



GETTING OFF TO THE RIGHT START

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You have spent a great deal of time and effort to attract and hire a top-level candidate for a key position. You know your organization's ability to serve customers and produce profits is only as good as its people--its human capital. How do you maximize your chances that this employee will become a productive long-term employee?

Getting him or her off to the right start is key. You never get a second chance to make a first impression. This is your chance to lay the foundation for a successful and productive relationship between the new employee and your company.

It's unrealistic to expect this new employee to report to work and be instantly productive, no matter how great his potential or how good her experience. If you want a new hire to become a productive, successful, long-term employee, you have to first invest time to orient and train him

The most successful organizations have a planned, systematic approach for integrating newly hired employees into their company. They make employees feel comfortable, help them develop their skills and knowledge, and help them understand their job and what's expected of them. The following steps will help you get employees off to the right start.

Acclimation Plan

Anything important should be planned out and done well, and getting a new employee off to a good start is no exception. Before the individual reports to work, you should review all information learned during the employment process and use it to develop an acclimation plan. Look over the employees' strengths, weaknesses, areas of concern, what motivates them, and how to manage them.

Most of this information can be obtained from the pre-employment evaluation instruments and interview and reference notes. If an employee has had a problem in the past in any particular area, you can plan how to help the employee overcome the difficulty in the new position. If, for example, he has experience but is somewhat weak in a specific area, you can assign him to initially work with a person who is strong in that area.

Developing an acclimation plan for new employees is a wise investment of time and energy because it not only reduces the potential for turnover, it also increases the probability the individual will be productive.

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The First Day

The first few hours and days set the stage for the employee's attitude toward the job and the company. On the first day the new employee might be anxious or apprehensive, as well as excited with high expectations. If you can help reduce the fear, calm the anxiety, and keep the excitement and level of expectations high, it will go a long way to giving the employee a good start.

Initially, the objective is to get the employee at ease and develop pride and commitment to the company. You, or someone you designate, should again review the notes from interviews and pre-employment tools to get to know the employee as a person. Take the time to truly communicate with the new employee and build a bridge of understanding that will last through the entire period of employment.

Avoid the most common mistake of orientation and training: using employees (or even the out-going employee) to do this job. These people are unlikely to convey the enthusiasm for the company and the seriousness of doing the job right that you or the manager would. As a result, many new hires do not reach the owner's expectations and soon go through the revolving door of employee turnover. Take the time to give this important part of the hiring process **your** personal attention, at least on the first day.

Acclimation

Provide new employees with a tour of the company. Introduce them to others, especially those they will be working with. Explain the duties of each person so they can understand how they fit into the organization. Explain the facility to them. Show them the restrooms, break areas, equipment, and where things are located.

Policies

Explain all the policies that will affect her, including, pay, benefits, sick days, overtime, etc. Many times employees are given an employee handbook or benefit sheet and told to read it, but that's not enough. If you have an employee handbook, it is very important that a knowledgeable person answer questions and go over the manual the first day.

Unwritten Rules

Many things are never written down, but an employee still needs to know them in order to feel comfortable. Employees should be told the "unwritten" rules right from the start. These may be simple things like how to store equipment, when and where to eat lunch, and care of their vehicle. The new employee will need to know the basic information of working at the company such as how to handle time cards and keys. Make a list of these things and go over them with your new employee, leaving the door open for questions in the days to follow.

Prepared Work Area

Ensure you have the new employee's work area and equipment ready with any necessary supplies, or

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tools. Nothing makes new employees feel more at home than to have new or well-maintained equipment waiting for them.

Expectations

Explain the levels of supervision in the organization and the schedule, especially if it involves activities such as training. Take time to sit down and review what is expected using the job requirements, candidate requirements, and level of expectation that were developed during your hiring process.

Be sure to schedule the start day at a time when you have both time and energy to get the employee off to the right start. Realize the first day is busy and mentally tiring for both you and the new employee. You will never have another chance to make a positive first impression. Make it great!