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## **The Importance of an Operations Manual**

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### **Abstract**

Without having an operations manual programs are susceptible to misinformation between one another. Partners for Peace is a program that is dedicated to serving Monterey County, and its troubled youth as well as their parents/guardians. Creating an operations manual will help to ensure that all staff members are on the same page when it comes to day to day issues around the office. Every staff member now has a copy of the operations manual, this will ensure that all members of the team will be on the same page when issues arise in and out of the office. In order for this operations manual to continue to be relevant in the future it must be updated at least once a year to make sure that everything is up to date with current rules and regulations.

*Keywords: Manual, Partners for Peace, Operations, Rules, Regulations.*

## **Agency & Communities Served**

The vision of Partners for Peace is “to create a community where mental health is a top priority and individuals can access the resources they need to achieve optimal well-being” (Partners For Peace, 2023, para. 1). Partners For Peace is a wonderful program that “provides prevention and intervention classes for families, parents, caregivers, and youth. Loving Solutions for parents of children (5-10), Strengthening Families Program for youth (10-16) and their parents, and Parent Project, Sr. for parents of youth (11-17) with challenging/difficult behaviors” (Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce, 2024, para. 1).

These are only a few of the programs that Partners for Peace offers, with many more currently in development. In all of these new programs as well as the existing programs that are geared towards family education, the main focus is on the “importance of saying, ‘I love you’ and the need to have structure in the home” (Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce, 2024, para. 1).

According to US Census Bureau data, the community served comes from a population of 432,858 as of August 2023 (Conduent Healthy Communities Institute, 2023a). Out of this population 60.8% of residents are of hispanic origin, 17.9% of children live below poverty level, 18.7% of these children are American Indian or Alaskan Native, and 21.4% are hispanic/latino (Conduent Healthy Communities Institute, 2023b).

## **Problem Model Background and Literature Review**

### **Problem Statement**

The problem being addressed is that there are no uniform instructions on a daily basis. Which brings up the issue of misinformation. This is a common occurrence in the workplace, where one employee asks the advice of another and they both are just guessing on what should be done. A manual will make it so no one will have to guess on how to handle a situation.

Not having a “go to” place that explains your company's guidelines or procedures can create chaos and confusion. In an article published in 2015 written by Peter Ackers he has written about the sociological and historical aspects of the employment relationship and how this affects ordinary people and society at large. His work stresses the moderate, constructive character of organized labor, with themes of partnership and pluralism, and challenges Radical and Marxist theories of Industrial Relations, stating that often “relationships have become more temporary and insecure. Employees that don’t feel confident are not good for the company morale” (Ackers, 2015, para. 1). According to Document 360, “Employees often have questions about their role or the business and the manual can show employees who they should turn to for help” (Prabhakaran, 2022, para 21). That chaos and confusion can be solved by having one central place that can answer most questions. By creating a manual that lays out information like this, a more safe, organized and productive environment can be created.

**Figure 1: Problem Model**

<b>Contributing Factors</b>	<b>Problem</b>	<b>Consequences</b>
Regularly changing rules/regulations	No uniform instructions on major issues	Misinformation
Constant turnover		Loss of Support
Not enough time		Volunteers leave the organization

### **Contributing Factors**

#### ***Regularly Changing Rules/Regulations***

Change is natural in any type of business environment and with change comes improvement (Texas A&M University, 2023). Change will come where it is most needed, and it

may be uncomfortable. Constant changes on the job can cause people to doubt their capabilities to carry out their tasks. It will negatively affect their performance. There will always be a learning curve in every change, and it takes a certain level of knowledge and experience for people to get comfortable with a new tool or process (Corna, 2022).

When an organization has constantly changing rules and regulations it can get hard to keep up. If there are no guidelines already in place there will not be anything for employees to update with these changes. Without uniformity in procedures, employees will continue to waste valuable time and not complete tasks adequately. New changes to the system can be uncomfortable to those that have grown accustomed to a specific way that the process is handled, but changes promote growth.

### ***Constant Turnover***

Non-profit organizations help to fill a gap that government agencies do not fill. It is estimated that non-profits make up 10% of the US workforce (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2018). However, currently “employee turnover has become a serious management challenge in nonprofit human services agencies” (Kim & Lee, 2007, para. 1). This makes it especially hard to have uniform instructions, due to constantly changing positions, and people leaving the agency.

### ***Not Enough Time***

Not having enough time to complete tasks, such as creating uniform instructions, also ties into “high turnover.” Because of the high turnover rate in many non-profits, employees are already swamped with “increased demands for services,...longer waiting lists, reduced services, and sometimes elimination of services” (National Council of Nonprofits, 2024a, para. 2). This does not leave much time for any additional projects.

Nonprofits like Partners for Peace rely heavily on volunteers to staff their positions. Unfortunately, this number has drastically decreased after the COVID-19 shutdown. With low numbers in volunteerism many nonprofit organizations “have to stop the programs that rely on volunteer groups and readjust their goals to help those most in need” (Sree, 2023, para. 3). Partners for Peace was no exception, there were many areas that had to be restructured, and unfortunately took up valuable time that could have been spent on creating instructions.

