition, each requirement is not necessarily an integral part of
every manuals program; however, each requirement must be considered in relationship to the program's needs.

Selling the Concept

Survey after survey has found that the enormous sums of money being spent on procedures manuals are not producing an equivalent payoff in economic terms. And, the reason—stated simply—is people (13:8). This is also borne out in a research study conducted by A. T. Kearney, Inc. (15).

Most procedures analysts admit to the unpleasant reality that the toughest part of developing and implementing a procedures manual system is gaining acceptance of the users for whom the system is designed. How many analysts have asked the frustrating question: "Since my system is technically optimum and is obviously going to result in improved performance and more efficient operations, why can't I get the manager/users to accept it?" (13:8).

According to Drs. Ross and Schuster (13:9), resistance to procedures manual system takes on a variety of forms and varies according to the level of the organization. They identified the following 9 common reasons for resistance:

1. Threat to status.

2. Threat to ego—key job skills become less important.

3. Economic threat—fear of job loss by clerical personnel.

5. Insecure feelings—top manager who formerly relied on personal power is now deprived of much "personal" type information.

6. Relationships changed—superior-subordinate relationship changed as a result of a new procedures system.

7. Job ambiguity—loss of autonomy and control.

8. Job rigidity—time pressures brought on by requirements of "programmed" system.

9. Interpersonal relations changed—former interpersonal relations built on information exchange now destroyed.

To sell the concept, Ross and Schuster (13:10) advocate that the procedures analyst remember the following major points:

Don't design the system first and then try to sell it by ramming it down the throat of the emergent social structure. You can't do it.

Don't pay lip service to involving people in the system design by trying to make them think they are participating. Most people will recognize this for what it is, or will realize that you are trying to seduce them into accepting your system.

Don't make the fatal mistake of assuming a procedure system has only technical and physical constraints. It has social system constraints as well, and they frequently outweigh the technical ones.

Do begin in the initial stages to gather information on the workings of the emergent social system and the constraints it imposes. Pay particular attention to work-group norms (i.e., expected standard of behavior) and emergent status relationships, both of which will be key factors in the acceptance or rejection of the system.

Do design the system within the emergent social system constraints, just as you design it within technical or physical constraints, such as information availability.
Do consider the social and behavioral aspects of systems design to be as equally important as the technical or physical aspects.

The Kearney study (15:10) even though stated differently than Ross and Schuster reached a similar conclusion:

For a clerical-improvement program to be successful, personnel at all levels of the organization must accept it. In order to do this, they must understand the need for it and be allowed to participate in its development. When such is the case, all concerned can feel they are doing something important that contributes to their own job satisfaction and the well-being of their company.

Finally, the procedures systems analyst must realize that weak management-manual-worker links breed objections to, and discontent with, the selling of the procedures-manuals concept. Or as Clifford Haga (14) so aptly put it:

Without the whole-hearted backing of the executive and top management and without the candid acceptance by line management, the best manual in the world, stuffed with the most elegantly-presented instructions for the most ideal procedures, is as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal.
PLANNING THE PROCEDURES MANUAL

Because the Procedures Manual Program concept has almost universal approval, the procedures analyst must bear in mind that the basis to success of his procedures manual, or any manual for that matter, is the job of planning that precedes the actual development.

How does one come up with a plan for the manual that will be "generally acceptable"?

Matthies states (8:30) that many detailed questions will be involved, such as:

1. What DOCUMENTS will go into the manual?
2. How will the manual be DISTRIBUTED?
3. WHO will use it most often?
4. What will they USE it for?
5. How will the manual documents be kept UP TO DATE?
6. WHO WILL ISSUE the original documents?
7. Who will publish REVISIONS?

As you start a manual, you have an opportunity to produce (1) an excellent management tool . . . or (2) a miserable mess.

Your first step will be to get everybody's ideas hammered into a single plan.

Matthies (8:33) sets forth three steps in making the procedures manual a first-rate management tool.

STEP ONE (1) toward a useful manual is the plan. If you don't plan the contents of your manual . . . but throw items into it helter-skelter, without a preconceived goal, your manual will reflect this lack of planning.

Many manuals are started by copycatting from a manual used by another organization . . . picking up its errors as well as its good points.

Yet a useful manual must be tailor-made for the organization. No two organizations operate exactly alike. . . .
STEP TWO (2) is the level of instruction. Is your manual intended to help tie together departments? Groups? Or is it to give instructions to individuals?

Each of those is a good purpose, but you can't achieve them all in one manual . . .

STEP THREE (3) covers the manual contents . . . What quantity of each type of document will you provide?

Be careful! You may create a bigger maintenance job than you can handle.

How many procedures will you have? 10? 25? 250? 1,000? If you intend to limit the number of procedures you'll have in the manual, what will you INCLUDE, and what will you EXCLUDE?

Answer those questions before you even start developing your manual.

In conjunction with the above planning efforts, the procedures analyst should solicit ideas and comments from his boss and other key people within the organization. The solicitation of ideas and comments will accomplish two things:

1. It will get a meeting of the minds of the key people as to what their manual should be.

2. It will help gain their acceptance of the manual once it is produced.
Degree of Detail Required

Since a procedure weaves the varied work action of a number of people into one sensible sequence it becomes the basic coordinating instrument for accomplishing the task. Therefore, when documenting the "how to work" actions, the procedures analyst should ask: What information does each individual worker need for his guidance, and what information do the workers need for interrelated actions?

The degree of detail required for each procedure must be consistent with the answers to the above questions. Each procedure should consist of a clear document title, be confined to a specific subject, and be written in simple language. Or as Ross (16:12) states:

You can't give too much thought to making manuals easy to use, and easy to get at. Making an unwilling horse drink at the stream is easy compared to getting employees to use manuals which are difficult to use, read or find.

Planning the Contents

Planning the contents pro forma is usually accomplished by conferring with departmental chiefs and listing procedural subjects that, in their judgment, need to be put in writing (7:253).
FORMAT AND LAYOUT

Format

Format of a manual is very important since one of the features which "sells" the user on a manual is the uniformity or consistency in the way the contents are presented and stated. People are creatures of habit: once accustomed to a particular routine they subconsciously expect the same general pattern to be followed for a particular class of document (11:2-3).

