

Ten Ways to Lose that New Employee

O.K it's 7:00 AM Monday morning and you have two bids due by 10:00 AM, a project meeting at noon and 3 new hires standing in your lobby waiting for you to welcome them to your company. Where do you start? Who has the time? Who has the patience? Business leaders always say they want new employees to have a positive hiring experience, but then why is it that organizations so often act in ways that create the opposite result?

These are the top ten ways to guarantee your new employee will start off on the wrong foot!

- Make sure a work area/vehicle has not been created or assigned. Let him ride in a truck with another technician for 3 weeks, creating a real drag on productivity.
- Schedule the new employee to start work while her supervisor is on vacation.
- Leave the new employee standing in the lobby for a half hour while your receptionist tries to figure out what to do with him.
- Leave the new employee at her work station, to manage on her own, while co-workers pair up and head out to lunch.
- Provide an hour in a noisy lobby for the new employee to read and sign-off on the Employee Handbook, or worse...don't provide a handbook and let them guess what your company's policies are.
- Show the new employee his work area or vehicle and don't introduce him to co-workers or assign him a mentor.
- Assign the new employee to a person who is too busy or doesn't have the communication skills to train the new hire.
- Assign the new employee to (you fill in the blank!) your most unhappy, negative, company-bashing, team member.
- Assign the employee "busy work" that has nothing to do with her core job description, because you are having a busy week.
- Start the new employee without taking the time to properly orient him to the customs, policies and procedures of your company.

Orienting employees to their workplaces and their jobs is one of the most neglected functions in many organizations. An outdated employee handbook (or no handbook) and piles of paperwork are not sufficient when it comes to welcoming a new employee to your company. The result is often a confused new employee who is not productive and is more likely to leave the organization within a year.

Developing an effective employee orientation experience is crucial for a positive new hire experience. It is critical that new hire programs are carefully planned to educate the employee about the values, history and who is who in the organization. A well thought out orientation program, will help not only in retention of employees, but also in productivity. Organizations that have good orientation programs get new people up to speed faster, have better alignment between what the employees do and what the organization needs them to do, and have lower turnover rates.

It is important that employees learn as soon as possible what is expected of them, and what to expect from others, in addition to learning about the values and attitudes of the organization. The main reasons orientation programs fail: The program was not planned; the employee was unaware of the job requirements; the employee does not feel welcome.

All new employees should complete a new employment orientation program that is designed to assist them in adjusting to their jobs and work environment and to instill a positive work attitude and motivation at the onset.

Consider these 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 co-workers 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 employee 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 or vehicle 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. **Safety Jeopardy**- Safety game covering required training topics such as Right-To-Know/chemical hazards. (You can have fun while covering important MIOSHA required training!) 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. 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 ...

For more information on orientation programs, Employee Handbooks or any of our **Say Yes! To Success** consulting programs please contact the BEC Group at (734) 730-8110. Or via email at BEGroup@comcast.net