

# Starting Off Right with New Hires



BY GARRETT J. SULLIVAN

### **Hire slowly, fire quickly.**

If you've been in business for any length of time, you know the wisdom of this axiom. Why then do so few organizations follow this common sense? I believe it's because they rush through orientation and do not properly "onboard" their new hires. With the cost of employee turnover at 150 percent of the annual salary, it makes sense to invest on the front end rather than to scramble on the back end.

Onboarding begins and ends with orientation. I've always believed the best orientations are given—at least in some part—by the head of the organization. It sends the message that new employees are valued enough to get the attention of the company's top employee.

In 2013, I suggest creating or honing your new employee orientation. Additionally, I suggest you mirror and complement the training with a new employee workbook as outlined below.

**Chapter 1 – The Basics:** This explains the company's history, mission statement, core values, purpose and products or services.

**Chapter 2 – What to Expect from Us:** You'll want to describe your company's work environment, and detail why your organization is such a great place to work. Underscore the many benefits—both tangible and intangible—that you provide. Introduce new employees to their mentors and non-supervisors who will help orientate them on the job for the next 90 days. Ensure their mentor provides status reports to their supervisor at least bimonthly.

**Chapter 3 – What We Expect from You:** Work standards and employment goals are critical.

Underscore that employees can truly soar. This will generate a sense of belonging with your company—and caring about the overall success of it—rather than simply being employed by it. As part of this chapter, include a personal and professional development plan, described below.

**Chapter 4 – Own Your New Job as Fast as You Can:** Explain how their jobs were done in the past and how they, as new employees, can improve upon them. Ask them how they can bring the job to a whole new level.

**Chapter 5 – Reach Out:** Encourage new employees to work hard, but to also get out and say hello to the rest of the team. Invite them to meet your customers and suppliers. After all, they need to know the extended "family," not just the people in their own area.

**Chapter 6 – Take Inventory:** Invite new employees to view their job as a fresh start. Allow them to make the most of this new chapter in their lives by honestly reviewing their personal and professional strengths and weaknesses.

**Chapter 7 – Join the Team:** This is the time for you—the leader—to demonstrate how you are part of their team. Explain how the various areas within the company work with one another. Ensure new employees are immediately added to all appropriate distribution lists so they're "in the know." Explain when and how you will be available to them.

**Chapter 8 – Prove Yourself:** Remind your newest team members that they'll likely be asked to perform tasks that are below their level of expertise. Encourage them to perform these tasks cheerfully,

knowing their jobs will increase in complexity as they prove themselves.

Proper onboarding pays long-term dividends. When you include an exercise to plot their personal and professional development, it pays even further. In today's workplace, goal setting is especially meaningful to Gen X and Gen Y.

**Onboarding to Launch Employee Goals:** One of the most valuable exercises is to ask your new employees to envision themselves in the next one, three and five years. Ask them to ponder and define both professional and personal/life goals. They don't need to share their personal goals; but if they choose to, you will play a role in getting them closer to their life dreams.

After this onboarding process, your new employees will enter the workforce with vision and enthusiasm. Always regroup in two or three months to ensure the information—and their mentor—have stuck with them. This is also a time to gather feedback and revisit personal and professional goals.

If you take these steps, you will vastly decrease job turnover and quickly move new hires to highly productive team members. **BI**

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