In his book, Administrative Communication (19), Lee Thayer makes a clear and concise statement concerning format. By paraphrasing, it becomes applicable to procedures manuals. Applied to manuals, it would read: A good format is one which helps the manual's user to interpret, comprehend, and remember the policy, procedure, or information; poor format is one which detracts or misleads.

That aspect of format which is psychologically most significant is the appearance of the reproduced pages. Just as a discriminating appearance is important to the speaker, attractive documents are important to attaining a successful manuals program. The appearance of a manual and its documents has no merit in itself: it is only as it affects the manual user favorably or unfavorably that appearance is of functional value.

Good appearance, as typified by an "open" uncluttered page, invites reading and contributes to readability. A confused appearance
contributes to misunderstanding.

Cooper says (18:61) that:

The mechanical side of designing and reproducing instructional materials is more than a matter of format and assigning numbers. The design features of an instruction system must contribute to its use or reference value. Conversely, a poorly designed system, no matter how well written, will detract from its usefulness.

If you want the documents in your procedures manual to be interesting, your interest techniques start with the exterior of the manual cover.

Give the procedure documents a cover that reflects their importance. Provide a cover whose appearance says: "Contained between these covers are key management documents. Heed them! Use them!" (8:78)

In other words, design a cover that says "quality." A rickety old common binder will not reflect the importance of the contents. Select a manual cover arrangement that will give a "family" appearance to all manuals no matter in what part of the organization you find them (8:79).

Before you settle on the format, i.e., binders, dividers, and procedure page layout; consult a layout artist and forms designer. Let them propose respective formats.

Layout

There are a number of writing styles or layouts that are used effectively for procedure manuals. Each functions as the best method for a particular class of documents or manuals.
Cookbook

This style is economical in word usage and effective for triggering action. A good cookbook can be one of your references to learn how to write effectively for manuals. A cookbook is designed in an action style for a task-oriented housewife. A recipe for "Huckleberry Dessert" reads:

Combine one cup flour, pinch of salt, and two teaspoons sugar. Work in one-half cup butter and one teaspoon vinegar. Spread on bottom of a 9" pan. Mix one cup sugar, two teaspoons flour, and dash of cinnamon. Add two cups berries and pour mixture in pan. Bake at 350° for one hour. Then add one cup berries. Sprinkle with powdered sugar. Serve with whipped cream or ice cream.

As adapted to procedures, the cookbook style becomes an action style for a task-oriented clerk. It may say:

Check customer's purchase order. Post quantity, product, price, and shipping data on order card. Give completed order card and customer's purchase order to order typist.

In procedures writing, "action" is required. Therefore, action is stressed by using the active voice; imperative mood of the cookbook (11:13).

Conventional narrative

This style is used most frequently for writing policy statements and for communicating information. The statement should be clear, concise, and correct—3 C's of writing. An example of a clearly stated policy is:

PLANT VISITS -- Plant visits by customers require permission of the plant manager. (11:3)
Playscript

Playscript is used specifically for detailing a procedural routine that flows back and forth between several job titles or administrative units. Though there were unnamed variations in use, playscript was formally evolved as a result of a series of studies, experiments, and restudies under the direction of Les Matthies (19:83).

As the name implies, playscript follows the technique used in the script of plays. In place of the actor, the individual or department responsible for the action is identified; and in place of the actor's lines, the action to be performed is detailed. Figure 1 is a short example of a procedure written in playscript (11:4).

Caption

This style uses functional titles as captions to identify the key action of subject content of a paragraph or series of paragraphs. Manuals are used for reference purposes 90 to 95% of the time. Because a person referring to a manual is looking for a specific bit of information, marginal and paragraph captions speed his search for the specific detail required. Without captions, he must scan complete pages to locate the particular information needed. Figure 2 is an example of captions in action (11:4).
Section | ACCOUNTING  
---|---  
Subject | Monthly Report of Salesmen and Company Cars  
---|---  
Procedure: Responsibility | ACTION  
  • Central Accounting  
1. On the last day of the month, prepare Form 228 for each sales office. Update each to match entries in the previous month's report.  
2. Enter employee number and code for each new salesman.  
3. Identify any change from preceding month's report by asterisk after salesman's name.  
4. Send two copies to sales office.  
• Sales Office  
5. Line out any incorrect entry and enter correction in line above.  
6. List all new salesmen (regular, resale, trainee) and all company cars assigned to your office.  
7. By the 10th of the month, send one copy of Form 228 to Central Accounting.  
8. File one copy.  
• Central Accounting  
9. Make 10 copies of each Sales Office Form 228 upon receipt from the sales office.  
10. Distribute copies:  
   | No. Copies | To  
---|---|---  
4 | Central Accounting  
1 | Fleet Supervisor  
1 | Data Processing  
1 | Payroll Department  
1 | Tax Department  
2 | Local Accounting  
11. File original of each monthly report.  

Figure 1  

Subject: MOTION PICTURE FILM LIBRARY

Film Library: Location—A Motion Picture Film Library is maintained by the Reproduction Department. Responsibility—The Film Library's functions are:
1. Review requests for motion pictures (including rentals) to be obtained from outside sources.
2. Index films upon receipt.
3. File all films.
4. Lend films to departments upon request.
5. Maintain control records.
Responsibility applies to complete motion picture films only. Incomplete films and filmstrips are not included.

Film Indexes: Company Owned Films—The Film Library compiles and maintains a current index of all company owned motion picture films.
Free Loan Films—The Film Library also maintains supplemental lists of educational, technical, scientific, and business films available from outside sources on a no-fee basis.

Requesting Films: Borrowing Films—To borrow a film from the Film Library or to obtain a film from the outside on a free-loan basis, an AVO, approved by the Department Head, is required. Complete the AVO, include the following information, then forward to the Film Library:
1. Why required.
2. Title and/or description of subject matter.
3. Date required.
4. Date to be returned.
Purchasing and Renting Films—To purchase or rent a film, a Purchase Request is required. In addition, complete an AVO, giving the following information:
1. Why required.
2. Title (if known).
3. Description of subject matter.
4. Source, if available.
5. Date required.
6. Date to be returned.
Forward both documents to the Film Library.


