



How Important are Your People? Your Team? Your New Employees?

Orientation: Successful Training for New Employees

Training and orientation are necessary for new employees in any organization. Without orientation and training many things can and do take place that are a risk and negative impact to the company and the new employee.

Some of the areas and questions that will be reviewed are:

- Why do new employees need orientation and training when they are hired by an organization?
- Some organizations do not have any orientation or training, or it is limited due to their belief that it is a non-productive use of time.
- Other organizations do not want to document orientation, training, and anything that is applicable, because they do not want to be held responsible.
- How does a company create a good orientation and training plan?
- What are the benefits from a good orientation and training program?

According to the National Research Bureau, “the one thing a company cannot afford is a failed orientation.” There are two orientation failures – one is where the orientation takes more time and effort to accomplish what needs to be done and the second is an orientation that does not give the new employee the ability to adapt to a unique environment.

Failed orientations and training end up costing the company time, money, increased risk, and the employee may end up looking for another company to work for (National Research Bureau and ATS).

Some of the areas that the new employee needs to know from orientation

There must be certain basic elements in the new employee orientation to not only make the new employee feel welcome, but also make the orientation productive. They are as follows:

- Benefits.
- The vision, mission, and goals of the company.
- Rules, forms, and regulations.
- Sexual harassment guidelines.
- Employee manuals and procedures reviewed and signed.
- Understanding of their new work environment.
- Introduction to staff.
- Human resource policies.



- Sign important documents for compliance.
- Set a tone for open communication.

What does a typical new employee orientation look like?

A typical new employee orientation should have the following areas (Gordon Welty, ATS, and Chartered Management Institute):

- An official welcome from an organizational officer.
- An outlined mission, culture, vision, and goals of the organization.
- Documents, forms, and regulations that the employee needs to read, understand, and sign.
- Workplace expectations presentation.
- History, organizational structure, and culture presentation company outline.
- Employee expectations.
- Introduction to staff.
- Integration into the work environment as soon as possible.
- Presentation of employee evaluations, employee performance measurements, incentives, and advancement potential.
- Human Resource guidelines, such as company policies, benefits, confidential agreement, Standard Operating Procedures, and other pertinent company criteria.
- Safety program and regulatory elements.
- How to become productive and motivated.
- Become more aware of the job knowledge and skills needed as it relates to their responsibilities.

The reality of most new employee organizations

Most organizations new employee orientation and training are terrible. They are either boring, non-existent, not organized, not supported by leadership and management, and/or do not outline what the company is about and how the new employee will fit in. Employee orientations need to be helpful, productive, organized, and an event that new employees appreciate (ATS).

What can an organization do to improve their new employee orientation and training program?

Liz Ryan outlines the purpose of a company's new employee orientation best from her experience and what she learned from her graduate school professor. She states that the new employee orientation should have the following outcomes for the new employee:



- **Utilize ways to reduce their uncertainty** – introduce them to others in the organization and show them the facility.
- **Start with the basics** – tell them who the orientation leader is, tell them the story of how the company started and how it is where it is at, take them to where they will be working, and anything else that will help them feel more at ease.
- **Spend some one-on-one time with each person** – allot thirty to sixty minutes during the orientation to be with the new employee so that they do not feel like it is cattle call in the new orientation.
- **Clarify their needs** – spend time through the orientation addressing questions, ensure that answers are provided, and most importantly, help them to see that your team and the organization is the place that they can enjoy, grow with, and excel in.
- **Ask questions** – ask each person what was good and what was not good and then about the new employee orientation and make the necessary changes to improve the program.
- **Focus on the new employee's arrival the first day** – the new employee orientation should be inviting, an experience to appreciate, and not disorient, but orient the new employee.

What are the specific elements of a good employee orientation and training program?

A good program does not end with the new employee being oriented at the start of their hire; it continues with a processed format. In fact, it starts before the employee is interviewed and hired. This orientation and training cycle are best outlined by Gordon Welty with the following twelve elements:

- Benefit entitlements.
- Coaching and discipline.
- Hiring.
- New employee orientation.
- Performance review.
- Position Advertised.
- Probation.
- Promotion.
- Recruitment.
- Selection.
- Separation.
- Training and development.



New employee orientation is just an introduction to ORIENT the new employee to the organization. Then, the orientation process continues, because it takes people a while to adapt to new places and environments. With that in mind, Kaye Loraine does an excellent job outlining how to help new employees in the PROCESS to ORIENT them. She calls her process “1-2-3”. 1-2-3 entails the following:

- **Demonstrate the procedure.** Show the new employee how the work is to be done, explaining as you go. Never put the employee down in any way – always provide constructive criticism that allows for their growth.
- **The second step is to have a return demonstration.** Be kind and supportive during this step and do not pressure or stress the orientee. Provide support and encouraging statements like "I know you can do it" and "You're doing so well."
- **Step one might have to be done over,** because a person does not learn a new procedure until they do it personally.
- **Answer any questions with a supportive attitude.** This stage goes on as long as needed. Follow up with the new orientee every once in awhile to see how they are doing.
- **Spend some time here and there with the employee** after they become independent until you are certain they are where they need to be.
- **Get feedback from the new employee** during all steps of the orientation. How could the orientation be improved? How could it be more efficient.
- **Employee productivity comes from how good or not good the orientation has been.** If the orientation is good, productivity and satisfaction will continue. If it has been poor the lack of teaching or overcoming bad teaching will result in more cost and time to everyone.
- **Provide positive feedback** and it will shorten the entire orientation process from the very first day through the final part. This will bring more comfort and learning will accelerate. The other method will cause insecurity lengthening the orientation.

One of the areas that creates the foundation for a great new orientation program and continued training processes is to include certain criteria that an organization can interview potential employee candidates to see if they fit the value system of the organization. It is easier to look for values in a person than to fit and teach the necessary skills. This is important and true for all employees of an organization, but especially important for those who are on the front lines collaborating with customers (Jacqueline Durett).

New Employee Orientation Benefits

Because many organizations skimp on new employee orientation and training, they are missing several benefits. A well planned and implemented orientation plan has several benefits:



- Organizational productivity.
- Compliance.
- Communicated and understood company expectations.
- Performance criteria outlined.
- Workplace performance summarized.
- Regulations identified and understood.
- Integration of newcomers into the organization quicker.
- Newcomer feels more welcomed.
- The newcomer has a sound impression of the organization.
- Minimize employee turnover.
- Reduce recruitment costs.
- Efficiencies improve.
- Communication is encouraged.
- The organization can continue to grow in the desired direction. (Gordon Welty, ATS, and Chartered Management Institute)

An example of a great orientation program is what Don Mayne, the CEO of Dorothy Lane Markets, in Dayton, OH, does. He personally greets every new employee and has done so for the last 20 years. His desire is to see that each new hire understand their competitors, the company culture, and Dorothy Lane Markets customers. You may ask what the results have been from this personal style of greeting – their margins are twice as high as the industry average (referenced by Gordon Welty).

Another example is the new employee orientation program at David Weekley Homes (DWH). One of the elements of their new employee orientation is the “home construction exercise,” where salesmen build a home out of Legos, the builders sell these homes, and others are stationed as observers. This entire exercise shows these new employees how important communications are to the success of all in the organization. DWH involves executives who participate regularly, continued conference calls for follow up to the initial orientation, each new employee having to read the books “Gung Ho!” and “Turn on the People in Any Organization” by Ken Blanchard, and rewards to those who meet their objectives short and long-term. DWH’s program contributes to the low 28 percent turnover rate, high 40 percent referral rate, and 92 percent of employees say they would recommend the company to a friend (Jacqueline Durett).

Why do many organizations not pursue a great new employee orientation?



The main reason for most organizations not providing any new employee orientation and training and/or a good program is the cost. Many organizations operate under the premise that it is the employee's responsibility to learn how to do the job once they are hired. The unfortunate part is that with some spend, commitment, and a purposed program, the employee will be more productive thus resulting in the company's bottom line (F. John Reh)

Another reason that organizations do not provide good new employee orientation and training is that they do not believe that their employees are the most important asset. This comes from the top down – the leaders and managers to the line staff.

A Good Program is Necessary

For any organization that does not have a first-class new employee orientation, continued orientation process, and long-term training program, it will hurt the entire organization. A well thought out, planned, and implemented program, supported by the organizational leaders and management, means the organization will be healthy, retain the right employees, reduce costs in employee retention, increase efficiencies, create an environment that communicates, help each employee to feel they are appreciated, productivity increase, compliance, recruitment costs decreased, and organization will grow in the direction desired.

What is Your Most Valuable Asset?

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