

## *Master the Mechanics of Your Job*

**D**O you remember, when you first entered high school, how many rules and regulations there were? Some of them seemed rather foolish and troublesome, no doubt. Yet soon you began to take these rules for granted and found that most of them really made your work easier and more orderly.

So, too, a business organization has to establish procedures and policies to make the work move efficiently, to prevent repetition and confusion, and to equalize the benefits and penalties among employees.

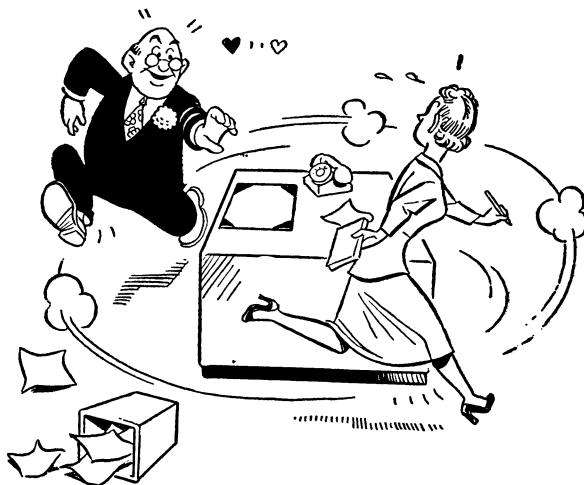
You will save yourself possible embarrassment and disappointment by learning your company's policies and office practices. If these are not in written form for employees, you can start your own listing and add to it as you find mention of new rules of procedure.

A questioning attitude may be a sign of an alert mind, but the person who questions the wisdom of established rules of procedure and rebels against office policies is apt to become an unpopular worker. She wastes her best energies in *negative* work.

Your work will be easier if you learn the rules and follow instructions.

***The Manual of Information***

If your organization is small, you will meet almost everyone in the first few weeks. This may be a very informal unit of workers



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with rather elastic policies. But the larger the organization, the more defined and specific are the policies.

There may be a great gap in rank between top management and you. Thus the policy makers may seem remote and unrelated to your work. The company policies and regulations may seem involved and burdensome. Actually, you'll soon learn that the larger the organization, the easier it is to know what you should and shouldn't do, how you should do it, and when.

Who are *top management* in your company? There may be a board of directors with a chairman who establish broad policies. Learn their names and build up a reading acquaintance with

them. No doubt you'll read or hear many interesting things about these policy makers which will personalize them for you and foster a better appreciation of your company.

Other officers may include a president, vice presidents, controller, treasurer, secretary, and others. Learn these names, too, and try to be able to identify them and their special company duties. In many companies you will have occasion to see and meet some of these top management people even when you are a beginner.

You'll want to learn how your company is organized and what variations in services are offered. Today, most business concerns have far-reaching operations. You'll understand and appreciate the policies and procedures established for your work when you become acquainted with the broad operation of your company and the people who direct these activities.

Your happiness and efficiency will be affected by your attitude toward the policy-making members of your organization. Even though, as a beginner, you have a minor position among thousands of employees, you can be an intelligent contributor to the total effectiveness of the organization. An understanding of your company and confidence in your ability will help you do the little routine jobs that are part of most assignments.

Before you came to this position, you may have had some general information about company policies toward employees. Now that you are an employee, you'll want specific information as it applies to you and your future.

What are the hours of work and what are the regulations about overtime? Each state has laws affecting the hours that women may work. These may vary for different vocations. What are your company's policies about payment for overtime work?

How are raises awarded? Some companies have a set scale of advancement. Raises may be granted in six months, one year, or at no set time. Sometimes general cost-of-living raises are given as distinct from merit raises.

Should you ask for a raise? You shouldn't expect an increase in salary until you have completed a year of satisfactory work. You

have been learning at company expense this first year and probably have gained more than you have given. Talk with the head of your department about a raise. Don't be emotional or demanding. Your personal troubles and financial obligations are not reasons for an increase in salary. Only your ability to produce effective returns to the company merits consideration.

Perhaps your request will have to be put into written form, so that this in turn may be discussed with the executives of the organization. This is for the head of your department to decide. Go first to her with your problem, so as to avoid any ill feeling that might result from side-stepping an immediate superior.