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Matrix

The matrix, a set of linear coordinates, is a method of arranging variable factors in a tabular format to help the reader select the information with a minimum of effort. When several variables govern choice of the desired action, the matrix most clearly and concisely details the procedure (action requirements). Federal income tax tables and airline timetables are common forms of matrix (11:5).

Decision logic table

A decision logic table is simply a tabular display of all elements of a problem from conception to solution. The table shows all conditions affecting the situation at hand and the relationships that exist among the various conditions (20:3). Figure 3 is an example of a decision-logic-table application.

Flow charts

The flow chart is a style which should be used sparingly. The important fact which must be considered is that the average manual user is not flow-chart oriented, a chart which seems too abstract or complex is likely to confuse or even dismay an unsophisticated clerk (11:5). Figure 4, developed by the MCA (11), is a good guide to be used in choosing the best layout for a procedures manual.
Insurance Premiums (Continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DECISION LOGIC TABLE</th>
<th>Job INSURANCE</th>
<th>Date 9-2-66</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Prepared by BILL RICHMOND</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Grate Table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age less than 30?</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age .GE. 30 and .LT. 40?</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age .GE. 40 and .LT. 50?</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age .GE. 50 and .LT. 60?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rate = $1.53</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rate = $2.13</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rate = $2.94</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rate = $3.92</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rate = $6.44</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3

## CHOOSING THE BEST LAYOUT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ROUTINE</th>
<th>LAYOUT</th>
<th>CONVENTIONAL NARRATIVE</th>
<th>PLAY-SCAPRIT</th>
<th>DECISION Table</th>
<th>ILLUSTRATED</th>
<th>FLOW CHART</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Straight Sequence</td>
<td>Cookbook</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsequenced Action</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action Depends on Variables</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixture of Policies and Procedures</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Straight Sequence</td>
<td></td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsequenced Action</td>
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<td>Action Depends on Variables</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixture of Policies and Procedures</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Straight Policy</td>
<td></td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>• When showing delegation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Entry by Many Locations for EDP</td>
<td></td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 4**


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Ross in discussing "classification and numbering" states (16:86-90) that:

One of your important decisions in connection with any procedures program concerns classification and numbering. Of course, you can just start out by numbering procedures beginning with No. 1 and then proceed in numerical sequence as new procedures are issued. However, it should not take much persuasion to convince you that it is much better to arrange some system of classification and numbering. Just imagine trying to locate a book in a library when the books are placed on the shelves in the order of their reception from the publisher. Your organization would be in no better shape if you did not classify your procedures.

There is no hard and fast rule for this classification and for a numbering system. It would not be feasible to set one down. Too many variables enter into the problem to permit a categorical statement that, "this is the way to do it." Possibly the simplest kind of classification will come from an analysis of the areas which can be affected by procedures.

Now please, please do not say "That's just what I need for my company." More danger lies in copying someone's concept of a good system than in any other thing you can do. Before you decide on any particular numbering system study carefully your own organization, the organization chart and the company's operations. Be certain before you begin that what you have is practical, that it will stand the test of time, provide room for expansion.

Just to show you how far you can go in your numbering and indexing, consider what companies do. They set up a system that not only identifies any specific procedure but they set up an identification and indexing within each procedure so that any specific paragraph may be identified. In order to do this, a standard outline form has been adopted for procedures writing which looks like this:
Now this is a very good idea. It establishes uniformity and assists in creating order and clarity in procedures. This statement does not mean that it is necessarily advisable for every company to adopt the same system. Each company has differences, real and fancied, and even the latter must be considered.

In conjunction with establishing a procedures and paragraphing numbering system, one must also establish a pagination numbering system for each of the documents contained in the procedures manual.

Karl Schricker (11:5) comments on page numbering as follows:

One important factor in preparing a manual is that of the numbering system to be used. The numbering system functions as a reference aid. Since a manual is everchanging, a fixed 1, 2, 3, ... page numbering system is not practical. Therefore, a system must be adopted which is flexible and permits the addition of new sections and pages without disrupting the established portions of the manual.

Because there is no one way to number a procedures manual system, it is encumbent on the procedures analyst, when developing his number system, to perform some research to: (1) see how similar organizations have established their numbering systems; (2) analyze his own corporate procedure requirements; and then (3) integrate the thinking of his boss with that of other major executives.

Chapter V, in Cooper's book (18) is a good reference for specific data on numbering systems.
WRITING THE PROCEDURES

Basic Principles

Clifford Haga (3) is of the opinion that all procedure analysts should adhere to the following six basic principles of good writing:

1. **SUITE THE MESSAGE (IN FORM, CONTENT, LANGUAGE, STYLE, LAYOUT, MECHANICS, etc.) TO THE READER'S NEEDS AND CAPACITY.**
   
   By controlling these factors, the effective writer minimizes the reader's effort and maximizes the reader's intake of information.

2. **ORGANIZE THE MESSAGE.**
   
   Organization (the order of the elements in the communication) should match the reader's order of priorities. Since the end product of organization is standardization, the alert writer will recognize the recurring patterns of specific classes of documents and will establish standard procedures for such routine communications.

3. **MAKE ORGANIZATION VISIBLE (MOV)**
   
   By giving the reader the proper indexes of organization (headings, subheadings, etc.), the good writer saves the reader the need to read the document twice: the first time to get the breakdown, and the second to get the content or meaning. Since so many reports and most policies and procedures remain current for an indeterminate time, continuing reference to them is usually for the sake of a single detail. MOV makes locating such details speedy and convenient.

4. **EDIT FOR B-C-D**
   
   By editing for BREVITY, CONNECTION, and DEFINITENESS (B-C-D), the good writer shows appreciation of the fact that writing must
match the intake and processing rate of the eye-brain system, a rate anywhere from 3 to 10 times that of the ear-brain system.

5. SUPPORT THE DATA WITH TABULATIONS AND GRAPHICS

Mechanical devices, such as charts, diagrams, and illustrations are the clearest and most economical means of presenting and interpreting quantitative data. "Tabulations" is broadly defined to include all the associated operations (arithmetical, mathematical, statistical, etc.) by which one forces quantitative data to yield their meaning.

