Integrating New Employees to the Workplace

July 13, 2012

by

Training & Organizational Effectiveness
Office of Human Resources
Integrating New Employees to the Workplace

Target Audience: Managers and Supervisors

Learning Outcomes
1. Understand the importance of orienting and developing an integration plan to help the new employees assimilate into the work place over a period of time.
2. Become familiar with a tri-level approach to orienting new employees: institutional, department or unit, and supervisory level.
3. Discover the resources and tools to assist managers and supervisors in the integration process.

Overview

Significant time, energy, and resources are spent on recruiting and selecting faculty and staff to OSU. Once a person is selected, integrating the person into the work place is just as important. How well a faculty or staff member is integrated not only affects how quickly they’ll be able to contribute, but also impacts retention of new employees.

Research indicates that through the first days and month, a new employee makes a mental decision on whether to stay or leave. Subconsciously a new employee is assessing how well the organization meets the expectations believed to be promised during the recruitment phase. This assessment equates to the following continuum:

What did I get myself into?  I know I made the right choice.

Research also suggests that many organizations treat the recruitment and selection process as a separate activity from that which brings the new employee onboard. The ideas in this handbook will emphasize new employee orientation and assimilation as an extension of the hiring process. A number of tools and ideas will be offered so that you can customize what you do as a unit or as a supervisor.

A good place to begin thinking about the orientation process is with you.

Exercise: Reflect on your experience(s) entering a new job. What do you recall that went well and stood out for you that your supervisor, co-workers or the organization did?

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______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

What didn’t go well or what didn’t happen that you wish your supervisor, co-workers or organization would have done?

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
Having reflected on your own experience, make a list of options that you may want to consider as part of an orientation and integration effort within your unit. What have you experienced, seen, or heard from others that represent the potential activities or things that you could do?

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

You now have a beginning point for what to provide to help a new employee.

**Consider: What Employees Want in a Job**

Numerous research studies have been done asking what is important to an employee in a job. While the order and language may vary, most of these studies identify similar lists. The below is a basic set of needs that includes:

- A livable wage with benefits.
- Safety.
- Civility in the workplace.
- Basic training to get started and off on the right track.

Beyond these basics, employees want:

- Competent supervisors.
- To be treated with respect.
- Meaningful work.
- Recognition and appreciation.
- High standards.
- Autonomy to meet and exceed desired outcomes.
- To know how their work contributes to the organization.
- To understand the direction the organization is moving – to be part of a “successful” organization.
- A career track that allows for progression.
- Opportunities for personal and professional development.

**Exercise:** As you consider this list, what additional ideas would you incorporate into an orientation and integration plan for new faculty or staff?

______________________________________________________________________________
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1This list is adapted from Hadden and Catlett, Contented Cows Give Better Milk, 1998.
The Tangible and Intangible Costs of Unsuccessful Integration

The costs of an unsuccessful integration are high. These costs impact the unit and often extend beyond the unit in the form of poor service and the unit’s reputation. When an unsuccessful integration disrupts the unit, it can take years for the group to recover.

The Cost of Turnover

Turnover is expensive. A general and rough equation used to determine replacement cost is 1.5 x salary annualized. The organizational impact can be high. To illustrate, assume an organization of 3500 employees with an average salary of $40,000. Organizational costs at different turnover rates are:

- 10%: 350 employees x $60,000 = $21,000,000
- 5%: 175 employees x $60,000 = $10,500,000
- 1%: 35 employees x $60,000 = $2,100,000

Other direct or indirect costs include:

- Redistributing the workload and lost productivity.
- Added stress and overwhelm.
- Repairing any disrupt created by conflict and misunderstandings.
- Reestablishing a healthy work environment if this has been disrupted.
- The time, energy and resources to conduct a new search.
- The time, energy and resources to train and assimilate a new person.
- The impact on morale.
- How employees view the competency of management.
Three-Tiered Approach to Successful Orientation

Given the unique structure and how things work at OSU, a three-tiered approach has been developed:

1. Programs and support at the institutional level.
2. What the department/unit offers.
3. What the supervisor does.

The first level represents activities that central administration does or that occurs at the institutional level. Examples include benefits, access to policies and procedures, obtaining keys and computer access, just to name a few. It also represents how well the employee understands the “fit” and contributions made to the larger institution. Each unit contributes to the collective whole representing OSU.

The second level is how well the new employee fits in with his/her co-workers and the unit. When the employee successfully integrates, they become part of the unit’s community. When an employee is not accepted, they are an “outsider” and coming to work every day is stressful. The quicker the new employee is accepted and understands how the unit functions, the more productive he or she will be.

