How do you track contracts?

Question: I have worked for my employer -- a large company with more than 1,400 employees -- for eight years now. When I started working here, the amount of contracts we processed yearly was manageable. More recently, the number of contracts processed annually has tripled, and keeping track of them has become a task that isn't really assigned to one person.

Getting a contract through the process and returned signed and completed takes constant reminders to the individual responsible for that particular contract. On average, we have to send four reminders to an individual for each contract to be reviewed or completed.

The executive assistant to the CEO has been undertaking much of the responsibility, and I have been pitching in when I have spare time, which is hardly ever.

Does anyone have an easy process to track contracts when routing for various signatures or reminding different managers/directors/VPs when a contract is due for renewal or review and then following up with them to make sure it was completed? Do you have one person who over sees this task? What is his or her title? Does he or she have any other job duties? -- *Lindsay Anderson*

Comments

One of the most frustrating aspects of any job is waiting for responses, especially when deadlines are involved. Below is a sample memo used when we send out drafts of agreements for approval. You will see that the responsibility of approval is where it should be.... with the manager or exec who is paid to make these decisions/-approvals...

Attached hereto is the completed Agreement Authorization Request for the above-referenced agreement with _________ and a draft of the Agreement. If you have any questions, comments or objections to the proposal or draft, please contact the listed Responsible Party, no later than _________________, 2006. To that end, your silence will be considered your acquiescence.
---------------This way, they are given a specific date to respond. If they don't, then it is understood that they approve. I am the legal secretary (admin). We usually give a one week response time (some less). The responses are copied and filed with the signed contract. If no response received, it means approval. this procedures works perfectly. Hope this helps.

Posted by: Char V | October 26, 2006 at 01:40 PM

We send a pre-paid envelope out with our request for feedback. Most of the time they will be returned without a postmark. Depending upon the size of your organization, you could have someone open them for you, and throw out the envelopes before they reach you.

Posted by: Laurie | October 26, 2006 at 07:00 PM

My company in last few years went through same dilemma. In response to that, my position (which was an Asst to the Dept. Director), was upgraded to Contracts/Insurance Coordinator. This position primarily oversees all Contracts and Insurance for the company. The original contract is submitted to my office, where I oversee getting all reviews and signatures, and returning it to client for signature. Do you have any software you use to keep track of your contracts? We use Contract Advantage... I'm not thrilled with it, but it's better than nothing.

Posted by: Connie | October 27, 2006 at 01:04 PM

I'm assuming these are all internal signatures you're trying to gather. If so, see if your email program allows for routing. I'm sure MS Outlook and Lotus Notes have this functionality - but it does require some equipment/software. This does all the tracking and managing for you.

Of course, there are other software programs out there. Here are a few links:

http://www.thesoftwarenetwork.com/Contract-Software/

http://www.cobblestonesystems.com/

http://www.upsidecontract.com/

Just go to Google and search for "Contract Management Software" and you'll find a lot of options.

If new software isn't an option, here are some other ideas:

1) In MS Word, there is a document routing feature. Go to the Help menu and search for "Document Routing" and it should display the help topic. I have not used this in recent years, but it used to be very effective. *May* require the Outlook option I described above to work.

2) If it's generally the same group of individuals who need to review/sign, is it possible to block a time in each of their calendars daily/weekly for reviewing of contracts? I did this with my project managers. At first, they were a little baffled as to why I was "touching their calendar"; however, they now rely on me managing their calendar for these items.

3) Ask upper management to revisit this situation and re-enforce the importance of reviewing/signing these contracts in a timely fashion.

4) Are there others working for an executive who can sign for them? I have also done this for contracts that were below "X" dollar amount.

Generally, there are Contract Administrators who do just what you describe. Here is one description I found on Salary.com:

Job Description for Contracts Administrator I:
Aids in the preparation of contractual provisions and the administration of contract proposals. Responsible for preparing bids and negotiating specifications and contractual provisions. Requires a bachelor's degree and 0-2 years of experience in the field or in a related area. Familiar with standard concepts, practices, and procedures within a particular field. Relies on limited experience and judgment to plan and accomplish goals. Performs a variety of tasks. Works under direct supervision; typically reports to a manager.

If the workload has increased that much, approach HR about creating a new position and hiring someone specifically to do this. Emphasize the LIABILITY issue to the company if the proper people aren't signing as they need to!

If you have other questions, feel free to email me!

~Cindy ;)

Posted by: Cindy Brock | October 28, 2006 at 10:17 AM

My corporation has a SOP (Standard Operating Procedure)written specifically to encompass confidential disclosure between us and any company/vendor. Each of our facilities has an assigned Administrator who tracks the agreements/contracts for their specific site. A corporate log with restricted access for site Administrators only is in place for visibility and traceability of these controlled documents.

A "Request Form" is available for all employees' in the company's public folder. Once a "Request Form" is completed, the Requestor emails the form to the Administrator for processing. The Administrator chooses one of three WORD templates (specified by the Requestor on the "Request Form"), fills in the blanks with details provided from the "Request Form", saves and names the template as a new document; then prints (2) two originals. The controlled document is now ready for the Requestor to take to contractor/vendor. Requestor obtains dated approval signatures from both parties on both originals; then one original remains with the contractor/vendor (them) and one original is returned to the Administrator (us). Hope this helps - email me with questions.

Posted by: Diana | October 30, 2006 at 04:46 PM