6. DOCUMENT THE STATEMENTS

In the context of administrative communications, documentation is defined more broadly than just "appropriate reference to printed sources of data." A documented statement (sentence, paragraph, section, etc.) is any statement containing an implicit or explicit reference to a standard by which the validity of that statement can be tested.

O'Hayre (21:83) on the other hand, in his basic principles of writing, places more emphasis on the writer and the written word by stating:

To be a good writer you have to start with some understanding of the chore and with a set of basic principles. The first point you must understand is this: to be even a passably good writer, you have to sweat and labor long and hard, doggedly and desperately, and you have to know and feel that your writing is worth the sweat.

The second point is that you have to learn to become your reader. There's no way out of it. If you are to make contact with your reader, if your words are to get through to him, you have to be able to think like he thinks, feel like he feels, react like he reacts, anticipate like he anticipates, and question like he questions. The person who most often comes between the writer and his reader is the writer himself. Too often the writer, being unable or unwilling to imagine-up a real person to write to, writes to himself to please himself.
A third point to keep in mind is that you must write in a style that is appropriate, that is custom-cut to fit the subject matter and the reader. If your writing is to get through to your reader, you have to adjust your style without writing down to people under you, or writing up to people over you. No one can teach style to any man, since style is the man, the particular way he alone puts words together to carry ideas.

Writing Effectively

O'Hayre (21:91) quotes Professor W. F. Carstens of the Sandia Corporation in stating that:

One-fourth of the most expensive manpower in any organization is devoted to turning out written words, and when one adds the fact that a high percentage of all of this effort is of poor quality, it is clear that something should be done about it.

Writing is basic to almost everything we do: in industry, government, and academia. We must be able to express our ideas, plans, and procedures in writing to think, plan, purpose, and do. Consequently, the quality of our writing has a lot to do with not only how well we perform our duties, but most importantly how well the users of our writing perform.

Any act of communication involves three necessary components: a communicator who has a meaning to transmit, a symbol or system of symbols to carry the meaning, and a receptor who receives the symbol and translates it into meaning in his own mind. In writing no communication occurs unless your reader is able to understand your thoughts and get your message (22:1). Thus poor writing means a loss. Conversely, good writing can lead to improving the operation and efficiency of our endeavors.
The basic purpose of all writing is to get a message across to the reader; it must convey exact meaning. To serve this purpose well, it must be capable of being quickly read and easily understood.

Therefore, to write effectively, one must recognize that effective writing is writing that is immediately clear to the reader. The writer may know what he wants to say but the reader does not get the picture unless what he reads develops in his mind directly and accurately the concept that was in the mind of the writer. The writer must bear in mind that he does not write for himself—he writes for others. Like a salesman, he must please the customer; like a teacher, he cannot expect the reader to know in advance what he is talking about. In a busy world where the procedures writer is striving for strict compliance with actions to be taken, he must not burden others (action takers) with the job of digging out what he is trying to say. To accomplish this, the procedures writer must use the right words in the right order, in the right quantity, and with the right punctuation.

The Air Force writing guide (22:2) corroborates the above by stating:

In short, too much of our writing fails to get its message across quickly and easily because the writer forgets his responsibility to the reader. The reader does not get meaning; instead he gets gobbledygook. This catchword means that the writer uses:
1. Many words to say what could be said just as well in a few.
2. Unfamiliar words.
3. Words of three or four syllables when simpler words would give the same idea.
4. Jargon and trite overworked phrases.
5. Long and involved sentences.
6. Foreign expressions.
7. Jumbled, unrelated, illogical ideas.

Laura Grace Hunter (23:85) also offers some general help to our writing clearly, concisely and correctly. These are:

1. Arrange words in their best order.
2. Make them sound logical.
3. Say what you mean.
4. Be as specific as possible.
5. Weed out excess words.
6. Say it in as few words as necessary.
7. Stop when you are through.
8. Do not forget what the subject was.
9. Avoid using the same word two times in a situation.
10. Place transitional words within the sentence.
11. Prefer a positive statement to a negative one.
12. Usually avoid splitting a phrase.
13. After you have made a revision, read the whole sentence to be sure the revision fits.

Morris, a well-known management consultant, in his writing guide (24) for the Department of Commerce emphasizes: people, order, and words. Morris (24:1) is of the opinion that:

Before we write any message, whether it is an enumerator's (Procedures) manual, letter to the public, or internal memo, we should stop to consider carefully who our audience is and how we can best write this message so as to obtain the results or action we want from this audience. . . .

The primary purpose of any management communication is to get action from the intended audience. A management communication differs in this important respect from a novel or newspaper article. The novelist or newspaper reporter is seldom seeking definite and positive action from his audience. The management writer is almost always seeking such action. Nowhere is this clearer than in manual writing; our goal here is to instruct our audience how to perform certain definite and specified acts.
Accordingly, for step one, Morris cautions the procedures writer to determine: Who is your audience? What is their education level? What does your audience want? What do you want from your audience? The second step, developing an outline, is what he terms "Order."

And lastly he lists (24:13) the principles for using words as:

- Be Brief - Cut out useless words.
- Be Simple - Cut down big words.
- Be Direct - Use strong, active words.
- Be Clear - Will your audience understand?
- Be Human - People write to people.

The General Services Administration (GSA) in its course (25) on "plain letter writing" employs a similar approach to the above. In summary, the GSA emphasizes the "4S Formula" which is:

1. **Shortness**
   a. Don't unnecessarily repeat inquiry.
   b. Avoid needless words, information.
   c. Shorter prepositional phrases.
   d. Watch "verbal" nouns, adjectives.
   e. Limit qualifying statements.

2. **Simplicity**
   a. Know your subject.
   b. Use short words, sentences, paragraphs.
   c. Be compact.
   d. Tie thoughts together.

3. **Strength**
   a. Use specific words.
   b. Use active verbs.
   c. Give answer, then explain.
   d. Don't hedge.

4. **Sincerity**
   a. Be human.
   b. Admit mistakes.
   c. Limit intensives and emphatics.
   d. Don't be servile or arrogant.

