

Welcoming New Employees

BY CONNIE SWARTZ

Providing a positive orientation experience can help new employees get up to speed quickly.

It's logical, really, that the faster new employees are able to be productive, the better for them and for the company. One way to help them get up to speed quickly is to provide a positive orientation experience. Here are a few suggestions on how to create a new-hire orientation that will make your new employees' first few days more satisfying and productive.

What Type of Orientation Is Best for You?

The format and formality of your orientation depend on your business plan, your culture and the number of new employees you anticipate hiring. Some examples:

- A company with unpredictable hiring needs might prefer informal company and job orientation. A topic outline, reference materials, and some planned, directed one-on-one sessions may be all that's needed.
- A company that anticipates growth in the next few years may create detailed orientation outlines. Any manager can use the materials in daily sessions to introduce new employees to the company and to their jobs.
- A company that hires many new employees will benefit from a

formalized company orientation. The orientation materials might include a new employee guide, a facilitator's guide, and PowerPoint slides presented in a classroom program. Job-specific orientation might be less formal and driven by the manager and fellow workers.

- A company that plans to grow by selling franchises needs to develop standardized employee materials that are included in the sales agreement.
- A company that is planning to be sold would profit from having a formal orientation program as part of the larger employee management system.

New-hire orientation should include both company information and job-specific information. Some companies combine the two. Others handle them separately.

Company Orientation

Company orientation is intended to give the employee clarity on the company purpose and how the company fits into the business community. The company orientation also needs to introduce the employee to how the company works—for the customer and for the employees. You can build company orientation around these general

questions:

- How can we demonstrate our company mission and values?
- How can we show how our employees work together toward our goals?
- How can we introduce the employee to our industry and our position in it?
- How can we make the employee feel welcome and comfortable in our company?
- What information does the employee need for our payroll system and our benefits systems?
- What information does the company need to get the employee into all of our systems?

Here are some topics to include in company orientation:

- An introduction to the company mission, history, goals, values and culture
- Examples of how employees are expected to support the company mission, goals, values and culture
- A walking tour to point out facilities, services, building access and emergency locations
- Introductions to people who can provide direction or useful information
- Guidance through company information and forms for benefits,

payroll and other Human Resource programs

- Company policies, procedures and terminology
- Contact information for company employees
- Orientation follow-up plan

Job Orientation

Job-specific orientation is intended to show new employees how their department and their job fit into the company. It explains their job context and structure. You can build job-specific orientation around these questions:

- What skills and knowledge does the employee need to do the job?
- What materials, equipment, information and authority can the company give the employee to enable him/her to do the job?
- How do we give feedback to the employee about how he/she is doing the job?

- What incentives can the company give the employee for doing the job?
- How will the employee know the importance of the job and how it relates to others in the department and the company?
- Who does the employee contact with questions, and what's the best means of communication?

Here are some topics to include in job orientation:

- An introduction to the department's mission, history and goals
- A tour of the department's shared equipment, common areas and introduction to other employees
- A status of what the department is working on now and how it relates to the company goals
- A list of tasks the employee needs to complete and a timeline for their completion

- A list of department resources
- Job-specific procedures
- Contact information for how to find information and to get help

Employees who feel welcome and integrated into your company can do the job better and have a greater sense of job satisfaction and company loyalty.

The benefits of orientation extend beyond the new employee as they share first impressions with fellow workers, peers, friends and family. In this way, orientation helps a company attract and retain the best employees.

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