Basic Rules of Authority and Responsibility with Holacracy
Guidance for your everyday work

The most obvious place you can find what you can expect from whom is by looking at the roles in GlassFrog. But the Constitution also gives you several basic rules on what authorities and responsibilities everyone has. Here is a cheat-sheet for all of them.

What is your authority?

- When filling a Role, you have the authority to take any action or make any decision you reasonably believe is useful to enact your Role's Purpose or Accountabilities, with the following exceptions: (1.3)
    - Don't break any rules defined in the Holacracy constitution. (1.3)
    - Don't violate Domains or Policies constraining your role (1.3)
    - Don't dispose of the company resources (e.g. money, intellectual property, other properties, etc.) without authorization (e.g. from the Lead Link) (2.1.3)
- If your role has a Domain, you can allow or restrict access to that Domain for others to impact, either case-by-case or by defining policy on that Domain that others may follow. (1.4)

What are your basic responsibilities?

When you fill a role, you take on the following responsibilities:

1. **Tracking tensions** sensed in your role and processing them (1.2.1)
2. **Proactively taking on work** to express your role's purpose and accountabilities (1.2.2)
3. **Defining explicitly at least one next step** for any project on your plate (1.2.3)
4. **Tracking your projects, next actions, and tensions** in a database (somewhere outside of your mind, whether it's a notebook or a software) (1.2.4)
5. **Prioritizing your attention** to accomplish the tasks that would add the most value at any given time, as long as it's in alignment with any prioritization given by the circle's strategy or the Lead Link (1.2.5 & 4.1.3)

Furthermore, you have the following duties to your fellow circle members:

6. **Transparency on request**: sharing projects and next-actions you are tracking; how you're prioritizing them; a rough projection of when you expect to finish them; and reporting on any checklists and metrics assigned to your roles. (4.1.1)
7. **Processing requests for projects & actions**: When requested to take on a specific action or project in one of your roles, you must accept it if you deem it a reasonable action or project to take on. If not, then you must either explain your reasoning, or capture and communicate a different action or project that you believe will meet the requester's objective. (4.1.2)
8. **Processing requests to impact Domains**: When a circle member requests to impact a Domain controlled by your role, you must allow it if you see no Objections to the request. If you do, you must explain any Objections to the requester. (4.1.2)

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9. **Prioritizing processing over execution**: You must generally prioritize processing messages/requests from your circle members, over executing on your own work. (4.1.3)
10. **Prioritizing meetings upon request**: Upon request from a circle member, you must prioritize attending a specific circle's tactical or governance meeting over executing on your own work, unless you already have a meeting scheduled at that time. (4.1.3)

No other expectation or constraint holds any weight unless it's explicitly specified in 1) the Holacracy Constitution, 2) the governance of the organization, or 3) a contract you have signed or other agreement you have explicitly made (e.g. if your employment contract specifies work hours).

What about expectations set outside of Holacracy?

When a company transitions to Holacracy, many expectations aren't captured in governance and rely on the legacy power structure. For example: compensation, dress code, minimum billable hours, etc.

The rules:

1. They are still in effect *until they contradict something adopted in governance*, and
2. They can only be modified via governance. (See article 5.4: Legacy Policies and Systems).

In practice:

The organization should work toward integrating the legacy policies into governance as soon as practical. The existence of legacy policies is the primary obstacle to the power shift that Holacracy enables. Legacy policies constitute a "shadow power structure" that will prevent the power shift and eventually kill the Holacracy adoption altogether if not addressed soon enough. An organization **cannot** live with two power structures: one will win over time.

Additionally, the status quo will also erode the trust in Holacracy's potential for most people who aren't at "the top", and they will eventually decide that Holacracy's learning curve isn't worth it.

Best practices:

- **Work on 'translating' the legacy policies into Holacracy governance** if you have role involved in defining them. It's not that easy at the beginning, don't hesitate to get professional help.
- **Create a role focused on translating legacy policies**, and/or supporting others to do so. Then request a project of that role.
- For all other roles, **don't object to a governance proposal because it contradicts a legacy policy**. Let the governance conflict with it, thus creating an incentive for whoever wants to rely on that policy. The status quo is your enemy in this case.
- **If you rely on a legacy policy, take on the work to defining it into governance** — even if you think it should be governance adopted 'higher up' in the circle structure. Until it is, define it, or a piece of it, at your level, and let that create a tension for the parent circles. Then use your Rep Link to propose these policies in governance in the appropriate parent circle.

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