Corporate Rules: from the Serious to the Silly

It's easy to view the plethora¹ of rules and regulations in companies as bureaucratic waste², excessive³ top-down managing⁴ or even innovation stunting⁵. But there could be other, more benign⁶ reasons behind the guidelines⁷ that determine⁸ many of our activities at work. **Michael Gaylord** explains.

n last year's film *The Wolf of Wall Street*, cinema-goers' watched in bemused' astonishment as the leaders of a high-profile. Manhattan brokerage firm threw a little person at a Velcro-covered target. They perhaps wondered how such farcical behaviour could occur in a large, well-organised company. Didn't the firm have regulations prohibiting audacious **

- ¹ plethora ˈpleθərə ogrom, multum
- * waste weist marnotrawstwo
- ¹ excessive tk'sesty nadmierny
- * top-down managing top dagn 'mæntd3trj zarządzanie odgórne
- s to stunt sth ta stant samθtŋ tu: hamować wzrost czegoś, nie pozwalać się czemuś rozwinąć
- benign bi'nam tu: bez złej myśli, pozytywny
- guidelines gardlamz wytyczne
- to determine te di'ta:min określać
- * cinema-goer 'smama 'gapa(r) wielbiciel kina, miłośnik szerokiego ekranu (UK)
- bemused bi'mju:zd speszony
- " astonishment əˈstoruʃmənt oszofomienie,
- 12 high-profile har preofast szeroko znany
- brokerage firm 'brankarid3 f3:m dom maklerski
- 14 little person "httl" päisn niska osoba, osoba z niedoborem wzrostu
- "Velcro velkrag rzep (materiał)
- 18 to wonder ta 'wʌndə(r) zastanawiać się
- 17 farcical Total farsowy
- " behaviour bt'hetvja(r) zachowanie (UK)
- ** to prohibit sth to pro'hibit 'sam@iŋ zabronić czegoś, zakazać
- audacious or derfas bezczelny



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behaviour? Perhaps not – at least not officially. In the 1980s corporate guidelines for employees¹⁴ were often more narrowly focused than they are today, covering such necessary domains²² as employee-client interactions and organisational protocol²⁴ with respect to structural hierarchies²⁶. In today's corporations, common²⁶ workplace²⁷ procedures are more likely to cover social domains, such as employee-to-employee interactions and relations and guidelines for appropriate²⁸ conduct²⁸. Such regulations, rightfully²⁸ so, enter into²⁸ sensitive²⁸ areas that impact upon²⁸ human rights²⁶.

Nevertheless, as in the 1980s, they often have their roots in a top-down management style. They may form the vehicle, by which the corporation imbues, its vision, advances, its aims and implements, its structural organisation on its employees. What purpose can be served, by expecting scores, of people to faithfully, follow carefully crafted, regulations? And what possible disadvantages, can there be to excessive sets of rules?

- 31 employee 100'ploth: pracownik
- 22 domain də'mem domena, obszar
- protocol 'praetakol zasady zachowania, protokół (grzecznościowy)
- ** with respect to sth wið ri'spekt ta 'sʌmθiŋ odnośnie do czegoś, co się tyczy czegoś
- * hierarchy 'hazarcki hierarchia
- common koman typowy, powszechny
- workplace 'wa:kpleis miejsce pracy, stanowisko pracy
- appropriate a praupriat odpowiedni
- conduct kondakt zachowanie, prowadzenie się
- * rightfully rattfell słusznie, jak należy
- " to enter into sth tə 'entə(r) 'tntə 'sʌmðɪŋ wkroczyć gdzieś/do czegoś
- sensitive sensativ delikatny
- to impact on/upon sth ta tm'pækt on a'pon snmθιη wywrzeć na coś wpływ, wpłynąć na coś
- human rights 'hju:man raits prawa człowieka
- 35 nevertheless "nevəőə"les niemniej jednak
- vehicle 'viaki pojazd, tu: środek, metoda (za pośrednictwem której coś się robi)
- ³⁷ to imbue sth tu ɪmˈbjuː ˈsʌmθɪŋ wpajać coś

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Corporate Bureaucracy -Why all the Red Tape 45?

