How to Put a Policy to Work: Rolling Out & Training Your Team

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Downloading a policy is the easy part. A policy only protects your firm — and satisfies a regulator, insurer, or client — once people know it exists, understand it, and actually follow it. This free guide walks through how to take any policy (one of ours or your own) from a document to something your team lives by. It's general guidance, not legal advice — but it's the part most firms skip.

1. Adapt it before anyone sees it

A template is a skeleton, not a finished policy. Edit it so it matches how your firm actually operates, add the requirements that apply to your jurisdiction and profession, and have it reviewed by qualified legal counsel and/or a compliance professional. A policy that describes a firm you aren't is worse than no policy at all. - Fill in every [bracketed] blank and delete or add sections to fit your reality. - Add your state/national and industry requirements — the template leaves those out on purpose. - Make sure it doesn't contradict your engagement letters or your other policies. - Get legal or compliance sign-off before you adopt it.

2. Make it official

Give the policy an owner, an approval, an effective date, and a version number, and store the current version somewhere everyone can find it. Ambiguity about which version is in force is its own risk. - Assign a policy owner — a person or role responsible for it. - Add an effective date and a version number. - Keep one source of truth (a shared drive or intranet), and retire old versions so no one follows a stale copy.

3. Announce it — and lead with why

People follow policies they understand the reason for. When you roll one out, say what's changing, why it matters (protecting clients, meeting a requirement, preventing fraud), and when it takes effect. A rule with a reason sticks; a rule without one gets ignored. - Send a short, plain-language announcement. - Explain the why, not just the what. - State the effective date, where to find the policy, and who to ask.

4. Train your team — this is the part that counts

Emailing a PDF is not training. Real training is short, role-relevant, and practical: it teaches people what to actually do in the moments the policy is about. Do it when people are hired and on a regular schedule after that, and make it easy to ask questions. - Make it role-specific — the front desk and the tax team need different examples. - Use real scenarios: "a client emails asking you to wire funds to a new account..." - Keep sessions short and focused; repeat the high-risk topics more than once a year. - Train new hires during onboarding and everyone on a set cadence.

5. Collect a signed acknowledgment

A simple signed statement that each person has read and understood the policy is your record that it was communicated. It supports fair, consistent enforcement and matters if you're ever audited, reviewed by an insurer, or in a dispute. - Keep it simple: name, date, and "I have read and understood this policy." - Store acknowledgments with your HR or personnel records. - Re-collect them at hire and whenever you make a material change.

6. Enforce it consistently and fairly

A policy enforced unevenly is worse than none — it looks like favoritism and won't hold up. Apply it the same way to everyone, document issues as they come up, and follow the enforcement steps the policy itself lays out. - Hold everyone to the same standard, leadership included. - Document violations and how you responded. - Involve HR and, for serious matters, counsel.

7. Keep it alive

Policies go stale. Review them on a set cadence and whenever something changes — a new law, a new system, a new service line, an incident, or a change in staff. When you make a material change, re-train and re-collect acknowledgments. - Review at least once a year. - Update when the law, your tools, your services, or your risks change — or after an incident. - Re-train and re-acknowledge on material changes, and keep a version history.

Rollout checklist

- Policy adapted to how the firm actually operates
- Jurisdiction and industry requirements added
- Reviewed by legal counsel and/or a compliance professional

- Owner assigned; effective date and version set
- Stored in one findable place; old versions retired
- Rollout announced with the reason behind it
- Team trained — role-relevant and practical
- New-hire and recurring training scheduled
- Signed acknowledgments collected and stored
- Enforcement approach clear and applied consistently
- Review date set (at least annual)

Training tips

- Short beats comprehensive — 15 focused minutes people remember beats an hour they tune out.
- Teach the decision, not the document — walk through what to do in the exact moments the policy is about.
- Make it safe to say "that doesn't look right" — about a wire request, a phishing email, anything — without fear of blame.
- Repeat the costly ones — wire fraud, client data, and phishing deserve more than a once-a-year mention.
