

HOW TO IMPLEMENT THE ORIENTATION PROGRAM

Once all the materials and information for the orientation program have been gathered, the next step in the development process is determining the order of presentation. As stated earlier, the key to a successful orientation program is:

“Avoid information overload!”

Begin with the most pertinent information and move on to more general information. Keep the program human—allow time for the new employee to meet and greet fellow employees and interact in the work environment. Allow time for the new employee to become comfortable in the work environment before subjecting him or her to the full job demands. Utilize a variety of presentation styles to vary the flow of materials and information.

PREPARE PRIOR TO THE START DATE

Much of the preparation for a new employee must take place prior to his/her date of hire. By ensuring that materials, information and co-workers are ready for the new employee, the orientation program will flow much more smoothly.

Here is what you need to do before the new employee arrives:

- Prepare or update the job description
- Prepare the workstation
 - ⇒ Order supplies and nameplate
 - ⇒ Set up desk, phone and computer
 - ⇒ Gather procedure manuals, technical manuals or reference materials
 - ⇒ Collect inter-office memoranda, correspondence and newsletters from previous three to four weeks
- Notify staff of new hire
 - ⇒ Name
 - ⇒ Position
 - ⇒ Department
 - ⇒ Previous work experience
 - ⇒ Start date
- Assign a peer mentor to assist the new hire throughout the orientation process
- Prepare orientation agenda, schedule meetings and training
- Prepare introductory work assignments
- Contact new employee
 - ⇒ Build relationship
 - ⇒ Set start time for first day and whom to contact upon arrival

- ⇒ Provide parking/commute information
- ⇒ Send “Welcome Kit” including:
 - Welcome Letter to confirm specifics and ensure the future employee of the right choice. The letter should contain:
 - Warm statement of welcome
 - Job title and a brief job description
 - Start date and time
 - Location
 - Name of supervisor
 - Overview of the benefit package
 - Organizational info
 - Forms to complete.

MAKE THE FIRST DAY A GREAT DAY

First impressions count. The first day at a new job should be a memorable one for every employee, and one of the most important ways to accomplish that is by an effective orientation program is effective.

Begin by breaking the ice with the new employee and trying to put him or her at ease by empathizing with their nervousness. Let the new employee know what is expected on the first day and a general timeline for the day. Keep the sessions short—60 to 90 minutes. Allow for alone time so the new employee may explore his/her workstation, files and reference materials.

Notify the receptionist or guard of the new employee’s arrival time. Have the supervisor and manager available to greet the new employee upon arrival. Allow him/her to arrive after the normal office start time to reduce confusion and to allow the staff time to settle in prior to starting the orientation. In addition, let the new employee leave earlier than the normal closing time in order to relieve stress caused by a new commute.

Below is a sample outline of the first day’s proceedings of a new employee orientation program:

- Introductions of supervisor, department manager, co-workers and top executives
- Tour facility
- Review orientation program agenda for the first two to three days
- Review the job description, job objectives and general learning timelines
- Discuss general organizational information like:
 - ⇒ Company history
 - ⇒ Product lines, industry, competitors and customers
 - ⇒ Organizational chart
 - ⇒ Mission statement and philosophy
 - ⇒ Culture
 - ⇒ Hours of work
 - ⇒ Security, ID badges and keys
 - ⇒ Probationary period
- Complete necessary human resources and payroll documents

- Review key tools such as:
 - ⇒ Phone
 - ⇒ Computer system
 - ⇒ E-mail
 - ⇒ Voice mail
 - ⇒ Other technology tools
- Assign first work assignment
- Allow time to become familiar with and organize work station and files
- Take employee out to lunch.

ESTABLISH A PEER MENTORING SYSTEM

As discussed earlier, involving co-workers in the orientation program can help provide the new employee with the key information on the organization's unwritten culture, processes and functions. Beyond having the new employee mingle with co-workers, your organization may want to develop a more formal "Peer Mentoring System."

Peer mentoring systems function by assigning one current employee to each new employee.

The "peer mentor's" role is to:

- Provide a personalized helping hand with the orientation process
- Show the new employee around the department or organization
- Answer questions on how things are done within the company
- Help find items and answers
- Provide a realistic view of the day-to-day life of employees in the company.

Becoming an effective "peer mentor" can be a development opportunity for employees that prepares them for supervisory or management roles. Mentoring requires the ability to think beyond one's own needs and anticipate, as well as respond to, the needs and questions of another employee.

Assigning a mentor to a new employee will help relieve the supervisor. From the new employee's perspective, a "peer mentor" provides a non-supervisory person of whom to ask questions. In addition, a mentor will help put the new employee more at ease.

Finding the right individuals to be mentors is the key to a successful program. While interested, not everyone will make an effective mentor.

Among the qualities desirable in a good "peer mentor" are:

- Positive attitude about self and company
- Well-respected throughout organization
- High degree of personal integrity

- Friendly and outgoing
- Good disciplinary record
- Understands new employee's position and job duties
- Key contact for new employee (member of work group)
- Welcomes opportunity
- Patient and supportive
- Volunteers for the assignment.

Furthermore, remember that the "peer mentor" will need to continue with normal work assignments while assigned to a new employee, so make arrangements ahead of time to accommodate workloads. Provide time for the new employee and "peer mentor" to meet on a routine basis and maintain these meetings throughout the review period.

A mentor may be the first individual to see indications of a new employee's discontent or unhappiness. Mentors need to be trained on what signs to look for and to whom to report their observations.