

***TURNING GOOD CATCHES  
INTO KEEPERS***

by  
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*A well-designed orientation program will help you keep  
and get the most from your new employee.*

With unemployment at a 24 year low, there is more work to do than there are people to do it. Companies are competing more aggressively than ever for a shrinking pool of scarce talent. Unfortunately, many employers aren't getting the most from these high performers once they finally land them. As a result, their new hires are at high risk of leaving and going to work for the competition.

We've all been there and know how it feels. New hires are often given little more than a desk, a file cabinet and a stack of materials to read. What little training they get consists of a one-or two-day orientation program which fails to develop their skills and to get them fully involved. New hires flounder around and soon lose their zeal. The outcome is predictable, on average one out of three new hires fail during the first year of employment. The cost to the company is prohibitive and the impact of job failure on the new employee can be devastating. In today's job market, talented people are no longer willing to accept inadequate and haphazard development. Smart applicants look for employers who consider their growth and success to be a top priority. They ask detailed questions during the interview about the company's training process and how they will be recognized for their accomplishments.

For their part, the new hires are eager to excel, to make a contribution, to begin their careers – just what you want. A well-planned orientation should provide them with what you both want – a structured process for getting them the tools they need to become productive as quickly as their talents and motivation will permit. It will help make sure that those good catches become keepers.

Do your planning before you go recruiting. The hallmark of a successful orientation program is advanced planning. Don't begin recruiting until you've put a well-thought-out orientation program on paper and everybody knows what to do and how to do it when the new employee arrives. Put yourself in the new employee's place. What would you want if you were just starting a new job with your company? High caliber applicants consistently want the same thing: a career opportunity where they are challenged to grow and are recognized for their achievements. If they are not looking for those things, don't hire them! A high quality written development program is a powerful recruiting tool. It is a strong selling point for your company when you can show a job applicant a well-designed orientation program. It lets them know that you have a plan for their success.

The orientation program should look ahead about one year. Clearly describe the desired objectives for the new employee and the steps for getting there. New employees need to

feel immediately included and valued by the organization. Along with technical skills, it is equally important to provide for assimilation into the organization - - the people and the culture. Teach the new employee how things get done and how people succeed in the organization. It's different in each organization.

Orientation should address several key questions. Who will be responsible for each step? What resources are needed for each step of the training? How will progress be measured? How will performance feedback be provided? How will performance problems be dealt with?

Be sure to train your trainers. This is where a lot of good intention go astray. Anyone who will be involved in coaching the new employee should understand the orientation program and have adequate skills and discipline to guide the new employee through the process. It will take focus and a great deal of patience to do it well.

First impressions are lasting impressions. Attitudes are formed in the first several weeks on the job and do not change easily, whether positive or negative. After the hard work of selection is over, don't let the nurturing of that new talent get lost in the rush of everyday concerns. People know when their growth and success are not their new company's priority.

### ***GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR NEW EMPLOYEE ORIENTATION***

1. New hires are at high risk of leaving and going to work for the competition.
2. First impressions are lasting impressions and once formed, attitudes do not change easily, whether positive or negative.
3. A well-planned orientation should provide what you both want.
4. The hallmark of a successful orientation program is advance planning.
5. The design of an orientation program should look ahead about one year.
6. Train the trainers.
7. Smart applicants look for employers who consider their growth and success to be a top priority.
8. A high quality written orientation program is a powerful recruiting and retention too.

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