



REGULATING DOCUMENTS

ALWAYS COMPLICATED; NO CURE FOR THAT!

Regulating documents are more complicated than expected at first glance. In many - especially in small- organisations regulating documents often are just a loosely structured pile of paper. In this module we help to improve on that and make regulating documents more effective

Objective(s): *Participants can distinguish between the various levels or regulating documents and understand their structure.*

Main activities: *Discussion.*

Estimated duration: *Approximately 45 minutes.*

Materials needed: *White board/flip over.
PowerPoint slides*

Introduction

Often we see something strange happen. As important people are supposed to issue regulating documents, some people seem to think that by creating all kinds of regulating documents, they will automatically become important. Wrong!

First of all, we must understand that regulating documents are controls. Therefore they are only to be issued when they really cover a risk. So, if regulating documents do not cover risks, their presence is most questionable.

Why implement work instructions when they have no added value?

Some years ago we were involved in optimising the regulating documents in a larger company with a total staff of 3400 people. Together these people created more than 30 km of hanging files annually.

Of this paper stream more than 60% was either 'off topic', useless, illegal (wrong signatures etc.) or sub standard.

Just imagine the money that could be saved if those 60% of 30 km 'hanging file' would never have been created! No time wasted on writing the documents, printing them, dispersing them and discussing them.

There is a second problem with regulating documents. People try to prove that the regulations are wonderful, but not applicable in 'their' situation. In other words: people try to escape from them.

Problem number three: outdated copies are still in use. That is a logical consequence of this type of controls. People make copies and when (if!) the originals are revoked, these copies still are in use. In summary we can say about regulating documents that they

- are expensive (time for production, discussion, implementation;
- are almost automatically tempting people to find a way around them;
- Require lots of monitoring
- Can hardly be revoked completely due to (illegal) copies roaming around.

Therefore: Regulating documents are the least attractive of all types of controls.

Levels of regulating documents

Top down we distinguish 4 different levels.

Policy statements

This type of documents provide the framework within which the organisation operates. It consists of high level guidelines ranging from mission statements to strategic choices for the mid-ling and long term.

Tasks, authorities and responsibilities (TAR)

Tasks, authorities and responsibilities are allocated to various roles in the organisation. Regulating documents at this level provide an overview of how these 'TAR's have been distributed.

Procedures

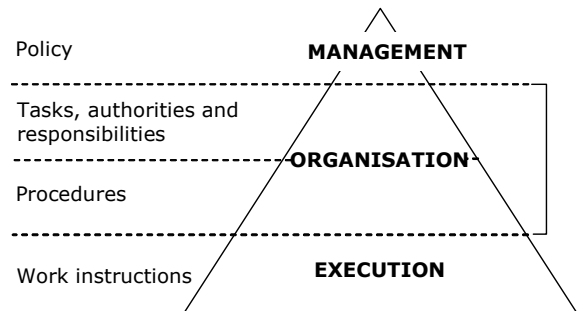
Procedures offer a sequential representations of actions in which various disciplines in the organisation are involved. Often represented in a 'simple' graph.

Work instructions

Step -by-step instructions regarding the execution of a single task by a single discipline.

References

References are documents that play a role in the organisation but are beyond their control. For instance laws, permit-requirements etc. They are left out of this system as they are no part of it. Once references have been adjusted to the specific situation in 'our' organisation, they become part of one of the four levels mentioned above.



Regulating documents are controls. So: only if necessary

If you would study the controls that are in place in the average organisation (even the big and successful ones) tears would come to your eyes.

When people are good at something they develop the urge to make this known to the world. We have come across the strangest examples of regulating documents. Products nobody was waiting for and nobody was inclined to use.

Civil servants have quite a reputation as it comes to the development of super fluent regulating documents but that impression is not fair. In every larger company you'll find piles of examples of these 'let-us-write-this-down-for-the-benefit-of-the-organisation' products that will make you weep.

If these regulating documents are necessary, make sure that they are:

- Correctly dated;
- Issued to the right departments/people and
- Authorised by the right person.

And all regulating documents should be listed!

First (Top) level: Policy

Top level regulations rarely have a direct input on the work floor. They offer information about the score and intentions on the mid-long and long term. These documents are usually produced by the management for the management and, sometimes, the shareholders.

Problem with this type of regulating documents are that they often represent a vision on such high and abstract level that 'translation' is required in order to get things going.

Management often gets carried away when producing policy documents. So here are a few guidelines in preparing these documents:

Clear statements on direction and goals.
Don't go into details; that is for other types of documents.
Don't mix policy statements with information that belongs to the levels of organisation and/or execution.

You are not changing the world.
You are just laying down guidelines for the direction of your company; that is all!

Second level: Tasks, Authorities and Responsibilities (TAR)

At this second level we get involved in organising things. Regulating documents of this type provide the organisation with simple overviews of tasks, authorities and responsibilities allocated to functions.

This helps the organisation to verify a sound separation between these aspects. You just want to avoid a clustering of TAR's united in one person. Neither would you want people to authorise their own spending.

An example of the way we suggest to lay down TAR's is given in a PowerPoint sheet.

Third level: Procedures

We use procedures to coordinate the complex cooperation between various disciplines in an organisation. They offer a sequential representation of the various tasks.

An example of the way we suggest to lay down procedures is given in a PowerPoint sheet.

Fourth level: Work instructions

Work instructions describe single actions for one discipline only. They are used in those situations where otherwise mistakes could easily happen, with consequences we'd rather not think of.

An example of the way we suggest to lay down work instructions is given in a PowerPoint sheet.

