



Leveraging Microsoft Office 365 for Policies And Procedures Management

A Guide to Policy and Procedures Management

Executive Summary

When business leaders and high-level decisionmakers examine their organizational policy management processes, they routinely identify whether regulatory compliance and corporate cohesion meet at satisfying levels. However, the process can be challenging if the right systems are not in place. The lifecycles in place to manage policies and procedures often fail to adapt to an organization's changing landscape and business expectations. The steps involved in creating, reviewing, approving, distributing and communicating policies and procedures require various members of an organization and can complicate existing workflows without the right management measures integrated.

Established modes of policy and procedure management, including manual entry systems, paper-based systems, shared network drives, spreadsheet applications, and email undermine proper compliance efforts and can reduce stakeholder confidence.

The ConvergePoint Policy Management app on Microsoft Office 365 leverages the SharePoint Online cloud platform to provide business leaders and executives a complete lifecycle solution for managing the policies and procedures lifecycle in a cost-effective package.



Introduction: Outdated Policy Management Systems Pose Serious Risks

In today's business climate, policy and procedure management is an essential element to gaining a firm grasp of all business processes. A system that properly manages all policies and procedures provides a solid foundation for organizations to communicate their expectations, foster a sense of company cohesion, develop employee engagement and retention, and reduce regulatory noncompliance.

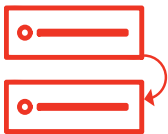
Operating on a consistent policy management platform and methodology is vital to abiding by corporate compliance and regulatory oversight, especially with new guidelines constantly being released by governing bodies. According to Chapter 8 of the United States Sentencing Commission's 2015 Sentencing of Organizations guidelines, organizations must establish standards and procedures that are effective at preventing and detecting criminal conduct.¹ Outdated policy management systems that do not adhere to the various regulations in place cannot efficiently adapt and integrate new elements without incurring costly consequences. The lack of clarity and insight an organization receives from an inefficient policy management system can instill severe risks.

A modern policy management system is essential to organizations hoping to avoid these risks. An inefficient system can cause logistical headaches for compliance and legal departments in charge of managing their organization's policies and procedures. Manual and nonautomated systems are no longer cost effective in today's modern business environments, often incurring higher costs on server materials and components, office storage space, and wasted administrative effort. Ultimately, the organizations that rely on dated policy management processes will struggle to maximize their output and lead in their respective industry.

In this white paper, organizations and business leaders will discover the power of ConvergePoint's Policy Management app on Microsoft Office 365 and how it optimizes efforts to manage policies and procedures, leverage existing IT infrastructure, and achieve corporate regulatory compliance. By establishing stronger compliance processes, organizations can better streamline operations, attain tremendous cost savings, and unify corporate messaging among departments and employees.

Challenges of Outdated Policy Management Systems

Outdated policy management systems are not unique to a specific business or industry. Many organizations are using inefficient paper-based processes that severely cripple their operations. While shared drives and excel spreadsheets are useful business tools, they create complications with version control and efficiency. These industrywide challenges have companies investing in more integrated software platforms that will automate workflows, centralize storage, and create a work environment of transparency and accountability.



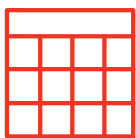
Shared Network Drives

Shared Network Drives offer team collaborators a central location for storing various types of documents. However, as a policy management tool, shared network drives lack standard document management features such as document security, version control, discussion boards, and audit tracking. Also searching and receiving documents is cumbersome.



Emails

Email is an applauded application in the business world because it solves a considerable communication problem. However, it has ballooned into threads of information that vary widely in significance and value, often creating a significant gap in streamlined communication. Organizations that use email to manage business processes must discover ways to eliminate incessant threads and establish a workflow that is not at risk of falling into a “black hole” of an employee’s inbox at any given point in the process.



Spreadsheet Applications

Spreadsheet applications are indicative of financial operations, but many organizations also use them to manage their policies and procedures. A report by Deloitte, a global professional services firm, showed that using spreadsheet applications for business processes is risky behavior. According to the report, integrity is easily compromised, and these types of applications are also often devoid of application-level security and are susceptible to manual mistakes and internal errors.

There are three significant challenges with using outdated options to handle the complexities related to managing policies and procedures:

1

Maintaining document organization is more complicated than commonly perceived.