Vacation policies are established by company rule. The length of the vacation and the choice of time are usually determined by the length of employment. Do not ask for special favors, such as an extra day or a split vacation. Find out the rules concerning allowance for a legal holiday occurring within your vacation period. Find out how payment is made for your vacation time. Is it given to you in advance, if you fill out the required form and have it signed by the proper person?

The special services offered by your company to employees are part of your payment for work and are arranged to make your working conditions happier.

What is the company policy about sickness? Is there free medical help? Are you paid for a certain amount of sick leave? Does your company insist on prompt treatment of an accident or illness as a protection to yourself and other employees? What are the facilities for X-ray examinations, dental care, nursing service, and advice on the selection of medical and dental service?

Does the company give legal advice or require you to sign legal statements about assignment of patents, participation in outside financial ventures, etc.? Do you hold a position in which you must be bonded as a protection to the company?

Many companies have facilities to help the employee avoid legal entanglements in case of law suits, collections of damages for personal injuries, or loss of property. Ask your department head about these services if the Company Manual of Information

does not clarify this point. The company wants to protect you against trouble and fraudulent claims.

As a business woman, learn to read every document before you sign it. If in doubt, get expert help. Don't sign petitions, contracts for purchase of goods, leases to rent, or any paper, unless you are sure of the liabilities which you assume. As a member of a company you cannot risk involvement in any situation which



What is the company policy about sickness?

brings adverse publicity to the company or disturbing trouble to yourself.

In some companies, personal counseling and advice are services offered by experts in several fields. You may need help in deciding on insurance, investments, savings, loans, and other matters that influence your happiness and your effectiveness as an employee. Do not hesitate to ask the experts.

What educational services are available to you? Is there a company library? Are education classes offered to employees, or is there an allowance given for educational work in a recognized institution? Some companies encourage employees to continue their study and formal education. Is additional pay given for completion of further education work?

Today, modern businesses assume the attitude that it is not only good business, but part of their moral obligation to help

their employees retain good health and lead normal, happy lives. Such companies want to help you and want you to use the special services for employees.

Sometimes you may be entitled to repayment for money spent on essential company business. Find out the company rules. If you take a company guest to luncheon, can you be reimbursed, and how do you proceed? When can you buy needed supplies, and how can you be reimbursed? What are the accepted procedures for getting new equipment and supplies? It is wise to ask before you act, or you may find you have overstepped your authority and have no redress for the expenditures.

Is the company responsible for your loss of money or other property while you are working? Usually you are expected to assume this responsibility. You cannot afford to be careless.

Does your work require the use of a company car? This situation is covered by a chain of rules as to your responsibilities and liabilities. Be sure to understand these regulations. When you are entrusted with expensive equipment you should take full precautions to protect the company and yourself.

Do you travel on company business? You will find definite rules for expense money, limit of expenditures, when and how to report the expenses, and adjustment of expense payment to any advance of money. Some women are very careless about understanding exactly the privileges, responsibilities, and limitations of traveling or working on an expense account. Do not expect special favors. Do not act without knowledge. Ignorance is no excuse in law or in business. Chapter 12 deals with problems of travel.

Salaries may be paid in several ways: cash, check, credit on a ledger account, or in other ways. Some companies will mail your check to a designated bank. Some companies have offices to cash your pay checks or to make out company checks for you to use in payment of certain bills. Some have other arrangements to help solve your money-handling problems. Do not carry much money with you or leave it in your desk or in your room. Loss of money is not only your loss but is apt to cause embarrassment

to others. Get advice from the experts and use company facilities or other businesslike methods in your money affairs.

Does your company allow a discount to employees for purchase of goods produced by the company, or give credit cards for discounts at other companies? This can be a helpful service to you, but do not abuse this privilege. Your sense of fair play will guide you in determining what you can buy honestly on such a plan. Remember this company service is not intended to include your family and friends.

### **Telephone Etiquette**

The telephone is an essential factor in business. You may find that your company has policies governing the use of the telephone, the proper etiquette for telephone conversations, and your responsibilities for information given in these conversations.

Company telephones are for company business. The number of phones is determined by the amount of business. These phones are not planned for personal use so do not abuse this service.

How is your telephone voice? Did you ever stop to think how much your voice tells about your personality? When you use a company telephone you are representing your company policy of friendliness, courtesy, and dignity.

