



YOUR NEW EMPLOYEE

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Our combined organizations have been blessed to be able to participate in thousands of successful hires, probably close to 200,000. Hardly a week goes by, though, that we don't get a call from a candidate who has recently started a new job. We pick up the phone and hear, "Oh, my gawd! I have made a terrible mistake! This job (place, or people) isn't anything like what I thought. I'm gonna leave!"

Since our average recruiter has been in this profession for more than sixteen years, and some as many as thirty or forty, we're usually able to calm them down and convince them to give the new opportunity the time and effort necessary to fairly judge it. Much of the time, we're successful in getting them to stay at least long enough to make a good judgment about the opportunity. Without our help, we're sure that 90 percent of the scared new employees would promptly walk out the door, never giving the new job a real chance. Part of our expertise is to be prepared for this kind of conversation.

Comments to a new employee within their first hour on the new job often make them feel unwelcome. They hear, "Well, someone forgot to tell the IT department you were coming, so they won't have your computer for a couple of days," or "The HR department forgot to tell the controller you were starting today, so we won't have your paperwork until this afternoon," or "We don't quite have your desk ready, so just sit here and read the policy manual until lunchtime," and "The person who's going to train you is out today and tomorrow." We're absolutely amazed how often this kind of thing happens. "Just read the employee manual or handbook" or "just review the orientation videos" isn't the way to start a good relationship.



WHAT EXPERIENCED HIRING AUTHORITIES DO

Experienced hiring authorities realize that no matter how good the interviewing and hiring process is, there are always some surprises in a new job. They realize that a new employee is downright scared, and despite their enthusiasm and desire for the job, they're still wondering if they made the right decision. Experienced hiring authorities are prepared for this and ensure that the new employee's first 90 to 120 days are intentionally structured and monitored correctly by themselves or others.

The most important thing that a successful hiring authority can do is to simply give the new hire personal attention and the attention of other people. The idea is to be sure that the new hire feels like an important part of the organization. The experienced hiring authority lets the new hire know that they're special and allows them to feel comfortable in asking any question they may have.

MENTORS AND TRAINERS

Assigning a formal or informal mentor to the new employee is crucial to the new employee's success. The best organizations have a formal program for this, but any organization can have an informal mentorship program. The mentor doesn't have to be the person who is actually training the new employee in their job function. In fact, in many cases people who are the best "functional" trainers aren't necessarily the best people to help a new hire personally integrate into a company. They're often very knowledgeable about the tactical aspects of the job, but often impatient or impersonal. They're so wrapped up in doing their job that they don't emanate a "*We're Sure Glad*



You're Here!" feeling to a new employee. The analytical IT guy or gal who shows the new hire how to use the CRM system isn't likely to be a warm personality.

There's usually someone in the department or on the staff of even the smallest firms who are kinesthetic, amiable people who love helping others. Often, a senior administrative person who really knows the ins and outs of the company is best at this. This kind of mentor is responsible for the new hire's personal comfort and understanding of the company.

This kind of mentor is also an excellent source for the hiring authority to talk to about how the new hire is doing in the new job. Should the new hire have any concerns or second guesses, they'll often share them informally with this kind of mentor instead of the hiring authority. This kind of mentor communicates, "This is how we do it here" in both formal and informal policies and procedures.

SHOCKS AND SURPRISES

Unfortunately, in many organizations there are things going on anywhere from uncomfortable to downright toxic. Of course, these kinds of things are never discussed in the interviewing cycle. It's very important for new hires to be introduced to the issues as quickly and carefully as possible. A few years ago, we had a client company in which the husband and wife owners were going through a terribly adversarial, knock-down-drag out divorce. They were using the company as their battleground, and predictably, the company was in turmoil. Of course the situation was never mentioned to our candidate during the hiring process, but after she had been on the job for no more than a day or so she learned about the situation.



Interestingly enough, all of the people in the company had learned how to work around the relatively crazy situation. The husband and wife came and went at different times during the day and the environment was tense. Amazingly, the company survived and actually prospered well beyond its perceived potential once the two owners stepped away from running it. Go figure!