- Bringing all supporting documents, archives, and discussions into one area is a challenge.
- Consistent document management requires consistent, streamlined processes.

2

There is a lack of control over how documents enter and exit the workflow.

- Employees often move around in the company, so the approval processes must be dynamic.
- Essential approval steps are sometimes skipped due to unawareness or changing processes.

3

Sharing progress with upper management is difficult.

- Paper-based systems lack accountability and data quantifiers.
- Generating status reports is a manual process; important parties may be left out of the loop.

The inefficiency of these systems can dramatically affect productivity and organizational compliance—two consequences no organization can afford to endure. A better solution is a system that easily integrates with the business workflow and offers robust document and workflow management in a central location. Once this type of solution is implemented, the policies and procedures workflow is streamlined, and the process becomes a manageable task that is easily modified as changes occur.

The ConvergePoint Solution

The ConvergePoint **Policy Management application** for Microsoft Office 365 and SharePoint helps organizations create a streamlined approach to policy management that eliminates the challenges of traditional systems. The software uses a three-pronged approach to manage the lifecycle of policies and procedures:



Create. Review. Approve.

The “Creation” portal offers a configurable central area for the drafting, reviewing, and approval of policies and procedures. This portal ensures the appropriate, vital players are kept up to date on deadlines and are always working on the most current version of the document. It also features notifications for each assigned task in the approval process, thereby reducing bottlenecks in the system. This portal provides a platform for team discussion, real-time status updates, the ability to attach supporting documentation to a given policy or procedure, and customizable workflows for revisions and approvals.



Distribute

The “Distribution” portal ensures all relevant employees are provided with easy access to the appropriate policies and procedures as they are activated. It offers advanced search capabilities so employees can obtain information quickly and automatically archives expired documents to ensure employees are only able to view current policies and procedures.



Acknowledge/Certify

The “Certification” portal allows organizations to develop custom quizzes that will test an employee’s understanding of the policy or procedures in place. It also can be used to obtain simple acknowledgement from employees stating that they have received and reviewed the policy or procedure documents.

Organizations can easily download the ConvergePoint Policy Management app from Microsoft AppSource and plug it into their SharePoint environment—whether SharePoint is on premises (versions 2013, 2016 and 2019) or in the cloud on Office 365 (SharePoint Online). The software allows businesses to maintain the policy and procedure management workflow while easily responding to changes.

Why Choose the Converge Point Policy Management App for Office 365?

With nearly 200 million monthly business subscribers using Microsoft **Office 365**² and its best-in-class SharePoint collaborative tool, any app that works on the Office 365 or SharePoint platforms will be easier to adopt by employees familiar with the Microsoft ecosystem. If adoption is made easier with a tool that users will intuitively be able to navigate and utilize, the successful integration of the tool is assured. ConvergePoint's complete policy and procedure lifecycle management solution can be easily installed via online application for on-premises SharePoint 2013, 2016 and 2019 versions, as well as Office 365 and SharePoint Online. ConvergePoint's Policy Management solution allows organizations to:



Download and deploy in minutes. Unlike other third-party software that requires lengthy installation periods of months, if not years, the ConvergePoint Policy Management app is readily available on Microsoft AppSource for immediate download. There is no manual work involved. Integration is automated on the proactive system. Data can also be exported with automatic mapping from any system to ConvergePoint's metadata fields for a fast migration of data; what used to take 10 hours can now be accomplished in one hour.



Secure sensitive data with access control. ConvergePoint's Policy Management app uses the organization's own Active Directory to create custom SharePoint groups. Data stays behind the host's firewall and within the organization's control, reducing the exposure to risk. Organization's can also securely monitor and manage permissions of sensitive data and provide access control to the appropriate parties. By maintaining document storage and collaboration in-house, many organizations gain greater control over their content and custom workflows, ensuring all regulated data remains safe.



Keep all documents in one central repository. Store all up-to-date policies and procedures in one central location that is easy for employees to access and search. It's also possible to customize the powerful search tool, which can support multiple date formats for global use.



Collaborate and stay on point. Encourage collaboration while also avoiding confusion through robust version control capabilities that enable employees to work from the latest versions of documents. This will ensure employees do not accidentally reference an outdated, unrevised or unapproved policy.



Effortlessly maintain an audit trail. A details page keeps a record of every document version and any notes associated for historical reference and a clear audit trail. The data is available at a glance and a full report can be generated from a single view of the complete version history of any stored document.



