

Onboarding New Employees

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We're planning on hiring several employees early next year. Some will replace employees who move on or are promoted. One or two may be additions to staff. We're a busy service based company with almost 60 employees, and we want to do a better job of getting new employees up to speed quickly. What can you suggest?

When you bring on new employees there are definitely things you can do to insure they get a good start. How well you pay attention to the issue of introducing new employees to your company can set a strong first impression. It can also make a difference in how well an employee performs in his or her first months on the job.

The general topic of introducing new employees to a company is called on-boarding. New employees need a general introduction to the company – people and practices. They need someone who can act as their go-to person for general questions about the lay of the land. New employees also need to be clear about what they are to do, and what is expected in terms of results. Spending time and effort to get it right in all of these areas will speak volumes about how valuable you consider your human resources to be.

A general introduction to the company starts with a tour. Just because the new employee came to the office for an interview, does

not mean they know where everything is located. Show them around – from wash room and lunch room, to where the various departments of the company are housed. Don't forget to show them where their own desk is, or will be.

Personally introduce a new employee to the people they will be working with day-to-day. It's often uncomfortable and embarrassing for a new employee to have to introduce him or herself to peers. Help to break the ice. Even if they don't remember all the names and faces, they probably will find it easier to connect with people the second time.

Help a new employee to make connections with key players. For example, someone joining customer service will probably want to get to know the sales people and the finance people, and vice versa. Someone delivering goods probably wants to meet the people in operations, who turn out the goods they'll be delivering.

Point out the top players of the organization. There are few things more embarrassing for a new employee than to find out they were just in an elevator with the President of the company, and they didn't even know it. Even if there isn't time to stop and talk with everyone, if they at least know what people look like,

that's a start to making the organization feel more familiar. Assign a mentor to host each new employee. This person can be from anywhere in the company. This should be someone who is confident and comfortable making introductions, answering questions, and being an ambassador for the company.

Think through what a new employee needs to know, from basic practices like clocking in at the start of the day and leaving at night, to understanding benefit options. Have a checklist that the employee can use to keep track of, and keep notes on what's been covered. Don't try and do it all in the first day or week, either. Spread out orientation, so that new employees have time to absorb and digest all of the information being thrown their way.

Plan out the employee's first few weeks on the job. Mix in learning about the job the employee was hired to do, meeting peers, learning about the company's various departments. Help the new employee get a general feel for the company's culture, and complete all of the necessary start-up paperwork.

Build an employee manual which lays out the company's practices and expectations for all employees. Ask new employees to sign off that they received a copy. Take time to review it with new employees, carefully



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answering questions and discussing what it means in terms of their long term success.

Have a job description ready to go the first day. Define the tasks to be completed, including specific expectations about what is to be produced within a specific timeframe. Have the manager go over it with the employee several times, starting that first day. Review the job description weekly for the first month, then you can go to a quarterly review for the first year. In the beginning, you want to be sure that the job description is correct and the new employee is focused on it. As time goes on, shift to focusing results, to be sure the employee is producing as expected.

Looking for a good book? Try Creative New Employee Orientation Programs: Best Practices, Creative Ideas, and Activities for Energizing Your Orientation Program by Doris M. Sims.

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