Our candidate, in this situation, was distressed for the first few days after she found out about the acrimonious divorce. Obviously, she was shocked and a little disappointed that she hadn't been told about the situation during the interviewing process. The hiring authority admittedly feared that if the candidate knew about the kind of environment that existed she wouldn't have taken the job. It worked out, but the point is that these kinds of issues need to be explained to a new hire as soon as possible in the right way.

Even if the shocks and surprises aren't as toxic as the example here, most every company has some issues like this. Idiosyncratic personalities like a CFO who thinks he or she knows everything, or a CEO who borders on being an egomaniac, or a company busybody who sticks their nose in everybody's business, aren't uncommon at all. Many organizations tolerate backbiting, negative people because of their functional expertise. These types often latch onto new hires to sow seeds of negativity. Off-the-record discussions about these personalities with a new employee, as well as advice about how everyone deals with them, are in order.

CORE DUMPING

Best hiring authorities avoid core dumping, that is, dumping everything the new employee should or needs to know all in one day, week, or month. A wise hiring authority has a *formal*



schedule to train the new employee one step at a time. And those steps are usually extremely s-l-o-w steps. New hires are already overwhelmed with paperwork and trying to get settled into a position. Being bombarded with everything doesn't help.

A segmented approach, teaching one skill or topic per day over a reasonable period of time, is manageable. A good trainer and an informal mentor should also have the training schedule for the new hire. Even though the hiring authority communicates that his or her door is always open, a new hire will be more likely to ask a trainer or a mentor what might be perceived as mundane, but important questions.

BE PATIENT, BUT NOT TOO PATIENT

Experienced hiring authorities move new hires along as fast as the new hires can tolerate learning. They have a good feel for exactly how fast new hires ought to learn. They know the difference between a strongly engaged, excited, focused new employee who wants to learn as rapidly as possible and an employee who has simply taken a j-o-b.

It's hard to give an exact prescription for the formula. Experienced hiring managers usually know exactly where new hires ought to be in the first two to three weeks, 30 days, 60 days and 90 days. They usually impart those milestones to the new hire by setting the right expectations clearly and precisely in the training program, as well as in conversations. Some people catch on faster than others, but there are some things in the learning process that are foundational for a new hire to comprehend. Experienced hiring authorities know what those are.

Speed in catching on may not be as important as the catching on itself. Patience here may definitely be a virtue.



Patience, however, with the consistent tardiness or absence of a new employee or a great deal of personal distractions at work can't be tolerated. As we mentioned in the chapter on firing folks, the difference between experienced and excellent hiring authorities and the average ones is that they know the difference between what they can be patient with and what they shouldn't.

Experienced hiring authorities have a conceptual time frame that a new hire should be given to learn the basics of their job. The best hiring authorities give clear directions to new hires, especially in the beginning. They make the necessary steps to be successful completely clear to the new hire, as well as what needs to be done to keep their job. If they find themselves reviewing with a new hire too many of the "in order to keep your job" issues instead of the "to really be successful" issues, they're on their guard that this relationship may not last long.

FIRST 90 TO 120 DAYS

The first 90 to 120 days of the new hire's employment are crucial. Many experienced hiring authorities can give a great evaluation of a new hire sooner than that, but 90 to 120 days is crucial. By then, the new employee has communicated their work habits, intelligence, and commitment to the job. Experienced hiring authorities have paid close attention to the new hire during that period of time. They err on the side of caution and careful evaluation during that period of time rather than cutting the new hire too much slack by using the excuse of, "Well, they're new." New hires still need to perform at the level of their competency. In fact, experienced hiring authorities are usually harder on their new hire evaluations in the first



90 to 120 days than they are later. Many experienced hiring authorities have formal face-to-face evaluation meetings with the new hire every 30, 60, 90, and 120 days. These don't have to be long meetings, but they should be direct and to the point. Written evaluations are wonderful. Experienced hiring authorities know that the tone set in the first 120 days of a new hire's employment will set the tone for their future success.