Long lists of regulations – otherwise known as red tape – that governa employees' initiatives are well known in government-run corporations, but what about in the private sector? Well, it seems

- ** to advance sth tu ad'va:ns 'sAm@iŋ posuwać do przodu, sprzyjać wykonaniu/wypełnieniu czegoś
- 38 to implement tu 'impliment wdrażać
- ** to serve a purpose ta sa:v a 'pa:pas przysłużyć się jakiemuś celowi
- " scores sko:(r)z mnóstwo
- 4 faithfully fei8fall wiernie, lojalnie
- to craft sth ta kro:ft 'samθin wytworzyć coś (z trudem, misternie)
- # disadvantage ,disad'vo:ntid3 niekorzyść, ujemna strona
- red tape red terp nadmierna biurokracja, gaszcz przepisów
- to govern sth ta 'gʌvn 'sʌmθɪŋ rządzić czymś
- well known wel nach doskonale znany (nie przed rzeczownikiem)
- ** to jump through hoops to danne Bruc hurps gimnastykować się (by coś zrobić), (musieć) sporo się namozolić (by czegoś dokonać) (najcz. o biurokracji, przepisach itp.)
- when it comes to sth wen it kamz to 'samθin gdy mowa o czymś, jeśli chodzi o coś
- authority or Borati władza, zwierzchnictwo
- 11 regarding ra'go:dtn odnośnie (do)
- application application wniosek

that employees in business corporations also have to jump through hoops", especially when it comes to getting the authority® they need to do their jobs. There are rules regarding application processings times, completions of properlys documented and signed paperwork* and obtaining permission from local or municipal" by-law enforcement agencies that frustrate workers and can stunt innovation. Scott Adams, the creator of Dilbert, a cartoon strip that pokes fun at corporate cultural quirks, has put it this ways: "Red tape would be top on the list of sucking the life force out of workers, making them feel helpless and turning them into weasels"."

Besides the usual mountains of paper work, what kinds of things may Adams have been referring to Well, in some cases it is necessary to get the approval of multiple senior managers or even committees to do something quite trivial. Alternative means of completing a project may have to be investigated, procedures reported and the approval of inspection teams may have to be earned.

- to process sth ta 'praoses 'sʌmθɪŋ przetworzyć coś
- a completion kəmipli: In ukończenie
- 55 properly 'propali prawidłowo
- maperwork 'perpawa:k papierkowa robota
- " to obtain sth tu əb'tem 'sam@in uzyskać coś
- permission paimin zgoda, zezwolenie
- municipal mju: ntstpl miejski, municypalny
- by-law bat in tu: lokalny, samorządowy
- egzekwowanie (praw, reguł)
- cartoon strip ko:'tu:n strip pasek z komiksem (najcz. na ostatniej stronie gazety)
- to poke fun at sth tə pauk fʌn ət 'sʌmθɪŋ nabijać się z czegoś
- quirk kwak dziwactwo
- to put sth this way ta pot 'sʌmθɪŋ δɪs weɪ ująć coś w taki sposób
- " life force laif fors siła życiowa, witalność
- " weasel witz tu: gnida
- to refer to sth ta m'fa:(r) ta 'sʌmθɪŋ odwoływać się do czegoś
- "approval a pru:vi aprobata, zgoda
- ** senior manager 'si:nia(r) 'mænidʒa(r) starszy menadżer, członek ścisłego kierownictwa
- " committee ka miti komitet



The term "red tape" actually came about? from the colour of the ribbon? that was used to wrap? dossiers? of rules in the massive 16th-century? Spanish Empire?. The red ribbon-wrapped dossiers, which contained? information on important Council? of State matters emanating from countries like faraway! Holland, distinguished them from the less important non-coloured local administrative dossiers.

