

7 Keys to Better Employee Orientations • Gina DeLapa, President

REMEMBER HOW YOU FELT your first day on the job? Chances are, you felt a mix of excitement and nervousness—especially if you were also new to the organization. Every encounter with your boss and co-workers, every verbal and nonverbal cue, and every nuance of the work environment, helped you answer the question asked by all new hires: “Did I make a wise decision by coming to work here?”

Whether you’re the HR manager or the hiring manager, you want your new employees to succeed—their first 90 days on the job set the tone for their engagement, performance and retention. And while these factors aren’t completely within your control, there are many things you can do as part of the orientation process to help your new employees make the best possible start.

The 7 Keys

1. Make sure new hires feel valued. During grad school, I had an HR internship at a mid-size publisher. Before Day 1, I had my schedule for the first two weeks. The day I started, my boss met me in the lobby, offered me a smile and a handshake, and escorted me to my fully equipped workspace (complete with large, personalized welcome sign). Clearly, the employer cared—and valued my time. Of the many people I met with during those first two weeks, not one person canceled or showed up late.

2. Help new employees feel welcome. One employer was so excited to show off its culture, they invited me in about a week before my start date so I could meet my new co-workers and decorate my office (modestly, of course). By the time I started, I already knew at least a half-dozen names, where to park, how to dress, and so on.

3. Give them somewhere to turn. How do you prefer to be communicated with? Is your door “always open” for questions, or do you prefer to address all

concerns during certain hours only? Keep in mind that even the most savvy new employees may need you to be accessible during those first few days.

4. Help them connect with others in the office.

How existing staff perceive new employees will depend in part on how you introduce them. “This is Bob Jones—he’s going to help us double our global market share” is much better than “This is Bob—the new vice president.”

5. Share the finer points of your office culture.

What do new hires need to know to make a smooth entry into your workplace, and to put their best foot forward? What are the rules, both spoken and unspoken?

“What the world really needs is more love and less paperwork.”

Pearl Bailey

6. Check in. Ask how things are going, and take time to listen. Little kindnesses, early on, go a long way toward setting a new employee’s mind at ease, and fueling their desire to give you their best.

7. Communicate performance expectations.

What results is the new employee responsible for? What are the time/budget constraints? It’s always easier to hit a target that’s been clearly defined. Take time, as the hiring manager, to clarify your expectations from the start.

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