Rudolf Flesch (26-27), Robert Gunning (28), Edgar Dale (29) and John Morris (24) are among the best known of the experts who have
developed ideas on how to make writing more readable. They believe we have forgotten that our reader is very likely a busy, somewhat-tired man who likes to read the sports page and the comics. But we make him struggle with words and sentences that would strain a college professor. We seem to be trying to impress rather than express, and the result is not very readable.

Several factors determine whether something is easy to read and to understand, but two things, sentence length and word difficulty, are the most important in measuring reading ease. We have several methods for measuring readability—Fog Count, Fog Index, Readability Scale, etc.—but all are based primarily on these two things. Obviously, then, we must use words our reader can easily understand and we must put them into fairly short, uncomplicated sentences.

But what does all of this readability testing mean to us? Certainly a readability yardstick is not a formula to write by, and we shouldn't expect it to be. But such a yardstick is useful. It is a handy statistical tool for measuring complexity in writing. It can help us determine whether our writing is actually gauged for our reader.

It is therefore essential that the procedure writer realize that procedures contain orders that must be put into action and that Murphy's Law applies. It is only then that he can understand why things go awry. People can follow orders only when they understand them. Writing that is easy to read is usually easy to understand. Your reader may say your ideas are too simple, but he will never complain that your writing is too clear or too easy to read.
William Strunk, Jr. and Rudolf Flesch succinctly sum up the various opinions on how to "write effectively."

Strunk states (31:ix):

Vigorous writing is concise. A sentence should contain no unnecessary words, a paragraph no unnecessary sentences, for the same reason that a drawing should have no unnecessary lines and a machine no unnecessary parts. This requires not that the writer make all his sentences short, but every word tell.

Flesch (27:8-9) supplements Strunk when he states:

What you really need is a good working knowledge of informed, everyday, practical English. . . . If you want to learn how to write, you need exact information about what kind of language will fit what kind of audience. And scientific data about the psychological effects of different styles. And handy, usable facts and figures about common types of words, sentences, and paragraphs. And knowledge of the results achieved by various writing techniques. In short, you need a modern scientific rhetoric that you can apply to your own writing.

As a guide, the procedures writer may consider using similar active verbs as shown in Figure 5 especially if the procedures are written in Playscript.

STANDARD PLAYSCRIPT PROCEDURE VERBS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Approves</th>
<th>Obtains</th>
<th>Reviews</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Carries</td>
<td>Posts</td>
<td>Searches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computes</td>
<td>Prepares</td>
<td>Separates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Destroys</td>
<td>Receives</td>
<td>Signs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Files</td>
<td>Records</td>
<td>Stamps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forwards</td>
<td>Removes</td>
<td>Types</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matches</td>
<td>Requests</td>
<td>Verifies</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 5
"A picture is worth a thousand words" holds much truth for manuals as well as for advertising copy. Instead of a wordy description of how to complete a form, a reproduction of the completed form may be more effective. Exhibits of forms, pictorial representations of operations, and graphically charted data make manuals attractive and effective (11:5).

In preparing a procedure, the writer may find that sometimes words alone are not enough or add complexity to the action to be taken. In those instances, the procedures writer may determine that he will need some kind of illustration to support the procedure.

The Air Force writing guide (22:232) offers the following guidelines that will help the writer decide on and obtain illustrations for his writing:

While you are writing, pick the passages that need to be illustrated. Then choose the type of illustration you want. In choosing it, give a specific reference showing where to find it, sketch it out in enough detail so that you won't forget, tell what photograph you will need, or write a word picture so that the illustrator can draw what you want. Select the illustration to fit the specific purpose of the text it supports and to fit the actual needs of the reader.

The process used to reproduce your report, manual, pamphlet, regulation, etc., has a great deal to do with the type of illustration you may use. For instance, if reproduction is to be done at base level, using relatively simple reproduction processes, you are limited to simple illustrations, such as charts and graphs; but, if your project is handled by a printing plant or commercial concern, you may be able to use more complex illustrations...
You should put the illustration as close as possible to the text it supports. Wide separation between the two discourages the reader from looking at an illustration when you want him to.

Placement alone, however, does not guarantee that a reader will look at an illustration. You should always refer him to it. If there is no confusion possible, you may direct him to the illustration by using such words as above, below, to the right, to the left, on the following page, etc. Otherwise, refer him to the illustration by number: As you can see in Figure 16 . . . or Figure 12, on the next page, shows how . . . .

The smoothness of such a sentence is superior to the customary parenthetical interruption (see Figure 14). . . .

The effective illustration is the one that replaces or clarifies a complicated verbal explanation. It is, therefore, a necessary part of the publication. Talk about it in your text. Point out that when lever A is pushed down, it lifts valve B, which opens orifice C and permits the fuel to flow, or As you can see in the new letter format, the salutation and closing are . . . .

If you fail to or can't integrate an illustration in the text, you should not use it. It will fail to help the reader, and it may actually confuse him. Always keep in mind: Use the illustrations to support text, and use the text to support the illustrations.

Labels are intended to help explain the purpose of an illustration. If any of your illustrations need labels, you should supply them. Sometimes you will borrow illustrations from other sources or will have them already included in a manuscript that has been written elsewhere. In these cases, you often will find labels included in the illustrations. You should examine the labels, remove any that are unnecessary for your purposes, and make sure that the text references to labels and the labels themselves agree. Also be sure that the correct labels are in the correct places on the final artwork.

Make each illustration caption talk to the reader; write captions that actually tell what the picture or drawing means.
For example, suppose you have a caption that merely says Testing Room. Such a caption could refer to an illustration of a room in which personnel are tested, in which aircraft engines are tested, or in which some type of equipment is tested. Further, it may be a room used for a certain type of personnel test, aircraft engine test, or equipment test.

If you change the caption to read Testing Room for Personnel Tests, you have eliminated one of problems, but still the type of test is not clear. However, if you call it Testing Room for Job Knowledge Tests, you have eliminated all other types of personnel tests. But still you have not fully explained the illustration. Your reader could ask, "Why is this illustration even included?"
The caption would certainly mean more if you wrote, Seating Arrangement for Job Knowledge Tests. Although brevity is certainly important in caption writing, use an extra word or two in the caption if you must; make it say something specific so the reader will know what the illustration means.

