

Labor: Developing formal orientation programs for new employees

Orientation programs help to maximize employees' commitment to the company.

By Jason Tremblay

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To the extent you believe there is any relationship between an employee's commitment to the company and the company's performance, a new employee orientation program is an excellent first step in maximizing that correlation and getting the most from your employees.

Generally, and particularly in this competitive work environment, many employers feel that they do not have time to properly orientate new employees. And, if they do have the time, they feel as if the costs of such a program are outweighed by the possible benefits.

However, this sends a bad message to the employee from day one. An orientation program can communicate to new employees the values, beliefs, culture and history of the company, all of which can foster the desire for new employees to be committed to the company and its operations.

In almost every case, new employees know very little about the company and probably know next to nothing about the company's history or its key accomplishments. They are not familiar with their coworkers, supervisors, job responsibilities, expectations or other issues that may be important to the company. There will never be a better opportunity to shape impressions and expectations upon an employee than at the beginning of their employment. And, the fact that you take the time to inform the new employee about the company sends an important message to the new employee that they are important, which is never a bad message to convey.

Rest assured, a new employee will receive an orientation, whether the company provides one or not. If the company does not provide one, a disgruntled employee who has a bad attitude and does not think favorably of the company may provide his or her own orientation to the new employee littered with misinformation and bad advice. This should be avoided at all costs and can be a one-way ticket to hiring a very unproductive and non-committed employee.

In order to make an orientation more productive, you should provide the new employee with, among other things, an explanation of the company's expectations, policies, opportunities for advancement, introduction of coworkers and to the operations within and outside a new employee's specific department. It is strongly recommended that new employees be introduced not only to their fellow coworkers, but also to supervisors and managers so that they feel that they are being welcomed into the company. It also is advisable to provide the employee with a mentor or advisor to assist their transition.

Additionally, the orientation is a good time to stress the importance of safety at the company. Obviously, it is in the company's interest that all employees work in a safe environment. Therefore, a message of safety is always a good message to send to new employees and communicates that the company cares about them.

Orientation programs can also be expanded to include existing employees. It is never a bad idea to inform all employees of the company's major accomplishments and goals. Not only does it instill an element of pride within the workforce, it also illustrates to the employees that the company thinks that they are important and an integral part of the company's success.

About the Author



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