Lastly but most importantly is what occurs at the supervisory level. Developing an effective working relationship between the employee and manager/supervisor is critical. Research indicates that managers control up to 75% of the reasons employees leave their jobs. When an effective manager-employee relationship doesn’t occur, it adds a stressor that detracts from focusing on results. In the back or forefront of the employee’s mind is the question, “Where do I stand with respect to my manager/supervisor?” If this question cannot be answered affirmatively, the relationship is at risk.

An effective manager-employee relationship can be established by putting the following concepts into practice:

1. Two-way, straight forward, respectful communication on workplace issues that occur on a regular basis. As part of this, make agreements on how to give and receive feedback.

2. Meaningful and challenging work that clearly contributes to the organization. People want to make a difference.

3. Encourage positive reinforcement through recognition of good performance. Share the impact and contributions of the employee’s work to the progress of the organization.

4. Commit to the personal and professional growth of the employee.

5. Allow a degree of autonomy, ownership and control in the employee’s job.

All three levels are important and affect productivity and retention.

It is in the best interest of the manager to monitor acceptance of a new employee and be proactive.

People leave mostly because of the manager. Money is usually not the factor for why employees leave.

It is in the best interest of the manager to monitor acceptance of a new employee and be proactive.
Tier 1: Orientation at OSU-Administrative Level

Inside OSU Web Site:
This web site is designed to assist new employees in becoming orientated and acclimated to OSU on their own time from any location. Topics included are:

- Health and retirement benefits overview with online enrollment opportunity and a schedule of new employee orientation sessions.
- Life balance at OSU resources.
- Overview of the “big picture” of OSU, its many resources and services for employees.
- Information about the surrounding community and what it has to offer.

The “New Employee Resources” of this website also includes helpful tips and resources for supervisors of new employees. Website: [http://oregonstate.edu/admin/hr/node/236](http://oregonstate.edu/admin/hr/node/236)

New Classified Employee Checklist:
Specific to classified employees, the Oregon State Central Administrative Resource (OSCAR) website under “downloadable forms” includes a checklist of what to review with your new classified employee. Website: [https://oscar.oregonstate.edu](https://oscar.oregonstate.edu)

Training Programs:
Management Training - The Core Curriculum management and supervisor program offers training on many aspects of supervising at OSU. Experts from various administrative provide resources and information that assists supervisors and managers be effective and gain a support system. Website: [http://oregonstate.edu/admin/hr/training/core](http://oregonstate.edu/admin/hr/training/core)

Performance Coaching - A performance coach (see website: [http://oregonstate.edu/admin/hr/coaching/](http://oregonstate.edu/admin/hr/coaching/)) can work with a new employee on getting off to a great start. This is different than mentoring.

Comprehensive information regarding promotion and tenure, faculty governance and other helpful information for academic and professional faculty is available at the Academic Affairs website at [http://oregonstate.edu/admin/aa/](http://oregonstate.edu/admin/aa/).
Tier 2: Orientation at the Unit/Department Level

The size of units and departments vary tremendously, so orientation activities are wide-ranging. The following ideas are activities your department or unit may already have in place to help orient new employees.

1. **Unit Checklists**
   In addition the Classified New Employee Checklist located on the OSCAR website, a number of units have developed tailored checklists for new employees. Checklists ensure that the multiple tasks of joining a new organization are addressed and consistently covered.

2. **Introductions and Meetings with Others**
   Spending time getting to know co-workers and colleagues speeds up the learning curve. While this is common practice, understand that it can also be overwhelming for the new employee to walk around with quick introductions. Consider having the new employee schedule 15 minutes with each co-worker to better understand what they do.

3. **Tour of the Unit/Department/College**
   Building in a tour of the larger department or college accompanied by a colleague will familiarize the new employee with the surroundings and larger mission of your workplace. This may be a good place to discuss common practices or “the Rules of the Road” to help the employee understand how the culture works outlines their expected behavior and defines “how we are around here.” (See “Rules of the Road” below.)

4. **Support Network**
   Connecting the new employee with others is the first step in building a network of relationships. Developing a support system that includes you as the supervisor, co-workers and colleagues is critical to success. This support network might extend to organizations, committees or learning groups across campus or organizations off-campus.

5. **Mentor/Buddy**
   A mentor (in addition to the supervisor) who understands your office and OSU can provide a valuable learning experience for the new employee. This gives the employee a colleague’s perspective with opportunity to ask questions and figure out the inner workings of the department or unit.

“Rules of the Road”: What’s Important Around Here?