Consider the size the illustration should be in its reproduced form. In certain instances, a drawing or picture may be reduced to fit a given space, and often reducing or enlarging an illustration will make little or no difference. However, if the illustration happens to be so complex that it will not be effective if it is not large enough, then give the layout man explicit instructions. If an intricate diagram or chart is reduced to the point where it is difficult to read, it is hardly worth bothering to include.

In some instances where a photograph would not suffice or one is not available, you will have to depend on an artist to draw the illustration. Frequently, even photographs have to be retouched so that the illustration is applicable to the text. Though an artist may be most proficient in his vocation, ordinarily he does not know the text of your project as well as you do. Therefore, there must be a joint effort between illustrator and writer to make a writing project really effective. Pass on your ideas concerning illustrations to the artist. Also, ask the artist for his ideas when you turn the manuscript over to him. He may discover places in the text that he can illustrate to make the text even more effective.
Some examples of beneficial illustrations are, when the procedure:

1. describes how to complete a "form,"
2. uses a "decision logic table" or "flow chart,"
3. describes how to prepare computer input data,
4. describes how to analyze computer output data, and
5. describes the use of a standard format such as a letter or memorandum.
INFORMATION RETRIEVAL

Need for Indexing

Karl Schricker (11:5) explains the importance and need for indexing a procedures manual when he states:

Indexing is a vital element in the success of any manual over 15 pages long, and very frequently those under 15 pages can benefit, too. A frequent complaint is "I can't find anything in this manual." Very often this is a valid complaint. Too few manuals contain properly prepared alphabetic indexes kept up to date according to a realistic schedule.

Too many manual developers optimistically believe that a "Table of Contents" meets the typical user's needs. They forget that the user normally thinks in specifics when he has a problem instead of in the generalities as listed nonalphabetically, in the "Table of Contents."

To function effectively, manuals must be more than a compilation of policies and procedures written by an assortment of analysts. They must be orderly collections of written instructions, directions, facts, or data which can be located with minimum effort and time.

Matthies elaborates on Schricker's comments when he states (8:111) that:

When you deposit information in your systems (procedures) manual, you've only started a process. How does the manual's user find what he wants to know? So now we come to the question of retrieval.

If you've planned your manual well, if the documents make your manual a complete depository of systems (procedures) information, your next question is:

Can a man find information he needs WHEN HE NEEDS IT?
If your manual arrangement IS well thought out, your reader may be able to find the right document by looking at the numerical list which you placed in the front of his manual.

But he'll often need an alphabetical index, a subject approach, to help him get "through the mental doors" to the information.

Techniques of Indexing

Matthies (8:114) in elaborating on the thought that "An index is a mental door. The index is a way for the user to get into the manual to get information that he needs," offers these techniques for indexing:

Subject titles on documents are not sufficient keys to open the door. A useful index points the way to information that is in the body . . . but may not be reflected in the subject title alone.

Here's a fast way to make up an index. Scan the entire contents of your manual. Dictate the subjects, giving the procedure and page numbers. Go clear through the manual. Type up the titles and page numbers, triple spaced. Cut them apart. Then sort them alphabetically. Next type your final index from the alphabetically arranged index strips.

Test the usefulness of your index. Ask people who have manuals if they can find information when they want it. Ask a friend to look up specific information.

The man who uses your manual is not interested in your "master plan" nor in your "definitions" of the various documents. He isn't even interested in reading one procedure clear through.

HE WANTS AN ANSWER TO HIS IMMEDIATE QUESTION.
Index Preparation and Maintenance

Matthies (8:111-114) continues to describe "index preparation and maintenance" as follows:

Index the administrative information contained in your manual. Place an index in the front.

Bring your index up to date every six months. If you have an unusually large number of changes come up, revise your manual index at once.

If you have chosen the titles well, the subject titles for your documents, you have begun the job of indexing.

For example, if you have a procedure on ABSENCES, that word is clear and can certainly go into your index in alphabetical sequence. But, if your title is something like PRORATION OF VACATION PAY FOR SALARIED EMPLOYEES, you'll have a hard time indexing that so that it will lead a reader to his information.

If you must use such a long, involved title, you had better pick out the key words and index those, such as . . . VACATION . . . PAY . . . and EMPLOYEES, SALARIED.

But the titles of your bulletines alone won't provide the needed index captions. You'll need to provide some extra captions, covering information that is down in the body of the document.

Read through the document. Then ask yourself:

What are the four or five most probable words (thoughts) that would occur to a man when he is looking for the information that is contained in this document?

Jot those words down and include them in your index.

Make the layout of the index appear attractive. Keep the caption close to its related document and page numbers. Use leader lines between them like this:

Absence, Leave of . . . . . . . . 19/2

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
About every fifth line allow an extra space to make it easier for your reader to read across the lines.

Always explain abbreviations. If you have only four different documents, you can explain your abbreviated codes by a line that runs at the bottom of every page of the index, like this:

Codes: PROC. for Procedure, POL. for Policy, SW for Statement of work.

When the subject is not on any particular page, just show the document number alone. Decide how wide you want the subject line to be at its widest. Do this in typewriter units. Perhaps it's 40. Then this caption can be the longest single line:

Travel, Approval for, to Subsidiary Plants

If the caption must be longer than 40 units, use an indented arrangement, like this:

Drafting Room Manual Compliance
    and Permissible Deviations.

Indent the second part of the caption two spaces. Run the leader line from the second line over to the document and number.

In maintaining the index, Matthies (8:114-116) is of the opinion that the procedures analyst should:

Keep one master index right up to the minute in your systems department. You can keep it on cards or on a strip board. Every time you issue a procedure, or revise one, bring your master index up to date.

If your changes to the index are in colored pencil, you can just glance at the file and be able to see how many revisions you have on the master. You may want to revise your published index more than once each six months.

You need a numerical index in your systems office . . . for cross reference. This is just a numerical list by type of bulletin, like POLICY, PROCEDURE, WORK STATEMENT, etc. But do not send this numerical
list to "help" people in the field. It will not take the place of a useful alphabetical index.

You think in terms of bulletins and classification, and numbers. Most people do not. People look up information by words, not by numbers.