Respect the time of other people. Decide what you want to say before you telephone. Keep a pad and pencil handy to jot down names and facts so that you can accomplish your purpose. Do not prolong the conversation, yet avoid an abrupt termination. Learn how to end a long conversation tactfully. Always close the phone call with "good bye," and do not bang the receiver.

The use of intercompany telephones requires the same etiquette as outside phone service. Of course you will be as courteous to your co-workers as to your public.

Be sure of the right telephone number. Dial carefully or give the number distinctly to the operator. Ask to speak to the correct person before you begin to talk. If the correct person is not there, you may ask if someone else can give you the information or ask to have the original person return the call.

If you ask someone to place a call, be ready to speak as soon as the connection is made. Never keep anyone waiting. Everyone is busy. If you must interrupt a conversation, ask if the other person will excuse you a minute or if it would be convenient for you to call again. Do not imply that your time is more valuable than that of the other person.

Be courteous. Listen and do not interrupt. Be sure you understand the message. Do not shout. Speak distinctly. Do not disturb others in your office by long, loud chatter. Speak to the person on the telephone — don't address the office force! Don't say anything in a telephone conversation that you would hesitate to say in a face-to-face conversation.

As a company representative, you must uphold the company policy of public relations in your phone calls. Do not ask someone to wait while you get information. Get the name and telephone number and say you will call back or send the information.

If you answer a telephone, use the proper response, "Y company, Miss Z speaking," or "Y company, Personnel Office." Identify yourself so that the caller can give the message to the right person. If you must call someone to the telephone, explain your absence and be sure the person answers the call. You are responsible for the completion of the call. If necessary, ask if you can take a message. Write down the facts and be sure the correct person gets the memo. Most companies have special forms to record a phone message. Do get the name right.

Learn how to transfer a call. Tell the person to whom you are speaking that you will try to locate the other person so that there



Never keep anyone waiting.



is no question about the silence or delay. Say, "Please transfer this call to 318, or to Mr. Tic."

You will learn that there are many irritating mannerisms in using a telephone. There's the shouter, the whisperer, the person who doesn't give a name but expects you to guess, and the one who goes into details that should be given in a letter or conference. Then there's the person who says, "Who's calling?" — to see if you are important enough to rate an interview! And there's the abrupt, officious person who barks out a message and gives you no chance to speak. You can set your own standard of telephone etiquette which is, after all, *good manners*.

### **Long-Distance Phone Calls**

Company policies determine who, when, and how, long-distance phone calls may be made. There may be intercity telephone service or direct wire service for company business.

Telephone service is expensive. Some companies are very liberal in allowing long-distance calls. Usually, however, this method of transacting business is limited to those in executive positions. If you have permission to use the long-distance service, ask what record you must make of the call so that the bill may be charged correctly.

When you must make a long-distance call, have your notes organized, state your message, take notes on the information received, and do not waste company money. Sometimes it is wise to confirm the conversation by a follow-up letter.

Use the same precautions in long-distance telephone calls made at company expense as you do for those calls you must pay for personally.

### **Incoming Mail**

Mail should be opened and sorted promptly. Clip the envelope to the letter to keep the address with the letter.

Read each letter carefully and circle or underscore important points. Make notes in the margin to help you answer the letter.

Sort the letters as to types. Then when you answer them you will be able to dictate more easily, and the stenographer will be helped in selecting stationery, reading her notes, etc. You may

want to arrange the letters according to ease of answering, or by importance and urgency, or by the audience: intercompany, consumer requests, applications, invitations, acknowledgments, professional communications, offers to sell, complaints, etc.

Answer letters promptly. If you must collect information that causes a delay, drop a note saying the complete answer will be sent at a certain time. Then be sure to fulfill this promise.

### **Memos and Letters**

Company policies are usually very definite about the form used for intercompany memos and for letters.

Large companies have an instruction book for stenographers indicating proper headings, salutation, margins, punctuation, and other mechanics. Some companies object to handwritten notes without a file copy, or communications other than through the prescribed channels.

If you have to dictate to a stenographer or use a dictating machine, learn to organize your message, to be definite, to speak clearly and slowly enough to avoid confusion. Give accurate data so the typist can write the letter correctly. Read all letters carefully before you sign them. Queer slips can creep in unless you are observant! Some are just funny, some may be costly.

