New Employee Orientation Guidelines



Human Resource professionals and line managers first need to consider key orientation planning questions before implementing or revamping a current program. These are the key questions to ask.

- What things do new employees need to know about this work environment that would make them more comfortable?
- What impression and impact do you want to have on a new employee's first day?
- What key policies and procedures must employees be aware of on the first day to avoid mistakes on the second day? Concentrate on vital issues.
- What specific things can you do to ensure that new employees will begin to know their coworkers without feeling overwhelmed?
- What special things (desk, work area, equipment, special instructions) can you provide to make new employees feel comfortable, welcome and secure?
- What positive experience can you provide for the new employee that she could discuss with her family at the end of the first day of work? The experience should be something to make the new employee feel valued by the organization.
- How can you help the new employee's supervisor be available to the new employee on the first day to provide personal attention and to convey a clear message that the new employee is an important addition to the work team?

Since first impressions are crucial, here are some tips for putting your best foot forward.

- Begin the process before the new person starts work. Send an agenda to the new associate with the offer letter so the employee knows what to expect. Stay in touch after he or she has accepted the position to answer questions or help in other ways. Also, make sure the new person's work area is ready for the first day of work.
- Make sure key co-workers know the employee is starting and encourage them to come to say "hello" before orientation begins.
- Assign a mentor or partner to show the new person around, make introductions, and start training. Let the mentor have sufficient notice so he or she can make preparations.
- Start with the basics. People become productive sooner if they are firmly grounded in the basic knowledge they need to understand their job. Focus on

the why, when, where, and how of the position before expecting them to handle assignments or big projects. Don’t overwhelm them with too much information.
- Provide samples about how to complete forms as well as the individual’s job description with the orientation packet.
- Have some fun. Do not spend time on every aspect of the handbook, only on the very important topics. Play some games because this can help the learning process. Games include: Photo Match – after the tour. Each employee is provided photos of other employees and a list of names. The object is to match the name with the face. Signature Hunt – While employees are touring the facility, provide them with a piece of paper with names of several associates they will be meeting. They are then asked to obtain the signatures of the people they meet. The employee, who obtains the most signatures, gets a prize. Other games that pertain to what the employee learned during orientation are also effective assurances that orientation is successful.
- Provide a list of frequently asked questions with a contact person/department, and phone number or extension.
- Plan to take the new employee to lunch, or ask the mentor, supervisor or co-workers to join the new employee in the lunch room. The first day on the job is not the day to leave the new employee in the lurch about lunch plans. This is a good time for the manager/supervisor to take the employee to lunch, include other co-workers, and make sure the employee is at ease.
- Give the new person some responsibility for his or her own orientation. Offer opportunities for self-directed learning, under appropriate supervision.
- Keep the new person’s family in mind. A new job means adjustment for the entire family, especially if they have relocated. Do what you can to ease the transition and help them feel comfortable in the community.
- Ask for feedback. Find out from former new hires how they perceived the orientation process, and don’t be afraid to make changes based on those recommendations. You can send an evaluation two to four weeks after the employee has started, and ask: Now that you have been with the company awhile, did the orientation meet your needs? After the employee has worked for you for a while he finds out what he should have learned but did not at the orientation.

An effective orientation program – or the lack of one – will make a significant difference in how quickly a new employee becomes productive and has other long-term impacts for your organization. The end of the first day, the end of the first week, the end of each day in your employment, is just as important as the beginning. Help your employees feel that you want them to come back the next day, and the next, and the next….