In conjunction with Matthies' above opinion, the procedures analyst should encourage the users of the manual to call when they cannot find something in the manual. Then give fast service by looking up the information and advising the caller. In addition, consideration should be given to subsequently including the item called for in your index.
REPRODUCTION AND DISTRIBUTION

Reproduction

The quantity of copies needed has a direct influence on the type of equipment required for duplicating. If a few copies are needed a typewriter will do—five to eight copies of suitable weight paper can be typed on an electric typewriter.

Studies at the Defense Logistics Services Center, Battle Creek, Michigan, have indicated that it is economical to Xerox up to ten copies and that quantities beyond ten should be printed by use of the "offset" or larger press method.

Based on years of experience as a management/administration analyst, procedures manuals should be printed as the increase in cost, if any, is insignificant in comparison to its "eye appeal" and indication to the user that this is something WE, management, hold to be important.

Distribution

According to Schricker (11:5–6):

Assignment of manuals can be a perplexing problem if a plan is not established at the outset. Distribution rules must be set by management on a realistic basis, keeping in mind that: (1) manuals should be made available to all who will have reason to consult them, and (2) the per copy cost of maintenance is a responsibility not only of the manuals-administration group, but also of the people to whom manuals are assigned. Unless the users promptly insert whatever new sections and revisions are issued, manuals will have little value.
Effective assignment depends on so many variables that it must be worked out independently for each organization. An obvious clue to proper distribution is the objective of the manual. An Employee Handbook would be distributed to all employees; a Supervisor's Manual to all supervisors. When a manual title is not explicit, distribution becomes a problem best solved by giving the manuals-administration group the prerogative of determining and controlling distribution.

Matthies (8) agrees with Schricker wherein effective distribution of procedures manuals starts with the procedures analyst's original planning, and ideally the aim should be that: "Each employee should have the information he NEEDS, but should get no information that he DOES NOT NEED." He continues by stating (8:69) that:

You'll not attain that ideal, of course. Let's admit that each man who has a manual will receive some documents that will not concern him. Attempts at providing truly individualized manuals always fail.

So relax. No matter what distribution scheme you decide on, it will not be perfect. But it can be a good plan in relation to the many not-so-good schemes you'll find in most organizations.

In describing how one develops a distribution list, Matthies suggests (8:69-71) that the procedure writer:

Start the list by studying your basic organization chart, the one that reflects the entire company.

If you don't have one that is published, sketch one. Check it for accuracy, and then decide.

Should each man who appears on this basic organization chart have a manual?

The answer will probably be "yes." Yet you might challenge a few positions.
From here you can develop your total distribution scheme based on each individual's need-to-know.

One Way: Have each department head help you. Tell him you are going to provide him with a manual and what the manual will contain. Then ask him:

Which of your supervisors or staff men also need such a manual?

Certain key staff people are likely to need a manual. Consider the internal auditor. The public relations man. The administrative assistant to your president. The top secretary. A key outside representative.

Each person to whom you assign a manual must also be placed on a distribution list for new documents or revisions to the present ones.

NOTE: Some people will want a manual because they regard it as a status symbol.

No matter how well you plan the distribution of the manual, the scheme will not be perfect. Expect some criticism of any scheme you devise. REMEMBER:

Manuals distribution planning is an ART, not a SCIENCE.

After the manuals are out, a foreman may feel that he needs one and ask you for it.

Ask him to get an endorsement on his "work need" from his department head. Only then supply him a manual. . . .

One of the factors that insure a successful systems manual is the distribution pattern.

If you don't send out enough manuals, you choke your lines of communication. If you send out too many, you thrust reading matter upon people who have no need-to-know.

The task of getting information to people who need it narrows down to two practical considerations:
1. The procedure writer narrows down the procedures that go into each segment of the manual by selecting that which is essential to an entity of the organization or group of workers.

2. Then the receiver of the procedures selects from that narrowed-down group of procedures the specific ones for which he has a need-to-know.

It must be borne in mind by the procedure writer that: (1) once he has a procedure ready to issue, he gets it out fast, and (2) from then on the onus is on the respective supervisors, and not the writer, to assure that each of his subordinates has the required procedures and complies with them.
MANUALS MANAGEMENT, MAINTENANCE, AND CONTROL

Management

According to Matthies, Schricker, and other authors, one should be economical in managing the procedures manual system.

In elaborating on being "economical" with procedures manuals, Matthies states (8:76-77) that:

In the small organization one manual is usually all you need. But as the organization grows larger, you may need more than one manual to do a job.

Different manuals are written for different audiences. If you try to talk to several different audiences at once, in one manual, you are in danger! You are in danger of doing a poor job of communicating.

Consider audiences. You may have audiences composed of supervisors and managers. You may have another audience composed of secretaries and clerks who are interested in how to do their jobs. You may have another audience made up of all of the employees. You will have special audiences such as the salespeople, the accounting people, or the quality-control people.

Rather than put out 100 manuals, not designed for specific audiences, wouldn't it be better to put out 4 manuals with 25 copies each . . . but each one speaking directly to its audience?

Consider: Should you provide a management manual, a personnel manual, an office manual, or a purchasing manual?
Maintenance

Maintaining the procedures manual in a current status is vital to the success of the program. To incorporate the latest required actions, procedures should be periodically reviewed for possible revision. In addition, spot checks or a periodic audit should be made to assure that holders of the procedures manuals have posted properly the revisions and any newly issued procedures.

Wylie, when commenting on the above, states (4:98) that:

It would be an exaggeration to say that most office managers are apt to feel that the task is completed when the manuals are prepared; but there are a sufficient number who fail to change the manuals as improvements in routines and methods are made. Whether changes are frequent or far between, the manual must reflect current practices in order to serve any worthwhile purpose.

Failure to revise the manual is not always the fault of the office manager. New standard practice instructions, when issued, may never be inserted in the manual by the department manager. The value of the manuals must be sold to each department manager so that his cooperation will be gained in keeping them currently revised. Where the manuals are controlled in one location in a small office there is no problem; but when the manuals are broken down into many volumes and are used by many departments, the task is somewhat more difficult. Instructions and revisions should be issued from one source. When revisions are issued from more than one office, confusion and conflict may result.