Although it can be draining for creative types, red tape has advantages. A certain amount of procedures creates a logical frameworks for business operations. Basically, having a number of well-defined rules helps corporations to coordinate" everyone's efforts. This makes it possible for managers to avoid spending excess time on situational ethics. The decision-making process** is made easier. They can more easily control risk and implement standards. Henceso, employees can act with respect to a prescribed set of behaviours that have been laid out for them, streamlinings the flow of information and »

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- ** to come about to kam a baot wyniknąć, przyjść na świat
- ²³ ribbon 'riban wstażka
- 74 to wrap to reep obwijać
- 35 dossier dosier akta, dossier
- ** century 'sentfari wiek
- " empire 'empaia(r) imperium
- " to contain to kan'tem zawierać

- " council 'kaons rada
- * to emanate from sth tu 'emanert fram 'sʌmθɪŋ wywodzić się z czegoś, pochodzić skadś
- faraway 'forrawe: odległy (tylko przed rzeczownikiem)
- to distinguish sth from sth to distingwif
 'sam@in from 'sam@in odróżniać coś od czegoś,
- draining dreinin wyczerpujący
- advantage əd'vo:ntida zaleta, plus
- framework fremwask ramy, struktura
- * to define tə dr'faın określić
- to coordinate ta kad's:dineit skoordynować, poklerować
- effort 'efat wysiłek
- decision-making process dr'sran 'merking 'praoses proces podejmowania decyzji
- male hens stad, tym samym
- ** to prescribe ta pri'skraib określić, wyznaczyć
- to lay sth out for sb ta let 'sʌm@ɪŋ aot fə(r) 'sʌmbədi przedstawić coś komuś (w prosty sposób), wyłożyć coś wprost komuś
- to streamline ta strimlain usprawnić, zoptymalizować

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eliminating any guesswork. "There's a lot of work that you just can't do outside of bureaucracy", says Craig Pratt, a human resources consultant.

Employee Conduct

There are also guidelines that govern the everyday activities of employees in their workplace. These are usually more specifically tailored tow reflects the philosophy of each corporation. Hence they can have some uniques (and rather amusing100) aspects. Consider101 that employees at Corn Products International, a large North American food manufacturer102, are not allowed to move office furniture. Any movement would violate 103 union 104 rules (perhaps there are concerns of injury104 and litigation107?). Employees are required to call an independent 108 mover in first. Rules regarding personal appearance110 can be quirky: a major North American restaurant chain** states*** that employees cannot wear "semi"-grown"

- * to eliminate tu r'imment wyeliminować
- guesswork (geswa;k zgadywanka, domysły
- ** everyday 'evrider codzienny (tylko przed rzeczownikiem)
- * tailored to sth 'terlad ta 'snmθιη dostosowany do czegoś, dopasowany do czegoś
- " to reflect to riflekt odzwierciedlać
- " unique ju'nisk unikalny
- 100 amusing a'mjutzin zabawny
- to consider ta kan'stda(r) rozważyć, zastanowić sie (nad czymś)
- manufacturer mænju fækt(ara(r) producent
- to violate ta 'varalert pogwałcić, naruszyć (prawo, zasady)
- union ju:nian związek zawodowy
- ™ concerns kan's3:nz obawy, niepokoje
- injury 'tndgəri uraz (fizyczny)
- 107 litigation .htt/ger/n pozew sądowy
- independent indipendent niezależny
- mover 'muzva(r) tu: firma przeprowadzkowa, spec od przenoszenia mebli
- personal appearance 'passanl a'parans wygląd (czyjś)
- " chain tjem sieć (sklepów, restauracji)
- 112 to state to stert oświadczać
- semi-X semi wpół, częściowo X

facial hair¹¹⁴ – they must either be clean shaven or, alternatively, have a *fully grown* moustache¹¹⁵ or beard. How do you determine the characteristics¹¹⁶ of a "fully grown" moustache in this case?

