

Getting employees through the first 90 days

New employees start making the decision to leave an organisation on the day they join!

A bold statement, but the evaluation of a new job and a new company will start during the recruitment process, and enters a critical period in the first 90 days. This is the time when new people are forming their views about the job, their colleagues and the new business they have joined. People have expectations that were created before joining, and those expectations can be met, exceeded or not met in the early days of employment – it is up to the employer!

From the moment the new employee walks through the door on day one, you have the opportunity to demonstrate that they are important to your business, but you need to be prepared. Getting an induction program in place is a significant task and must be given priority. The line manager must be accountable for the program and making sure it is followed through.

Here are a number of simple suggestions for an effective induction program:

- Make sure everyone knows a new person is joining the business. Have an announcement circulated before the commencement date that gives details about the person's background and the role they will be performing – the title, reporting relationship and other information that is needed.
- It is critical they are welcomed on arrival. The reception staff should know who they are and be expecting them. The line manager must take the time to meet with the new employee and start the induction program. Make sure they meet their close work colleagues during the first hour on site.
- The work area for the new employee must be ready. It sounds simple but it is critical in creating a positive first impression. The work space should be set up in advance – the phone, computer and other equipment should be ready. Make sure that it looks like it is ready for a new employee – remove all of the previous employee's photos, notes pinned to the wall and other signs of someone else's space.
- Safety, safety, safety. A non negotiable for the first morning in a new job is to understand the safety procedures and demonstrate the organisation is serious about safety. Schedule the induction session and make sure it happens.
- Take the time on the first day to train the new employee on the simple things that everyone else takes for granted. The phone system, email, software applications, and photocopying are usually different in every organisation. It is very frustrating for a new employee to have to ask for help every time they want to do simple tasks.

- Spend some time on a walk around the workplace – this gives you the chance to show the new employee the location of key facilities and to understand the basic layout, but also a chance to introduce them to people that you meet on the walk through. Having made sure everyone knows the person will be joining the company through good internal communication, the people they meet will be able to acknowledge them and welcome to the business.
- Making sure the basics are right is important, but you also need to focus on the job issues. New employees want to get involved in the new role as early as possible. Making a contribution to the new organisation in early days is critical. Structure the induction program so that they have some time in the first week doing their new job.
- Arrange meetings with key people the new employee needs to meet. This needs to be done before they join and the program reviewed with the new employee in the first few days. They need to understand who they will meet and the role they have in the organisation. It is also critical the people they will meet are briefed about why they will meet the new person and what they should cover in the meeting. Make the time as productive as possible.
- Spend time in the first month giving the new employee a chance to learn about the business. This means time in various sections seeing what is done, meeting staff, meeting customers, reading documents, and whatever is needed to gain the knowledge. If this is not done in the early part of the program, it will not happen. As the new employee starts to increase their workload, they will never find the time to undertake this learning. Employees who have a fundamental understanding of the business they join will add more value.
- The most critical activity in the first 90 days is to agree objectives for the first year. This period of time gives everyone the opportunity to negotiate goals, measure and deliverables. Knowing what is expected in the first year is fundamental to success, and the first 90 days is the time to establish those initial goals.
- Establish formal review meetings as part of the induction program. Reviews at 30 days, 60 days and 90 days should be conducted to ensure the induction goals have been met and that the work program is well underway. The review meetings are an opportunity to calibrate activity and learning and to further demonstrate the organisation wants success for the new employee.

While most induction programs will focus on new employees, it is important to ensure staff moving into different roles, departments or divisions of a business are also treated as new staff. While a lot of the fundamentals will have been covered, don't underestimate the need for a tailored program to ensure the person transfers successfully.

Getting the right people in the right roles for a business is critical. It is a difficult process and a significant investment. Capitalise on the investment and get the first 90 days right. Delight the new employee and make sure they tell everyone they know how well they have settled into their new role. Getting the first 90 days right will be the foundation for success for the person and the organisation.