## **Consequences**

### ***Misinformation***

Uniform instructions are important to any small business or any organization that assists the community. Detailed instructions provide guidance on what must be done during the day to day tasks of each employee, whether that describes how to hire new coaches or how to run workshops. Without this information on hand, employees are able to interpret their day to day tasks as they see fit, meaning that they may not meet the set goal that has been set in place over the years that the program has been up and running. The best instructions need to be revised every few years to make sure that they are able to keep up with the changing times, and different protocols, so that it can be a pillar in the organization.

### ***Volunteers Leave the Organization***

With confusion and frustration on what steps to follow during certain situations, staff will often question their role within the company. However, paid staff generally try to cope with the situation in order to keep their job position (Lopez-Cabrera, 2020). Being a volunteer and donating a person's time makes it easy for a person to leave a hole in the organization if they decide to leave for any reason. This is due to the simple fact that

volunteers have less at stake within the nonprofit.

This proves to be very unfortunate since “volunteers are critical to the functioning of nonprofit organizations” (Englert and Helmig, 2018, p. 1). “Volunteers help ensure the achievement of organizational goals” (Englert and Helmig, 2018, p. 1). Without uniform instructions, volunteers will have nothing to fall back on when on the job, which can then lead to frustration with the nonprofit as a whole.

### ***Loss of Support***

When employees or volunteers find themselves without a written “go to” place for answers, this causes chaos, which can then open up the organization to loss of support from donors, the community, or grants that fund programs. According to the National Council of Nonprofits, “If only one community member or donor loses confidence in a charitable nonprofit, because the nonprofit behaves unethically, that’s one too many” (2024a, para. 1) . Losing one can cause a snowball effect, which can be highly detrimental to any nonprofit organization.

It is important to instill trust and confidence in an organization before something goes wrong. Being transparent with donors can go a long way. According to GuideStar, “transparent nonprofits received more contributions and were stronger organizations” (2023, para. 1). Transparency is just another way to ensure that the organization does not lose support of their donors.

## **Project Description and Implementation Process**

### **Project Description**

I created an Operation Manual for this program. This Operations Manual has detailed

instructions on what needs to be done in any and every situation that the program may encounter, so that when the current staff leaves the company and new people are brought on board, the new staff will have a clear idea on how things should be done.

### **Project Justification & Benefits**

The primary purpose of the project was to make sure that all the processes were written down, and it is no longer passed by word of mouth. This Operations Manual will make it so any person old or new to the organization will be able to take up a position and know how and when things are to be done. This will help the program in many different ways. The main way that this will help the program will be to have a centralized manual for all processes that is available for everyone. There are many different sections included in the manual that will help in all aspects of the program from the financial aspect to the day to day issues that may arise. The information needed to hold interviews with all members of the program to make sure that there was a full understanding of what the program takes to run proficiently.

### **Expected Outcomes & Assessment Plan**

The purpose behind creating an operations manual for Partners for Peace was to improve Organizational infrastructure, as well as improve knowledge of all positions within the program. This will greatly help the organization function in their day to day activities, and will help make quick and effective decisions by current and new employees. The expected outcome for this operations manual was that it would be used in everyday decisions thus making the manual used in everyday situations. Assessing how effective the operations manual is for the program was difficult. However, conducting interviews with key personnel to assess the project's contribution to the agency's capacity was the best course of action.

### **Implementation Process**

Interviewing each member of the Partners for Peace program granted the opportunity for an operations manual to be correctly written for the betterment of the program. With the vast amounts of information that were provided by every member of the program, it took time in order to sift through all of the information and make sure that it was all presentable. Then I made sure that all of that information was in an easy to read order that will assist with all questions by both current and future employees. This Operations Manual details the how of everyday operations, as well as major functions and issues that employees may need assistance with. Finally, once the draft was completed then I met with my mentor and reviewed the draft so that we could make any corrections that needed to be made at that time. There were many steps that were needed to complete the operations manual; these steps can be seen in Appendix A.

### **Project Results**

Prior to the Operations Manual being created many members of the agency stated that there were issues when someone was absent or left the organization. When staff is unsure on what to do, there tends to be a lot of different directions. In order to gather information from the organization, a survey was created to see how much of the information will be useful. During this survey the participants were asked to rate the usefulness of the manual. All participants were given a scale of one to ten and asked to rate the manual based on how useful they found it. The average rating that was given was an eight. The overall consensus regarding the Operations Manual was that it will be used in the future and will continue to be used in the future as long as it is updated every six months.

### **Conclusion & Recommendations**

Having a centralized form of instructions will highly benefit the organization on many levels. Not only will this manual fix the issue of employees being absent or on vacation, but it

will help provide consistent work, responsibilities, and priorities for the group. Based on the vast information that I have gathered during my internship, I recommend that a member of the team must go through the manual and update it. This will ensure that not only will the manual be updated, but it will also make it so at least one member of the staff will have a higher knowledge of what is expected from every member of the organization.

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## Appendix A

### Project Implementation Plan

Task	Timeline	Parties Involved	Materials/ services Needed	Deliverables
Research	By: March 8th 2024	Myself	Laptop, Internet	Understanding of Operations Manuals
Interview Members of the Program	By: March 29th 2024	All Partners for Peace Employees	Zoom Link, Employee's time	An Understanding on how the Program works
Draft of Operations Manual	By: April 5th 2024	Mentor, Myself	Laptop	Draft of Operations Manual
Final Draft of Operations Manual	By: April 5th 2024	Mentor, Myself	Laptop	Operations Manual