



# White Paper

## A “Loose-tight” Standard for Corporate Policy

### Abstract

Management policy directives must satisfy two conflicting objectives:

- They must be specific and precise in order to limit adverse behaviors.
- They should be flexible enough that managers can apply their individual personality, strengths, and creativity to achieve the objective.

Policy-writers constantly struggle with this tension and with the challenge of trying to explain the solution in English prose. Failure often results in costly confusion.

IPOV offers a novel solution to this familiar problem. The idea is to collect short video clips that illustrate how several different authoritative people would interpret and apply the policy. The goal is to illustrate that certain personal differences are allowable – as long as the essential policy core is properly enforced.



## Contents

Introduction .....	3
Problem Statement.....	3
System Design .....	3
Applications.....	5
Web Training.....	5
Instructor-Led Training.....	5
A Policy Development Tool .....	5
A Management Reference Tool .....	5
A Policy Standard .....	5
A New 'Standard' for Corporate Culture .....	5
Unresolved Questions.....	6
Summary.....	6
Appendix 1 - iPOV and the CoSolvent Platform.....	7
Appendix 2 - CoSolvent Community Server Data Sheet .....	8



## Introduction

The Policy Standard System is an idea for better definition of corporate policy – especially where the policies are inherently subject to interpretation.

## Problem Statement

Management policy directives must satisfy two conflicting objectives:

- They must be specific and precise in order to limit adverse behaviors.
- They should be flexible enough that managers can apply their individual personality, strengths, and creativity to achieve the objective.

Policy-writers constantly struggle with this tension and with the challenge of trying to explain the solution in English prose. Failure often results in costly confusion.

## System Design

IPOV offers a novel approach to address this familiar problem. The idea is to collect short video clips that illustrate how several different authoritative people would interpret and apply the policy. The goal is to illustrate that certain personal differences are allowable – as long as the essential policy core is enforced. The proposed system is developed as follows:

1. Select 3 to 6 experienced and respected personnel to participate in videotaped interviews about their experiences with a given policy or performance domain.
2. In advance, domain experts develop a set of structured questions to elicit the respondents' personal definitions of the responsibilities and boundaries of their job (ethical, technical, etc.). The questions should encourage them to reference their personal experience, operating style and values.
3. Each interview is recorded in an informal<sup>1</sup> video session.
4. The resulting video tapes are sent to iPOV who:
  - a. Converts the tapes into a set of Web/Flash movie clips (typically one per question/answer combination).
  - b. Transcribes and index the interviewee's audio comments.
  - c. Embeds movie and indexed transcript into a web-based gallery with embedded search engine (Figure1).
    - Deliverable via Internet, Intranet or CD (Flash/HTML/JavaScript)
    - Fully transcribed, text-searchable immediate random-access
    - Each question/answer pair broken out as an individual clip

---

<sup>1</sup> The sessions would typically be recorded in the expert's office or other familiar setting. The expert would be encouraged to use informal 'props' such as diagrams on a flip chart, pointing to binders, books and reports, and 'talking with their hands'. PowerPoint slideshows would be allowed, but would not be encouraged or required. The video recording equipment can be modest: an inexpensive digital camcorder and tripod will suffice in most situations.

Ideally, the session would only involve the expert, a competent questioner and a camera operator. The questioner's role is to pose the question and ask follow-up questions in the event that the expert's answer is ambiguous. Competent questioners could come from a number of sources, including colleagues, external consultants, and internal auditors. In some situations, the questioner and camera operator may be the same individual.



Topic	Person A	Person B	Person C	Person D	Person E
How much day-to-day responsibility do you give your outsourced subcontractors (OCs)?					
How often do you check up on the business practices of your OCs?					
What are the warning flags that make you more vigilant in monitoring your OCs?					
What information could your OCs supply on a regular basis to assure you of their performance?					
What consequences of OC inactions or misbehaviors do you fear the most?					
What are the most frequent OC-related problems (of a material significance)?					

Figure 1 - A Draft Video Gallery of Current Practices

5. Client expert(s) review the gallery and select a subset of the clips to constitute an approved summary of best practice (Figure 2).

