

## module two: staff development

### Finding and Keeping Good Staff

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#### article:

#### **Onboarding**

Put everyone on the same page.

by Laurie Guest

Onboarding is the current buzzword for orientation. No matter what you name it, please tell me you do it. Why? Onboarding is a must because the success of a new applicant depends on not only learning how to do the tasks required in a job but also learning all the rules and regulations that go into the job. After all, many of these might be rules you haven't thought to tell without an existing onboarding process. Onboarding contains knowledge, skills, and behaviors that lead to long-term success and proper understanding of the culture of your organization. Something so important cannot be left to chance.

#### **How Onboarding Works**

Begin with a structured plan for all new hires to follow during the first few days or even weeks on the job, depending upon the depth of the position and the size of your company. Oddly enough, it may even begin before their first day of work. When the job offer is given, set the expectation of the onboarding process so the applicant knows what to expect.

In our organization, we started a buddy system where veteran staff people volunteered to take a new hire to lunch the first day or at least sit with them in the lunch room. This may sound like junior high, but not knowing how to fit in the first day is a moment of stress no matter what your age. Informing the new hire in advance who his or her veteran will be on the first day is a simple way to introduce the social aspect of the job.

Make sure that the system you put in place for big picture exposure is the same for all applicants. I know of a hospital that didn't take the time for big picture explanation for certain positions, like housekeeping and dietary. This proved to be a mistake for them. It indicated the gap between departments and how they were respected within the system. Include everyone in the same orientation until it is time for a job-specific task training.

Also, be sure to include indoctrination into the appropriate culture on day one. What are the expectations of proper behavior? Is it in writing? How is it taught? What are the consequences of noncompliance? Why is the culture important to the success of the company? Finally, what words do you use to show the new hires how important they are to the organization regardless of position?

#### **Why put it in writing?**

Prepare a written policy and procedure guidebook for new hires to review and keep. It's a good idea to have a signature page at the back for the new hire to sign and return to you after he or she has read and understands the guidelines. In our organization, we had a policy manual that was the same for every employee that included mostly human resource information: time-off policies, dress code, and disciplinary matters. In addition, each department had a policy and procedure manual specific to that team.

Be purposeful about the documents you prepare. If you treat the policies with the respect they deserve, you demonstrate to the new hire that we take the rules seriously. If you don't do that, too much is left to chance. Consequently, learning then comes by making mistakes. Take the unspoken rule in our medical facility: No microwave popcorn allowed. Our doctor felt that a medical facility should not smell like a movie theater, and everyone who worked there knew we were not allowed to make popcorn. However, no one thought to tell the new people this. Sure enough, within the first few weeks, a new staff member ultimately ended up making popcorn for lunch, and every employee came in going, "Who's making popcorn? Who's making popcorn?" As you can imagine, the new employee felt foolish.

Eventually, we added that rule to the onboarding information sheet. Though that sounds like a silly example, put yourself in the shoes of the new employee. Even little things can make a big impact on the success of the first quarter on the job.