Customize workflows. Help automate the process and alert the necessary employees when it is their turn to draft, review or approve a policy or procedure. Alerts are fully customizable.



Send and receive important task notifications. Policy managers are notified when a policy is ready for renewal, needs to be revised, or should be retired, and when there is a task to complete or when a policy or procedure has been updated.



Verify receipt and test knowledge. When rules are broken or procedures aren't followed and incidents occur, it's important for an organization to show it did its due diligence by training its employees and making its rules and procedures known. The best way to avoid fault is to test employees on their understanding of policies and procedures with custom quizzes or track their acknowledgements that state they have read and understood the policies and procedures disseminated.



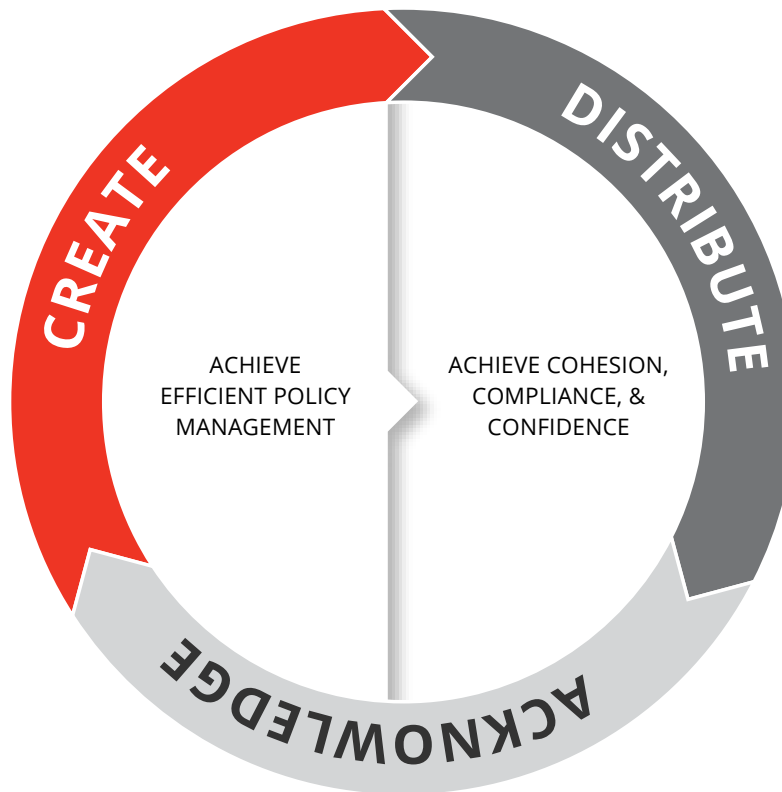
Keep the big picture in mind. Policy managers and other designated individuals are able to easily track statuses of policies as well as acknowledgements from employees with a real-time dashboard that offers a bird's-eye view of the organization's policies and procedures in use.



Stay nimble and ready to grow. ConvergePoint's Policy Management software is able to scale to meet the current and future needs of the organization. Customers can choose whether to make the software available to the entire organization or only a select few through user-based licensing.



Remain current and competitive. Free automatic updates and upgrades ensure organizations always have the latest and greatest technology at their fingertips for consistent compliance and improved efficiency. ConvergePoint also provides access to support for integration and troubleshooting for the life of the software subscription.



Conclusion

Operating on an outdated policy and procedure management system can cause serious risks for any organization. By combining SharePoint's content collaboration features with ConvergePoint's Policy Management software's elite functionality, organizations can modernize their approach to policy and procedure management while gaining a firmer grasp of their compliance landscape.

With fast data migration and easy, automatic installation, organizations will begin to see a substantial improvement in their efficiency and compliance maintenance in no time. **Schedule a free demo to learn more.**

References:

1. "2015 Chapter 8." United States Sentencing Commission, 26 Apr. 2016, <https://www.ussc.gov/guidelines/2015-guidelines-manual/2015-chapter-8>.
2. Satya Nadella, Chief Executive Officer of Microsoft, Microsoft FY 2019 Third Quarter Earnings Conference Call transcript, 24 Apr. 2019, <https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https://c.s-microsoft.com/en-us/CMSFiles/TranscriptFY19Q3.docx?version>.