- Clip selection emphasizes diversity
- Clip selection emphasizes sincerity and drama
- Clip selection emphasizes clarity of decision-making criteria
- Deliverable via Internet, Intranet or CD (via Flash/HTML/JavaScript)
- Fully transcribed, text-searchable - immediate random-access
- Each question/answer pair broken out as an individual clip

Topic	View #1	View #2	View #3	Synthesis
How much day-to-day responsibility do you give your outsourced subcontractors (OCs)?				As much as possible - except where it might pose a material risk to us.
How often do you check up on the business practices of your OCs?				We assess the risks - then check often enough to prevent their practices from raising serious risks.
What are the warning flags that make you more vigilant in monitoring your OCs?				Evasiveness Unexplained delays Complaints
What information could your OCs supply on a regular basis to assure you of their performance?				Performance statistics Meetings with staff
What consequences of OC inactions or misbehaviors do you fear the most?				Loss of key personnel Fraud
What are the most frequent OC-related problems (of a material significance)?				Delays Loss of quality Lack of focus on us

Figure 2 - A Video Gallery of Approved Best Practices

6. The galleries are deployed on the company Intranet (and/or on CD) to support a variety of applications:



## Applications

### Web Training

The gallery would be an asset that is referenced from other, independent, WBT training titles to illustrate:

- Corporate flexibility, tolerance and support for diversity
- That policies can be consistent across varied applications and contexts

### Instructor-Led Training

The galleries in Figure 1 and Figure 2 could be used to teach employees how to reason out the intent and application of specified corporate policies. A typical class might proceed as follows:

- Instructor frames the context and intent of a relevant policy
- Class members are formed into groups
- Each group reviews clips for a given topic from the gallery in Figure 1 to:
  - a. assess the quality of the respective answers
  - b. identify any common threads of policy application
- Each group writes and presents a synthesis statement on the topic
- The class discusses the alternative synthesis statements
- The class compares their statements to the official version (from Figure 2)
- The class and the instructor discuss and resolve any ambiguities.

### A Policy Development Tool

The process described for classroom training could also be applied as part of the process of policy development and refinement. Instead of student groups, the groups would consist of stakeholders.

### A Management Reference Tool

Figure 2 can be made available on the Intranet as a permanent reference for managers. This might have a number of potential benefits:

- Give managers an immediate point of reference for policy questions.
- ‘Stiffen the backbone’ of less senior employees to do the right thing.
- Encourage broader discussion of policies and their implications

### A Policy Standard

Figure 2, in conjunction with traditional policy documents, may serve as a “loose-tight” standard for corporate action. It clearly defines the policy limits on behavior at the same time that it demonstrates the flexibility that is allowed concerning the manner or style with which the policy is implemented.

### A New ‘Standard’ for Corporate Culture

This last item is fairly speculative. It seems at least plausible that a company could use this type of tool to influence the corporate culture. The key would probably lie with the individuals that are selected. Specifically, the selected individuals should be opinion-leaders that manifest one or more of the following characteristics:

- they are in positions of authority
- they are widely viewed as having been successful in their jobs
- they are respected and/or liked
- they are highly qualified

If the individuals are respected and admired and their views have management sanction, one would hope that a cross-sectional summary of their opinions would serve as a valuable



affirmation of the corporate culture – one that reinforces critical ideals while recognizing individuality and diversity in applying those ideals.

### **Unresolved Questions**

1. What protocol should the company use to solicit expert participants?
2. What safeguards should it give to protect individuals if they misspeak?

### **Summary**

We believe that the proposed approach represents a credible attack on one of the most stubborn challenges in corporate governance – the tension between the desire to give precise instructions (to prevent error) and the desire to maximize individuality and creativity.



## Appendix 1 - iPOV and the CoSolvent Platform

interactive Point of View (iPOV) is a specialized eLearning and web video company in Auburn AL. iPOV understands the challenge of teaching non-professionals how to record knowledge with inexpensive video equipment and has proven many times that, with the right tools and guidance, **anyone** can make inexpensive, practical, validated video communications. Over the years, iPOV has built a suite of software tools and specialized processes that collectively form a strong basis for rapid development of a video-based CareGiver Support System:



If a video-based CareGiver Support System were built from scratch, the effort would be significant.

However, iPOV has already developed and deployed an open-source platform, iPOV's CoSolvent Community Server (CCS).

