

7.22: Employee Orientation and Training

Learning Outcomes

- Describe employee orientation approaches.
- Describe employee training approaches.

Before any employee can get to work, he or she must go through a process of onboarding that includes:

- Filling out legal and financial paperwork
- Learning about and signing up for eligible benefits
- Reviewing the employee handbook and policies
- Receiving any necessary training in job-specific technology, procedures, etc.

Sometimes, corporations believe that they can hand new employees a stack of paperwork and assume they will fill it out correctly and figure out how to fit in with their new employer. This is rarely a good idea, as every employer has its own systems and expectations—and being the “new kid on the block” is tough enough without adding a laundry list of do-it-yourself tasks.

Why Orientation and Training Are Important

When a new employee arrives, he or she is likely to have preconceived ideas about what is expected of him or her, and are likely to be anxious about making a good impression. Often, those ideas are based either on prior experience, on word of mouth, or on information the new employees have gathered through the media. None of these sources will help a new employee if his expectations don't match reality.

Orientation and training can serve many positive purposes. For example, they can:

1. Lower costs by helping the employee get up to speed quickly and avoid time- or money-consuming mistakes.
2. Help the employee to gain confidence and feel valued because he or she knows the company's system, people, and expectations.
3. Improve the employee's performance by helping him or her to build skills and relationships quickly.

Employees who know what they're doing can save their employer a huge amount of money. Almost half of Walmart's workers turn over each year,^[1] which could be why it often scores poorly for customer service. Walmart said inept shelf-stocking cost \$3 billion in 2014.^[2] Costco pays more to have happier staff who quit less and build up skills. Margins are higher as a result.^[3]

Even an employee who makes \$8 per hour can end up costing a company around \$3,500 in turnover costs, both direct and indirect.^[4] Some studies have put the costs of employee turnover in certain industries even higher—one report from Cornell University's Center for Hospitality Research estimated an overall turnover rate of 120 percent in the quick-service restaurant industry, with turnover costs averaging \$5,864 per employee.^[5]

How Human Resources Onboards Employees

Human resources professionals are usually in charge of ensuring new hires have completed all necessary paperwork, signed up for benefits, reviewed safety and ethics policies, and received a comprehensive tour of the workplace. Before getting into the details of the workplace, most HR managers will ensure that employees have filled out and signed paperwork that proves their eligibility to work in the United States, as well as tax forms and other important documents.

Together with the hiring manager, HR may also set up and implement training, introduce new hires to key staff, provide keys or codes, and explain (for example) how mail is sent and received, when and where to get lunch, where to park, and whether it's okay to use social media during work hours.

How Managers Welcome New Employees

Even though HR will (or should) walk a new employee through necessary paperwork and training, it's important for managers to make their new hires feel welcome. It's equally important to help new hires acclimate to a new work setting. To do this, many managers will:

- Send a welcome letter to their new hire before they arrive, providing information about what to expect on their first day at the new job. Sometimes this letter will include suggestions for appropriate attire, parking information, and other key details.

- Meet with HR to discuss exactly when and how the new hire will learn about company policies and benefits.
- Meet with team members to set up the new hire's work space, passwords, telephones, and access to necessary systems.
- Assign one individual to serve as the new employee's mentor or buddy (usually someone who knows the ropes and can provide answers to most reasonable questions).
- Plan for the new hire's schedule and initial set of tasks, as well as a process for helping the new hire to ask questions, review procedures, and ensure that he or she is off to a good start.
- Plan for any training the new hire will need (in collaboration with HR and department members).
- Set up a lunch with the new hire and other members of the working team as a way to get to know one another, answer questions, and make personal connections.

? Practice Question

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Options for New Employee Training



Training can take many forms, depending upon the type of work for which the employee is hired and the employee's existing level of skill. Training may be more critical if the company uses proprietary software or systems that don't exist in other locations or if procedures or policies are unusual, involve industrial or official secrets, require specialized knowledge, or are legally complex.

Some types of training techniques include:

- Self-paced online training in areas such as software skills, safety procedures, or other technical skills.
- Hands-on training in the use of equipment or machines ranging from copiers to heavy equipment.
- Leader-led group training programs to teach "soft" skills such as coaching, team-building, customer service, client management.
- Formal business courses through outside vendors.
- "Shadowing" or following a skilled employee to observe and learn skills and procedures.
- Mentoring or one-on-one meetings to review work, discuss options, and provide feedback.

The key to successful training is to ensure that the employee truly understands and can use the information provided. Evaluation can involve formal testing or informal conversations. It's important to let the new hire know that questions are welcome—and there is no such thing as a "dumb question."

? PRactice Questions

<https://assessments.lumenlearning.co...essments/12221>

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1. Rachel Abrams, "Walmart Worker Advocates Express Skepticism Over Raises," June 3, 2016, accessed July 27, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/06/04/business/walmart-worker-advocates-express-skepticism-over-raises.html>. ↵
2. "Serfs up," The Economist, March 26, 2015, accessed July 27, 2017, <https://www.economist.com/news/business/21647320-american-firms-are-having-get-back-habit-granting-pay-rises-serfs-up>. ↵
3. Wayne F. Cascio, "The High Cost of Low Wages," December 2006, accessed July 27, 2017, <https://hbr.org/2006/12/the-high-cost-of-low-wages>. ↵

4. The Build Network, “Try Fixing the Problem Before Replacing It,” Inc., Feb. 27, 2014, accessed July 27, 2017, <https://www.inc.com/the-build-network/turnover-costs.html>. ↵
5. J. B. Tracey and Timothy R. Hinkin. “The Costs of Employee Turnover: When the Devil Is in the Details.” Cornell Hospitality Report 6, no. 15 (2006), 6, 8. <http://scholarship.sha.cornell.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1148&context=chrpubs>. ↵

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