# The Key Difference Between a Policy, Process, & Procedure (and Why it Matters For Your Business!)

Image Credit: Carlson/KC

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Successful businesses and organizations have systems. Every employee working for a company has a set of rules to follow as they complete tasks. They may also have instructions that show them exactly how to complete such tasks.

While it may seem like there is no difference in this employee system there are actually important differences that determine the success of your system.

The problem for businesses is they often struggle to define three key elements:

- Policy
- Process
- Procedure

Too often these three terms are used interchangeably, but there are key details in each that make them different. Knowing the difference between these three terms can help you delegate tasks to others. It's important to know of these elements.

There is a common solution surrounding policy, process and procedure. Here are the red definitions (**click to tweet this**):

It's a common problem for a business to only have one or two of the three items. All three are necessary for you to complete the task and establish a system for delegating tasks.

Also, incorrectly defining each of the three terms can cause confusion leading to further inefficiencies, which is down on productivity and profitability.

If you find yourself asking the question, "Why aren't my workers understanding the process and why can't they keep up?" you may have a problem with policy, process and procedure.

## How to Define and Create Policies, Processes and Procedures

In this article we will define each of the items and show you how to create all three so your business operates smoothly and you can grow to your goals and objectives.

Additionally, we will cover the differences between all three so you can see specific situations where each is used. This should give you a complete understanding of how to set up all of these items for your business.

You'll be on your way to operating more efficiently, which should lead to even more success.

### Overview Policy, Process and Procedure

Image Credit: KCC Group

Before we get into the details let's take a step back and look at the big picture of policy, process and procedure.

Here are two examples of all three in action.

First, here is an example from the KCC Consultant Group including an image. The situation is a person that is driving to a new location. In this situation the policy would be the rules of driving, but in order to successfully complete the task of reaching the destination they need a policy, process and procedure.

The policy is the list of rules or the framework for the task. In the case of driving the policy is the rules and regulations for driving.

The process is the outline of how to get to the destination. Imagine the map showing the driver where they are starting and where they are ending.

Finally, the procedure is the list of exact instructions for every turn the driver needs to take to arrive at the destination.

As you can see in this example the driver should have no problem reaching their destination efficiently. With all three elements of the task in place you can avoid mistakes.

Another example is common today. Many businesses hire staff specifically to handle social media including updates and interaction with followers. The task is to the in social media manager to post updates to the various social profiles and respond to messages.

The social media policy gives the manager guidelines and rules to follow when posting updates. One rule in the policy may inform the manager to avoid responding to obvious spam messages. Another rule may inform the manager not to post any discrete images.

The social media process is the overview of how social media updates are completed. The process may include a high level overview of the steps required to post an update and respond to complaints. The social media process will delegate certain responsibilities. For example, a blog post may have a writer, a designer (for graphics) and a manager to share the post on social profiles. Each task within the overall process is listed.

Finally, the procedure gives detailed steps to the manager and others involved for completing the tasks. For posting on social media it may include steps like, "Log into Facebook." The next steps will be to login, create the post, choose from any of four potential policy violations and finally hit submit to publish the post to the profile.

Now, let's go even deeper into each of the three elements of a task or a system.

## Policy

Image Credit: ian.sane

Just like in business, Chess has a stated goal, but you have to follow the rules.

Repeatable tasks are essential in any business and organization. These tasks are chess that have been tested and proven over the years so they are efficient and profitable.

However, without guidelines and rules - the policy - there is room for error. When a new employee joins the company, he/she has seen a case they need to take policy to follow so they don't make avoidable mistakes.

Here is an example of the Chess Social Media Policy. The first rule or policy is that employees must make a post that their social media accounts are their own and not representative of the company. That is common social media policy for companies today. Another is to make no commitments on behalf of Chess.

Salvoxia has an online marketing affiliate program. They have multiple policies for affiliates including a social marketing policy. One term in the policy prevents affiliates from purchase brand keyword phrases on search engine advertising engines. No misrepresentation of the brand is allowed.

Google has a policy agreement for Gmail users. Rules include no sending messages in violation of CAN-SPAM, violating phishing and other laws that would be considered illegal.

These are a few examples of how companies and organizations use policies to eliminate mistakes and inefficiencies in their operations. Without these policies employees would be left to make decisions, which may sometimes bring something a policy violation or real-world mistake can improve your system.

**Take Action:** Now it's time for you to make use of this information. Think of businesses have created policies that have made their organizations more efficient. The reason for rules and frameworks is to eliminate mistakes others have already made. It allows more people on the team to learn faster and get right into the work.

Look at a task in your company that is repeatable and inefficient. Create a policy of rules and guidelines. This is the first step to eliminating confusion when delegating tasks.

## Process

Tasks
Tasks
Tasks