CCS allows a controlled community of stakeholders to collaborate using a wide variety of rich media (including video).

iPOV currently offers CCS as a Software as a low-cost Service (SaaS) to organizations that encourage video sharing among trusted stakeholders.

Key features include:

- A Web 2.0 interface that requires only a web browser, an Internet connection and Flash. The https secure communication protocol passes freely through most firewalls.
- A flexible file and asynchronous video storage model that allows easy exchange of files and videos, with multi-level access control and permissions to keep files and comment 'conversations' private.
- Flexible alerts to potential viewers via email and automated notifications and user features include the ability to arrange, move, replicate, and replace files, do site-wide searches, add user-defined tags, and trade comments.
- iPOV has developed an advanced Flash video player that can perform advanced playback functions (including virtual cut and merge) after the movie has been downloaded to the user's web browser. By building the player into the CoSolvent Server, iPOV can explore novel web video-based features with server/client cooperation.

CoSolvent Community Server is the outgrowth of iPOV's long experience with eLearning and video production. iPOV has done more than 300 custom eLearning projects and web video applications for major corporate clients since 2000. **All of these projects used video as the primary intellectual raw material.** iPOV has pioneered tools and methods to transform virtually any type of video into high quality eLearning – quickly, accurately and at very low cost. iPOV has the skills, tools and software experience to rapidly assemble and deploy a credible prototype of the Video-based CareGiver Support System on the CoSolvent Community Server platform.



## Appendix 2 - CoSolvent Community Server Data Sheet



CoSolvent Community Server (CCS) facilitates collaboration within a community of stakeholders.

Think of it as a combination of a 'private YouTube' and a 'shared network drive' that can store and display video and many other files.

CCS applies strong access and sharing controls to folders and notifies users about events of interest (i.e., file(s) or comments added to a folder).

CCS relies on simple web technologies that work almost anywhere - through firewalls, in other languages, and across oceans.

### Features:

#### Core Features

- Minimal Client System Requirements
- Flexible Video and Audio Support
- Works with Inexpensive Video Cameras
- Comprehensive Security
- Windows-like Folders and Menu Structure
- Public Sharing Folders
- Arrange, Move, Replicate Files
- Replace Files without Breaking Links
- Email Sharing
- Subscribe to Folder Changes
- Hosted Software as a Service (SaaS)

#### Other Features

- Administrative Tools
- Item-level Comments
- CoSolvent Flash Video Player
- Customizable Titles and Pages
- Multi-Lingual Interface
- Site-wide Search and Filtering
- Synchronized Video Subtitles
- User-defined Tags
- Thumbnail "slideshows" of each video
- Video-enhanced Context-Sensitive Help
- Video in Several Bandwidths

### Service Model:

- **Software** - Free and/or Open Source (mostly GPLv2 with some minor variations).

Service Plan Options

- **Dedicated Server Hosting and Maintenance (\$1500/month)**
  - Hosting on dedicated Amazon EC2 instance
  - Backup and security management
  - Regular upgrades as iPOV innovates
  - Email support and bug fixes
  - Initial site customization and graphics
  - No limit on number of users
  - 250 GB storage, 1000 GB bandwidth/mo

iPOV will host and maintain the basic server on a fully dedicated Amazon EC2 instance. Client has total control of site, including master server accounts and passwords.

This provides the greatest level of flexibility, independence, security and control.
- **Shared Server Hosting and Maintenance (\$400/month)**
  - Like dedicated, but shares an EC2 instance
  - Minor limitations related to IP addressing
  - No limit on number of users
  - 50 GB storage, 300 GB bandwidth/mo

The client site shares a server with up to 6 other sites – with no logical or data connection between any of the sites. However, iPOV retains control of master server accounts.
- **Shared Server Hosting and Maintenance - Per User Pricing (planned – not yet available)**
  - Shared server services
  - Monthly per-user fee
  - 5 GB storage, 40 GB bandwidth/mo./user

Same as shared server, but fees are assessed on a per-user basis.
- **Optional Tech Support (\$1500/month)**
  - Phone support to designated user admin
  - Site management consulting

iPOV provides extended support services through a client-designated administrator.
- **Optional Community Development Services (ask for quote)**
  - Assist client with community development
  - Customize software to serve unique needs

iPOV can help clients design and deploy a server that exactly fits their operational needs.