

# Employee Orientation / Onboarding

By Terry Keffer



You've made an excellent hire and are excited about the possibilities your new "A Player" will bring to the team. So, what's next? Studies show that you'd better get it right *and* that you don't have much time to do it. Did you know that many new employees make up their mind within *one week* into their tenure as to whether they're going to begin another job search? New hire expectations vary greatly, and those differences are often generational.

Consider your own experiences over the years. I can recall one of my former employers who did very little to prepare for my arrival. I ordered my own office furniture, "stole" the majority of my office supplies from other departments and, over time, figured out many of the key aspects of my job as I received very little formal training. But that was 25 years ago. While I personally liked the flexibility, freedom, and opportunity this environment provided, it would have driven a lot of new hires crazy. In today's environment, new hires expect a great deal more from those leading teams and organizations and we need to be prepared if we want to build a strong team.

We've all heard that today's workforce is fluid, but the study I referenced above is far from the only one pointing to this fact. Twenty percent of new hires leave within their first 45 days and about fifty percent leave within 18 months. Only twelve percent of respondents to a 2017 Gallup "State of the American Workplace" survey said they "strongly agree" that their organization does a great job onboarding new employees. A solid onboarding process is critical; making your new team member feel welcome from their first moment in your office goes a very long way in building employee engagement and retention.

So, what does an effective onboarding process look like? Onboarding is a proactive process that focuses on fully acclimating and integrating the new hire into the organization. Onboarding seeks to align the needs of the employee and the organization, with the ultimate goal of having the employee perform at his or her best. Most onboarding processes last from one week to six months, though some go even longer. This often depends on the position being filled and available company resources.

Orientation is a small part of the overall onboarding process, beginning the first day of employment. A thorough orientation checklist can be lengthy. Examples of things that you, as an employer, can do to create an effective new-hire orientation include:

- Have the new hire complete compliance paperwork **before** their start date. This frees up their first day, allowing the new team member to spend time with the team and begin to immerse themselves in the culture of your organization.
- Unless the new hire will be ordering their own furniture as I did, have the office or workspace properly furnished, even applying a fresh coat of paint if necessary. (And, if they will be ordering their own furniture, I'd suggest letting them know prior to their arrival.)
- Have needed office supplies on hand.
- Make sure computer and phone access is granted.
- Schedule ample time to have new hire meet with representatives from support services, such as Safety, Human Resources, Accounting, IT, etc.
- Give a tour of the office or workplace, making introductions as appropriate.
- Take the new hire to lunch with other team members.

These tips are the tip of the iceberg; the list of things you, as an employer can do to set your newest team members up for success is long. I would encourage you to give this thought, and most importantly, make sure that your process makes sense for your organization. While nothing can guarantee A Player will become a valued long-term contributor, conducting a thorough orientation and intentional onboarding process can greatly improve your odds of retention success.

**If you have questions or are interested in learning more about effective onboarding techniques, please contact Terry Keffer at [terry@consultkeffer.com](mailto:terry@consultkeffer.com) or call 540-815-3139.**

