

FROM ORIENTATION TO ACCULTURATION

What Really Belongs in Your New Employee Orientation

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Death by Orientation

The biggest mistake a company can make when onboarding talented, energetic new employees into an organization is to cram 20 hours of mind-numbing employment information into four dull hours of orientation. And yet, this is exactly what many new hires, arriving enthusiastic and ready to work, must endure during their first week on the job with a new employer.

New employee orientations are dumping grounds for compliance. Every department wants to shove as much information about employment, benefits, diversity, and safety as possible into the time allotted. The result is a jam-packed session of PowerPoints, handouts and talking heads. Instead of reaffirming an employee's decision to take the job, the company unintentionally creates a finger wagging session that leaves new hires weary and dispirited.



Orientations occupy a short but influential time in the new hires' tenure during which they are extremely impressionable. And when people are in unfamiliar territory, they are more alert for any clues that will help them navigate the terrain. In this state of uncertainty, employees are also more likely to jump to conclusions about you as a company. Your orientation plays a significant role in a new hire's developing opinions about you as an employer, so use the time strategically to educate them on what really matters.

What Really Matters in a New Employee Orientation

Understanding and being successful in the culture of an organization is the leading indicator of new hire's speed to performance and retention. Additionally, Millennials rank cementing relationships and learning the corporate culture as the greatest challenge when transitioning into a new job, way ahead of learning the new job responsibilities. In fact, 28% of Millennials report quitting a job because they did not feel connected to the organization. As a result, new employee orientations should focus on building organizational savvy and helping employees connect to and navigate the unique culture of your organization.

This means off-lining administrative matters, to be accessed on an "as needed basis," and instead focusing on corporate history and culture, organizational values, and helping

your newbies establish bonds with their peers and others in the organization. With thoughtful consideration and design, this can be done exceptionally well. Facilitated case studies that highlight cultural norms and practices, videos that tell your story – where you’ve been, where you are, and where you’re going strategically – and people profiles (of customers and employees) are excellent tools to illustrate culture, business practices, and environmental and industry challenges and opportunities. Live tours of worksites and lunch n’ learns with high level executives also go a long way in providing new hires with hands-on learning about your company, business and people, and empower them with the most critical information and resources to succeed in their roles.

Getting Started

If you are stuck on how to revamp your new employee orientation to focus on acculturation, you can start by taking inventory of what you currently have. Ask yourself:

- What is the emotional takeaway of the new hire after your orientation? Are they confused, bored, regretful, or anxious? Or do they feel proud, excited, confident, and secure?
- What is the perceptual takeaway of the new hire after your orientation? Do they perceive your company to be disorganized, with uncaring management? Or do they walk away from the orientation thinking that the company is a well-run machine with smart, caring management?

Once you have these answers you can begin to design a program that is meaningful to your business’ culture and goals. If you are still stretched for ideas on how to transform your orientation, there are plenty of resources and talent available. The bottom line is that successful organizations help new hires navigate organizational culture and build a strong network of relationships with colleagues who can help them become star performers. Don’t miss the opportunity that your new employee orientation can contribute in fulfilling this role.