

IDENTIFY PARTICIPANTS AND THEIR ROLES

Prior to developing program content, the organization needs to determine the **participants** and define their **responsibility in developing, managing and maintaining the orientation process**. In a large company, several departments or functions will be involved. In smaller companies, some of the following roles may be taken on by one individual.

- **HUMAN RESOURCES:** The primary role for coordinating the orientation program is typically played by Human Resources. This includes ensuring the orientation program is conducted, all necessary paperwork is completed and the program's scheduling. In addition, Human Resources is part of the welcoming group and will review organizational information such as policies, work rules and benefits with the new employee. One of the most important functions for Human Resources is to provide training to all other participants on roles, responsibilities and presentation techniques.
- **DIRECT SUPERVISOR:** The primary role of the direct supervisor is sharing information regarding the actual job requirements, performance standards, training and departmental functioning. In addition, direct supervisors often provide organizational, product and industry information, conduct tours and provide insight into the organizational culture.
- **DEPARTMENT MANAGER:** The department manager is an important member of the welcoming group, providing organizational and departmental information in terms of goals and objectives. The department manager can furnish important insight on both inter- and intra-departmental workings.
- **EXECUTIVES:** For an orientation program to be successful, it must have the support and participation from the top management group. An executive can provide information on the company's history, organizational goals and strategies and company culture. Having an executive participate in the orientation program will help make the top management group appear more approachable.
- **OTHER DEPARTMENT HEADS:** Individuals from other departments provide insight into the workings of the organization at large. They help the new employee learn how departmental requirements and functions integrate to provide better service for the company's customers. This information helps the new employee meet internal customer requirements more quickly.
- **CO-WORKERS:** Co-workers provide key information into the organization's unwritten culture, processes and functions. In addition, the new employee may be more at ease asking questions of a peer as opposed to a superior.

CHOOSE PARTICIPANTS

When choosing the individuals to participate in the orientation program:

- Select those who will provide the most understandable, accurate and expert information on a topic
- Recruit employees from several functional areas to expose the new employee to all areas of the organization and help him/her quickly adapt to the new environment
- Thoroughly train all participants in assigned roles

ASSIGN RESPONSIBILITY OF COMPLETING EACH STEP BELOW TO ONE OF THE PARTICIPANTS WHO WILL:

- Ensure that orientation is completed for each new employee
- Maintain and update orientation documents and materials
- Maintain completed checklists, sign-off sheets and performance evaluations following orientation completion
- Schedule new employees for orientation with each participant
- Review orientation evaluations and ensure that necessary revisions are made

DEVELOP AN EFFECTIVE ORIENTATION SCHEDULE

The length of time needed for a new employee orientation will depend on the:

- Size and complexity of the organization
- Complexity of the new employee's position
- Objectives of the orientation program

One critical principle to follow is to:

“Avoid information overload!”

Forcing a new employee to take in too much information in too short a time will cause increased anxiety, boredom and selective listening on the employee's part. As a general rule, an orientation program that is only one day in length is likely to result in information overload.

The best orientation program:

- Spreads delivery of information over a longer period of time, such as one month.
- Schedules the most relevant information first
- Schedules the more general topics after the critical topics
- Schedules follow-up sessions to ensure that questions have been answered
- Monitors the new employee's progress in adapting to his or her new position and company culture
- Builds in flexibility to accommodate with differing complexity levels across job groups