*Plan, think, and take it easy.* If you can use a dictating machine, you can play back the record and hear how you express yourself. Do you stumble? Do you suggest punctuation and paragraphing? Do you spell names or technical words? Until a stenographer becomes familiar with your style and technical terms, you will cut down on the need for rewriting if you help her get your meaning.

Use the prescribed method of signing letters. Some companies insist on the company name, with your initials. Some want the name of the department head, with your initials. Learn the rules and follow the policies.

Learn to write a good letter that is friendly, informative, concise, and inclusive. Letters are a form of public relations.

Know what you want to say. Say it. Use good English. Avoid stilted phrases. Personalize your remarks but don't be dramatic,

too clever, or trite. Read the letter. Are you willing to be judged by it?

Companies have definite rules as to who gets copies of letters as well as who may send letters without submitting them for supervision. When in doubt, ask your supervisor to read the letter. You may find that you have violated a company policy or given a wrong impression.

The art of writing letters is real and very important. Study good examples of letter writing. Learn to write the kind of letters you like to receive. A business letter expresses the philosophy and the policies of the company. You'll find more about letters as public relations in Chapter 10.

### **Files and Other Items**

Each company has rules about the use of files. There may be special file clerks who take care of filing. If a message belongs in a file, do not keep it in your desk.

If a letter is marked for several persons, read it at once, check off your name, and pass it along. This is not your personal property.

If you have promised to send certain booklets or enclosures, be sure to see that these are sent.

### **Postage**

Company policy probably dictates whether the letter should go air mail or special delivery. Should supplementary material be enclosed or sent at a lower rate? The relative value of special service must be weighed against the extra cost incurred. In any company operations, *little expenses make big totals at the end of a year*. That's why company postage should go only on company mail. Your personal letters should carry your personal postage.

### **Telegraph**

You may have occasion to telegraph a company message. What are the rules? Does the company have a wire system between company plants in different cities? Is the message urgent enough for a straight wire or can it go at the lower rates of a day letter or night letter?

Make the message clear. Avoid unnecessary words, yet do not

confuse your message. Consider the wording *without punctuation*.

Be sure to keep a copy of the wire for your file. Sometimes it is wise to mail a confirming copy of the wire, to prevent a misunderstanding.

### **Parcel Shipments**

If you must send a package as part of your company business, ask the proper official as to the correct way to handle this shipment. Does the shipping department do this? Are there record forms to fill out? Should the package go parcel post, express, air express, registered or insured? Consider the urgency and the expense.

The cost of shipment depends on the weight, size, distance sent, and sometimes the content of the package. Do not enclose a letter or written instruction unless this is within the regulations of the shipping media.

If you receive a package for business reasons, should this be registered at a receiving office before you accept it? Perhaps registration is required to check the receipt against the order.

In large companies, there are definite rules for all shipments and receipts of packages. Why not learn the mechanics of this procedure?

Out-of-country shipments require special forms and handling for duty payments and to comply with national regulations. You aren't expected to know all these rules, but you are expected to consult the person who does know.

### **Visitors**

Visitors to the company should be treated with courtesy and in conformity with regulations. Avoid personal visitors unless you are sure this is permitted by company policy. You want your family and friends to see where you work, but does your company permit this interruption?

Never permit solicitors of any service or product to take your time during working hours. Most companies prohibit solicitors except on authorization from the proper company official.

Visitors to a company are usually under the direction and care of a specialized department. If strangers visit your department, be sure you are authorized to visit with them and to show them

the department operation. This may cause difficulty. Be courteous, but get advice from the head of your department. Perhaps it will be necessary to call the guide service or a messenger to take the guest to the visitors' office. Do not assume the authority to judge the right procedure in extending information or permitting inspection of work by any visitor.

### **Conferences**

Conferences are an integral part of business operation. These are usually set up by an office memo stating the purpose of the meeting, the time and place, and probably the others included. The conference may be set up by telephone or personal call.

Be sure your superior knows about the conference unless you are authorized to act without this notice. Determine what rights you have to express your opinions in the conference if you represent your department. A newcomer can save herself embarrassment and avoid looking ridiculous if she will refrain from talking at meetings on matters about which she knows little. Of course, a good idea should be expressed. But it is a wise policy to talk over your suggestions with someone who knows, before presenting an idea to the group.

If possible, try to collect data and information which will help you understand the subject to be discussed. Perhaps you can take along records or reports which might help you if you are called on to speak.

Be on time! Do not keep others waiting. Give your undivided attention to the subject under discussion. Do not whisper or talk to others. Do not introduce unrelated subjects. Listen. If you are called on to give your opinion, do so (1) as your personal opinion, (2) as a representative of your department, if you have that right.

If the conference includes out-of-company people, be very careful not to violate company secrets. Be sure you know how much authority you have to speak as a representative of your company.

Take notes on the main points of the discussion. Be exact and complete, but to the point.

Discuss the conference with your immediate superior. Then

write a report to her, with copies to others, if necessary. Always ask her to check your reports before they are sent to others in the organization. See Chapter 8 for further details on reports.

If you call a conference, be sure to include the right people. Have a clear plan of action and consult your superior about your plans. Many companies have an established form to use for conferences. The subject or reason for the meeting is usually set as a title so that subsequent reports and meetings may be given the same title and filed together. Keep notes. Write a report of the meeting and follow through on your responsibilities and assignments. Show your report to your superior and determine who should get copies.

### **Forms, Blanks**

Companies have forms, blanks, and record sheets to minimize the time spent on records and to make readily evident identification of certain information. Use the right form for each office assignment, as telephone message, package shipment, expense account, time sheet, etc. These are all mechanics of a job. Regardless of what you may have done on another job, you will save yourself work by mastering the mechanics of the present job.

### **Duplicate Messages**

There are several ways of making duplicate messages. Which is best? What are the policies concerning the form, the salutation, the signature?

*Carbon copies* of a letter are seldom legible for more than seven or eight copies. Unless the message is easily read it may be necessary to have the letter typed several times or use another method.

*Hectographing* is a method of reproducing seventy-five or more messages. Methods differ so that you should ask how many legible copies can be made.

*Planographing* is a more expensive method of reproducing messages. This is a photographic reproduction of the



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original copy and requires special typing, paper, and specialized equipment. The result looks like a typewritten letter. Several hundred copies can be made.

*Mimeographing* is an inexpensive method of making many copies. Most stenographers can cut a stencil for mimeographing. Be sure the stencil is clear and accurate. Keep the stencil in case you should need more copies.

There are other types of reproducing letters and bulletins in which a person's name and address can be used just as in typing. Investigate the facilities available for multiple messages before you ask for any one type. The head of the stenographic department can give you this information.

*Printing* is, of course, the best method of making many copies of a message. This is a more expensive method for small runs but may prove to be a low unit cost for large runs. Consult someone who knows the answers before you have anything printed. Provide *clean copy*. Don't expect the typesetter to guess at your meaning. Changes after the proof is set are expensive. Proofread carefully. Mistakes are costly.

Company policies will determine the method used for multiple messages. If you are responsible for the copy, be sure you have organized your message, said what you mean, stated the facts clearly, and presented a complete story. Would you be proud to have people know you wrote the copy?

Needless to say, sometimes it may be desirable to have each letter an original, addressed to the individual. The importance of the message and the company policy must determine the value of the method for the occasion.

### **Order out of Confusion**

When you first begin to work in a company, you may feel that there are so many regulations you will never learn them all. You will, if you keep a record book and organize your information for future reference. Start a policy and regulation file for forms, copies of good examples of notices, and data on procedures. Make haste slowly.

Company policies and procedures are planned to make your

## 104 *The Young Woman in Business*

work easier. Aren't you glad you don't have to set up an entire system of your own?

Systems of procedure make for efficiency, impersonal action, and prevention of errors.

In a large company you will find experts on so many phases of the business that you won't have to guess or hesitate. Look in the company telephone book to see how many functional departments are listed. Just as you are hired to learn to do specialized work, so too, other specialists have learned to make the mechanics of some phase of work more efficient. You aren't supposed to know how to run the company. You are supposed to know how to get advice to save time, money, and energy.

Give your wholehearted support to the policies, procedures, and practices established by the company. Master the mechanics of the job and you will find your work more pleasant and effective.

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