

by *Bob_Goldman*

You know there are people who obsess about writing the great American novel.

Not me. I don't dream of writing the great American screenplay, nor the great American pop song, nor the great American spam e-mail. These are all worthy goals, but for working people, like thee and me, there can only be one literary goal that shines like a beacon in the dark and stormy night.

We want to write the great American office policy manual. Oh, the unadulterated power of it all! Who wants to be in Oprah's Book Club when you can be the ultimate arbiter of office behavior the definitive reference resource when the HR monster rears both of its ugly heads and solemnly announces that your latest administrative boo-boo can only be judged by the one unimpeachable, undeniable source of truth and morality - the office policy manual.

Will you be reprimanded? Suspended without pay? Shot at sunrise? Not even Antonin Scalia can weigh in on these issues. In the office, right and wrong all comes down to the black and white rules of the office policy manual. Until recently, I didn't think that a human being could write such a volume.

I assumed policy manuals simply appeared in a cloud of Montecristo smoke at management offsites. But now, thanks to the nice folks at TemplateZone.com, I learn that mere mortals can indeed write an office policy manual, and there is even a piece of software to help us accomplish the Herculean task.

Introducing Office Policy Manual 2007.

According to the listing on templatezone.com, "Office Policy Manual 2007" eliminates the need to "dedicate valuable time researching and collecting information, selecting appropriate policies, formatting document design and layout, revising and fine-tuning."

It's a wonderful promise. Heaven knows I've worn down the nubbin of more than one quill pen revising and fine-tuning my most recent mission-critical office ethics assignment - a list of rules for disposing of the contents in the office refrigerator when they are past their prime. I mean, is it morally right to throw out a fellow employee's tuna salad before it even starts glowing in the dark?

My Herculean efforts would have been but a trifle had I a software guru on whom to lean.

Some of the features available to users of Office Policy Manual 2007 include "over 130 in-depth business & technology policies," including a disaster recovery plan, blogging/IM usage, benefits and sick leave. Since no two firms are exactly alike, I imagine that the software does allow some interactive sculpting of these rock-solid policies, perhaps in a multiple-choice format.

With this kind of killer app, you would expect to click your own data input into these critical subject areas, like:

In case of a major disaster, it is essential that the employee:

- A. Be ready to sacrifice his pathetic life to save the manager.
- B. Be prepared with a good excuse explaining why they're not responsible for this disaster, unlike all your other blunders.
- C. Turn in all expense reports to HR before running to the nearest exit.

Every employee will enjoy a rich panoply of benefits, including:

- A. The right to detail your manager's Mercedes on alternate Saturday mornings.
- B. The opportunity to receive souvenir matchbooks from the exclusive bistros where your supervisors enjoy their lavish, expense account lunches.
- C. When caused by workplace stress, every third angioplasty is free.

Employees who wish to apply for paid sick leave should:

- A. Ask for a hospital bed to be moved into your cubical.

B. Prepare for laughter and finger-pointing from your superiors.

C. Get a note from your psychiatrist.

Also included in the software package are a number of priceless extra features, including an "expanded library of workplace posters sanctioned by the Department of Labor." I'm sure any of these artworks would replace the original Gauguin and Matisse oil paintings in your break room, though the guys in sales may balk at giving up their Snap-On tool calendars.

Best of all, if you order now, templatezone.com will also include a free copy of OrgChart Pro, "the fastest way to instantly create and maintain vivid, presentation ready organization charts." It's a \$149.95 value and worth every penny.

Think of the fun trying to mouse your name into the upper branches of the corporate tree. Think of the surprise as your limb is lopped off when your job is transplanted to Bangalore.

Hmmm. I don't mean to be an alarmist, but should we be worried that Office Policy Manual 2007 is available in Hindi?

Bob Goldman has been an advertising executive at a Fortune 500 company in the San Francisco Bay area. He offers a virtual shoulder to cry on at bob@funnybusiness.com.

Â© Copley News Service

Work Daze: Manual transmission by Bob_Goldman