Karl Schricker (11:6) agrees with Wylie (4:98) and also suggests a method by which the holder of the procedures manual can assist in identifying required revisions when he states that:

A manual is never completed. It should always describe the best way of performing a task or completing an activity. Even an excellent manual
becomes obsolete as alert employees and systems departments discover better ways of performing tasks and develop better systems and procedures, and as progressive management establishes new policies or revises existing policies to conform with the changing conditions.

A system must be established to advise the manuals-administration group of necessary changes in time to see that revisions are processed expeditiously. One practical system is to equip each manual issued with a set of tear-out cards on which to suggest desirable changes to the manuals-administration group.

Control

Controlling is an essential management practice and, as such, applies to the procedures manuals system. Doing so will assure the following:

1. Procedures Manuals will be issued to and retained by employees on a need basis only.
2. Revisions to procedures will be issued to holders of those procedures.
3. System costs will be optimized by reducing quantities published, distributed, stored, maintained, audited, and inventoried.
4. Procedures Manuals will remain with the organization and not be given gratis to a possible competitor.

Matthies (8:73-76) states the following regarding controlling procedures manuals and offers suggestions on how to do so:

Control your manuals. Provide, in your internal systems planning, for their control...
You will see to it that a man who needs a manual in his work gets it.

But when he moves away from that position, leaves the company, transfers out, or goes into some other work in the organization, does he still need that manual? Does the manual (1) go with the job he has just vacated, or (2) with him?

Of course, you have every manual numbered. You know who has each manual by the number. Physically place the number of the manual just inside of that manual. It can be done with a label.

Take an inventory at least once a year. Be sure that people you have charged with manuals actually have them. The systems secretary can do this.

If a man terminates, be sure that the manual in his possession does not leave your organization. You can have a termination pick-up control in the personnel department. These people keep a record of all a man's charges, such as for tools, credit union, or anything else he may owe the company. You can include a notice that he is charged with a systems manual, and have it filed at this point.
SUMMARY

This paper indicates that substantial potential exists for organizations to improve clerical productivity and reduce operations costs through development of a procedures manual system.

At this point, it would be presumptuous to set forth absolute rules that lead to a successful procedures manual system.

Nevertheless, as a result of the research, it can be summarized that a few fundamental guidelines consistently point out the path to positive results, namely:

1. Procedures manuals are a communication tool of management which set forth standard and uniform practices and help the employees find work information they need when they need it. As such, they play an important role in assuring a smooth operation.

2. There is more to developing procedures manuals than writing. One should also evaluate the procedures-manual-program requirements.

3. Participation in the procedures-manual program must take place at all levels in the organization to sell the concept. The procedures analyst must get the wholehearted backing of management and the candid acceptance by line personnel, otherwise, the program will be "dead in the water."

4. To make the procedures manual a first-rate management tool, one must plan the contents, determine the level of
instructions, and determine the quantity of each type of
document to be provided in it.

5. The degree of detail for each procedure must be consistent
with: What information does each individual need for his
guidance, and what information do the workers need for
interrelated actions?

6. Format controls the housekeeping and information retrieval
elements of the manual; this includes:
   a. Good organization. (In a manual, this means good
      housekeeping.)
   b. Binders, tabbed dividers.
   c. Indexes and Contents
   d. Document numbering system.
   e. Arrangement of fixed information on formatted pages.
      (Items identifying the manual; and, the number, subject,
      date, and page of the document.)

7. Layout controls the physical arrangement of the information
items on the document page. Factors are:
   a. MAKE ORGANIZATION VISIBLE (MOV). This is the con-
trolling principle of layout.
   b. Match the layout to the action pattern of a given
      routine.

The seven most common layouts are:
   b. Conventional Narrative. Use for one-job-title
      sequenced routines.
c. Playscript. Use for sequenced routines flowing back and forth among several job titles.

d. Caption. Use for unsequenced actions, housekeeping routines, and most policy statements.

e. Matrix. Use for "If this and if that, then do this" routines, for example, adjustment routines; policy statements showing delegation and relationships.

f. Decision-Logic Table. Use for a mix of more than two "this is" and more than one "then."

g. Flow Chart. Use for sequenced routines flowing back and forth among several job titles.

8. There is no hard and fast rule for establishing a document numbering system because too many variables enter into the problem. The procedures analyst should tailor the procedures numbering system to the needs of his organization to establish uniformity and assist in creating order and clarity in the procedures manual.

9. The useful procedures manual is the reader's manual--the poor manual is the writer's manual. It is essential that the procedures writer realize that procedures contain orders that must be put into action and that Murphy's Law applies. People can follow orders only when they understand them. Writing that is easy to read is usually easy to understand. Therefore a good procedure document is clear, short, and current.
10. The use of illustrations should be considered when words alone are not enough or add complexity to the action to be taken.

11. An index to a procedures manual is a mental door. The index is a way for the user to get into the manual—to get information that he needs. Therefore, a useful index points the way to information that is in the body—but may not be reflected in the subject title alone. Therefore, an index, to be effective, must be complete and current to point the way within a procedure to a worker who wants an answer to his immediate question.

12. The quantity of copies needed has a direct influence on the type of reproduction to be used. However, whenever possible, procedures manuals should be printed.

13. Distribution of the procedures manual should be considered in the initial planning, and ideally the aim should be that each employee should have the information he needs. Once a procedure is ready to issue, it should be gotten out fast.

14. The procedures manual should be managed economically; therefore consideration should be given to the questions: Should there be only one manual encompassing all procedures for the entire organization; or should there be a series of manuals tailored to the needs of the individual entities?

15. Maintaining the procedures manual in a current status is vital to the success of the program. To incorporate the
latest required actions, procedures should be periodically reviewed for possible revision. In addition, periodic checks should be made of all copies distributed within the organization to assure their currency.

16. Control of procedures manuals should be maintained to assure that they are "in the hands" of only those workers who have a need for them.

17. An effective procedures manual is designed, not written. By properly manipulating the three critical design factors—FORMAT/LAYOUT/STYLE—the manual user is given an efficient tool, assuring each user that he/she will get what is wanted: speedy, convenient, accurate retrieval of the information desired. And, by so doing, you will reduce your own effort of original issue and maintenance (revising and also the expense and effort of updating) by one or more orders of magnitude.
REFERENCES


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SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY


