

HOW TO EVALUATE FOR CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

A major failing of many orientation programs is the lack of follow through. Once the last formal orientation session is complete, new employees are often left to fend for themselves with the assumption that they understand everything presented. To ensure ongoing success of both the new employee and the overall orientation program, **continuous review** and **evaluation** must be completed.

EVALUATE EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE AT THE END OF REVIEW PERIOD

A fundamental tenet of performance management is that people succeed best when they have concrete goals and ongoing feedback. New employees need a clear understanding of what is expected of their work, how their work performance will be measured and how well they are meeting expectations. Conducting an evaluation of the new employee at the end of their initial review period (often 60 to 90 days) can provide this insight.

Following are the purposes of new employee performance evaluations.

Probe the new employee for feelings about the job and company

The objectives of the orientation program include promoting loyalty and reducing anxiety. A final orientation meeting is the time to assess how well the objectives are being accomplished.

Answer questions and clarify misconceptions

During the course of the review period, the new employee will be faced with many new and different situations that may give rise to questions or concerns on their part. The follow-up meeting is the time to address those issues. Additionally, if the employee demonstrates a lack of understanding of issues discussed in formal orientation sessions, a follow-up meeting is the time to re-orient them on a topic or schedule a time in the near future.

Determine if the employee is a good fit for the position

During the review period, the new employee should be exposed to most aspects of the job. The follow-up session is the time for the employee and supervisor to assess skills sets and abilities to determine if there is a good match with job requirements. Deficiencies discovered should be evaluated to see if further training and development is needed, or whether alternative job arrangements should be made.

Open communication channels

Meeting with new employees to follow up on needs and concerns demonstrates the organization's concern for their well-being. By doing this, the organization sets the stage for open communication in the future.

Documenting the employee's performance is important. In order to facilitate the orientation follow-up meeting, conduct a **New Employee Performance Evaluation** that focuses on the employee's understanding of job responsibilities, demonstration of required skills, and abilities and plans for future development. (See *Sample New Employee Performance Evaluation*)

EVALUATE THE ORIENTATION PROGRAM'S PERFORMANCE

Feedback from new employees is the best method to determine the effectiveness of the overall orientation program.

The company needs to evaluate:

- How well the program is meeting its objectives?
- What are the areas of concern?
- How can the program be improved?

One effective means of soliciting employees' comments is through a questionnaire that asks them to comment on the orientation program and the organization at large.

In the questionnaire, ask the employees to evaluate the effectiveness of the orientation program including:

- Presentation of information
- Effectiveness of materials utilized
- How well the materials prepared them to perform on the job.

Use the questionnaire properly:

- Give new employees the questionnaire early in the review period to allow them to reflect on the program and prepare comments.
- Share the results with those individuals involved in the orientation program. Stress the confidentiality of the information gathered.
- Reiterate that the information gathered is meant as a constructive feedback.
- Periodically review the data collected to identify common themes in comments that indicate the orientation program needs modification.

Use other tools to assess orientation program's effectiveness:

- **Focus groups** of managers and supervisors that may reveal items for consideration
- **Exit interviews** that may uncover information about employee isolation, alienation or dissatisfaction.

High turnover by recent hires may also indicate an unsuccessful orientation program. In addition, numerous disciplinary actions may indicate that work rules or procedures are not clearly explained.