

# Orientation

## Getting New Hires Off on the Right Track

The following Fact Sheets are available on line at [www.aofp.ca](http://www.aofp.ca):

1. Becoming an Employer of Choice
2. Employee Turnover
3. Using the Turnover Calculator
4. Fostering Employee Commitment
5. Keeping your Good Employees
6. Employee Engagement
7. Essential Skills
8. Workforce Diversity
9. Managing a Family Business
10. Rewards
11. Recruiting Foreign Workers
12. Orientation
13. Employee Empowerment
14. Introducing Technology
15. Effective Appraisals

### How can this Fact Sheet help me?

Investing the necessary time and resources into employee orientation programs can yield significant benefits for your organization. This fact sheet will help you understand what is needed for a successful orientation program.

### Challenges and Opportunities

The orientation process is a critical stage in the life of an employee and employer. This is when employees learn “how things are done around here” and acquire essential information for performing their jobs. It is also a time for employees to meet key people and to adopt the values of the organization and their work group.

Effective orientation helps new employees integrate into the organization, inspires confidence and motivation, and reduces worker stress. It can also help the employer and employee determine if the relationship will work in the long-term. Finally, orientation can help the employee become engaged in their work and committed to the organization. Unfortunately, few organizations invest the necessary time and resources into employee orientation programs to realize these benefits.

## Case Study

**Elmira Poultry Inc.** invested in the development of a one-hour orientation video that is used for both new customers and new employees. It focuses on the company's values, culture, and health and safety practices. All new workers, including temporary workers, are required to watch it and to successfully complete a quiz.

## Solutions

Plan your orientation program in stages so that material can be readily absorbed and retained by the employee. The following components are recommended:

**Stage 1.** Have a formal orientation program in place for the employee's first few days or weeks.

- Ensure the new employee feels welcome (have someone meet the employee in the lobby on their first day, post a welcome sign).
- Provide an overview of the organization's vision and goals verbally and in writing.
- Provide an employee handbook and a tour of the organization's facilities.

**Stage 2.** Provide an overview of key organizational policies and expectations (e.g., payroll, benefits, health & safety).

- Give employees an opportunity to ask any questions and to clarify expectations.
- Introduce the employee to key people, both within and outside the workgroup (e.g., supervisor, co-workers).
- Explain job procedures, duties, and responsibilities and performance criteria, as well as any training to be received.
- Explain how the employee's job and department supports the achievement of the organization's objectives.
- Provide a uniform, essential tools and equipment in good working condition and ensure that the employee's work space is prepared.
- Provide samples of the company's products.
- If the employee is from outside the immediate geographic area, provide an orientation to the community as well as the organization.

**Stage 3.** Establish a mentor or buddy system to provide support for the new employee during the first few months.

**Stage 4.** Establish ongoing and regular two-way communication with the employee.

- Ensure that the supervisor provides the employee with feedback to let them know how they are progressing.
- Establish a mechanism to allow the employee to give feedback to the organization.
- Follow-up with the new employee at monthly intervals during the probationary period.

**Stage 5.** Foster positive relationships and a sense of belonging.

- Organize periodic social events, encourage new employees to attend, and publicly introduce them.

## Case Study

**Carriere Foods Inc.** provides their orientation package in Punjabi and is considering translating it into additional languages. The company also often uses bilingual employees as translators to help new workers understand their orientation on their first day.

## Orientation Checklist

### 1. Information regarding the organization:

- History, structure, products and services.
- Mission and values.
- Key customers, customer profiles, and customer service philosophy.
- Policies and expectations.
- Names of and introductions to key people.
- Employee handbook or orientation video.
- Tour of the facility.

### 2. Information regarding the job:

- Job location.
- Job description, including tasks and performance standards.
- Hours of work and scheduled breaks.
- Salary/wage information.
- Benefits and rewards.
- Probationary period.
- How the employee's job and department supports the achievement of the organization's objectives.
- Safety requirements.
- Operating procedures.
- Uniform, tools and equipment.
- Information on where to go for help.

### 3. General information:

- Employee records.
- Pay schedule.
- Pay scales.
- Vacations and holidays.
- Sick leave and absentee policy.
- Training and development opportunities.
- Promotion policies and opportunities.
- Disciplinary policy.
- Information about the community.
- Opportunity to ask questions.

## References

- Alberta Human Resources and Employment. (2003). Finders and keepers: Recruitment and retention strategies.
- Allen, T., McManus, S., & Russell, J. (1999). Newcomer socialization and stress: Formal peer relationships as a source of support. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 54, 453–470.
- Dessler, G., Cole, N.D., & Sutherland, V.L. (2005). *Human resources management in Canada* (9th ed). Toronto: Pearson Prentice Hall.
- Klein, H. J., & Weaver, N. (2000). The effectiveness of an organizational-level orientation training program in the socialization of new hires. *Personnel Psychology*, 53, 47-66.

### The following Fact Sheets may be helpful:

11. Recruiting Foreign Workers

13. Employee Empowerment

These resources are available on line at [www.aofp.ca](http://www.aofp.ca) under Workforce Development.

## How do I start?

1. Look at your current approach to orientation and identify areas for improvement.

Ask recently hired employees about their experiences and suggestions. To what extent were they made to feel welcome? Did they receive the information and tools they needed? What might have helped them get on the right track more quickly? What questions do they still have? Are you missing any orientation steps? If so, consider implementing them.

2. If you have an employee handbook, review it to determine if all essential components are in place. Should it be published in more than one language? If you don't have an employee handbook, consider the advantages of developing one.

### ADVANTAGES OF BEST PRACTICES

- More qualified job applicants
- Better trained and informed employees
- Better health and safety practices
- More engaged and productive employees
- Fewer line interruptions
- Fewer product quality problems
- Easier implementation of new technology
- Lower absenteeism and employee turnover
- Higher sales per employee
- Higher market value to book value