Other stipulations¹¹⁷ attempt to avoid offending¹¹⁸ anyone for religious reasons: one British company has banned¹¹⁹ the use of the phrase "Bless you" in responding¹²⁰ to a co-worker's sneeze¹²¹; another company, this one Canadian, has banned the wearing of any object that resembles¹²² a crescent moon¹²³, apparently for fear that¹²⁴ it invokes¹²⁵ sympathy with Islamic terrorists (in fact one Canadian province has even banned the wearing of all religious symbols at work).

Looking Beyond the Short

Although some rules may be going a bit too far, corporate leaders, even those in corporations that are thought to be nontraditional, will claim¹²⁷ that emphasising¹²⁸

- 114 facial hair 'feifl hea(r) zarost
- moustache ma'sto: was
- the characteristics | kærakta ristiks cechy, właściwości
- *** stipulation ,strpju lerin warunek
- " to offend tu a'fend obrazić, urazić
- " to ban sth tə bæn 'sʌmθɪŋ zakazać coś
- to respond to sth tə ri'spond tə 'sʌmθɪŋ
 odpowiedzieć na coś
- 121 sneeze snitz kichnięcie
- to resemble sth to rizembl 'samθin
- 123 crescent moon 'kresnt mu:n sierp księżyca
- 124 for fear that fa(r) fia(r) ŏæt z obawy o/że...
- 125 to invoke sth tu in ับออห์ รกกษาฏ wywoływać coś
- short term [5:t t3:m krótki okres czasu, niedaleka perspektywa czasowa
- 127 to claim to kleim twierdzić
- to emphasise sth tu 'emfasaız 'sʌmθɪŋ kłaść na coś nacisk
- COO (Chief Operating Officer) sign and the operating offise(r) dyrektor ds. operacyjnych
- 130 to cite to sait przytaczać
- to encapsulate sth in sth tu in kæpsjuleit 's∧mθiŋ in 's∧mθiŋ zawrzeć coś w czymś, zamknąć coś w czymś

guidelines that advance the company's aims can help to implement a broader vision. Sheryl Sandberg, COO128 at Google, Inc., cites130 Google's unofficial rules, encapsulated13x in their famous '10 things we know to be true' company manifesto112, among them: 'Great just isn't good enough' and 'It's best to do one thing really, really well'. "We consistently"3 underestimate ourselves, so our (rules) emphasise that we can always strive to135 do better and then actually do it", Sandberg recently told Thomson-Reuters. A BBC editor-in-chiefs, proclaiming the importance of employees paying attention to the corporation's long-term vision, said, "The BBC is a mission organisation, a company where people believe they are part of something bigger". In short130, if the guidelines improve business efficiency , if they uphold142 professional standards, serve clients and attempt to implement a vision that goes beyond simply monetary profit¹⁴³ then there is good reason to believe they can be business-enhancing144, and not damaging to¹⁴⁵ innovation. ■

- manifesto mænifestar manifest, program (polityczny, ideowy)
- consistently kan's stantil konsekwentnie, ciągle
- to underestimate tu "Andar'estrmeit nie doceniać
- to strive to do sth ta stratv ta du 'sʌmθɪŋ dażyć do zrobienia czegoś, starać się dokonać czegoś
- editor-in-chief 'edita(r) in t/lif redaktor
- ur to proclaim to pro kleim ogłosić
- Iong-term log ta:m długoterminowy, długofalowy (tylko przed rzeczownikiem)
- in short in joit krótko mówiąc
- to improve tu im/pru:v polepszać, usprawniać
- 41 efficiency I'fI/nsi wydajność
- to uphold sth tu ∧p'haoid 'sʌmθɪŋ przestrzegać czegoś, być wiernym czemuś (np. zasadom)
- monetary profit 'manitri 'profit zysk finansowy
- 144 to enhance tu in'ho:ns ulepszyć, poprawić
- askodliwy wobec/dla czegoś, szkodzący