Each organization has its own attitudes and beliefs about what is important and what the requirements are for success. These attitudes and beliefs are based on certain values—and these values turn into ways of being for the organization. This is organizational culture. This culture is full of rites and rituals that act as a control system that tells people what is expected of them. They let people know where they stand, reinforce an individual’s identity within the organization, and set the tone for the way in which people relate to one another.

In some organizations the rules are explicit, even written; in others they are unwritten and ambiguous. Some are obvious to any observer; some are subtle and not easily discerned by newcomers. A problem
for women and minorities is that rules obvious to people in the mainstream may be unknown to outsiders. Even well intentioned mainstreamers may not share rules because they assume everyone knows them. In any case, the rules are still important. Below are some examples:

**Rules of the Road**

1. Office etiquette.
2. Who, how and when people socialize.
3. How performance is recognized or contribution is credited.
4. Hours of work and punctuality.
5. Who gets consulted on projects.
6. Who gets copies of communications.
7. How questions are asked or disagreements expressed.
8. Dress code.
9. How people compete or cooperate.
10. Sense of urgency or casualness.
11. Language standards.
13. Relationships between bosses and subordinates, men and women, professionals and staff, and so on.
15. Office decor.

**Tier 3: Supervisor Level**

**Specific Supervisor/Manager Conversations with the New Employee**

**A. Review the employee’s Position Description**

- Provide the context of the position. Share how this position fits in with everyone else’s position in your unit.
- Share the “big picture” view you have for this position.
- Discuss the major job duties.

**B. Discuss expectations and standards**

- These translate the “job duties” listed in the position description and helps the employee understand what needs to be done on a day-to-day basis.
- Standards should be articulated in a manner that allows the employee to track progress and assess whether or not expectations are being met.
- There is a separate module on “expectations and standards.”

**C. Establish a regular meeting to discuss work life and progress**

- “Regular” is defined by you and the employee. In some positions, this means daily while in others it means weekly. Minimally, a weekly meeting is recommended. Depending upon the position, this may change and become less frequent as the employee settles into their job.
- This is a primary tool to build the relationship and set the pattern for how you will communicate with each other.
D. Discuss and agree on how feedback will be given
   - Feedback on performance should be expected and it is important for the employee to know how well they are doing.
   - Many managers and supervisors find it difficult to give constructive feedback even though they understand it is important.
   - Discussing a process on how to give and receive feedback is easier to do when you’re not working on top of any issues.
   - It begins with two simple questions:
     - Tell me what works for you with respect to giving and receiving feedback.
     - Tell me what doesn’t work.
   - From these two answers, make some basic agreements with each other.

E. Develop a working agreement for how to disagree and raise dissenting view points.
   By the nature of hierarchies, power differentials automatically exist. Unless there is agreement and understanding for how an employee in the lower position can raise or is encouraged to bring forward opposing viewpoints, the employee is likely to opt for silence.

D. Consider the following “Career Progression Model” with respect to balancing individual and organizational needs:
Five Questions You Can Ask That Contribute to a Good Working Relationship

1. **What is the best way to manage you?**
   This gets at style preferences and allows the person to share what works and what they get frustrated by. It also allows them to share what motivates them.

2. **What is the best way to communicate with you?**
   This allows you to discuss preferences for in-person, phone, or e-mail. It allows you to discuss preferences around open door policy, scheduled meetings, and what and how to share information.

3. **How often would you like to meet?**
   This allows you to close the expectations gap for what the employee and manager expect. Initially, you may agree to meet more frequently and this may change as you learn and become competent in the various job duties.

4. **What challenges you?**
   This helps you to identify their strengths and talent and the types/levels of tasks they expect to take on. Related questions might be – Why did you accept this job and what were the reasons you left your previous two jobs?

5. **As part of your orientation and assimilation, what would you like to learn?**
   This will help you manage expectations and understand what you’ve missed in the integration plan.
**Exercise: Indicators of Work Group Acceptance or Rejection of a New Employee**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACCEPTANCE SIGNALS</th>
<th>WARNING SIGNALS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Team members remain friendly with new employee after “Honeymoon Period” is over.</td>
<td>• Team members avoid new employee whenever possible.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• New employee’s “good” ideas are accepted with enthusiasm.</td>
<td>• All ideas are accepted or rejected without evaluation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• New employee’s “poor” ideas are rejected with feedback as to why they won’t work.</td>
<td>• Team members support “poor” ideas to “set-up” new employee for failure.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Other employees/team members seek information and/or ideas from the new employee.</td>
<td>• No one seeks input from new employee. His/her ideas and opinions are not valued.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• New employee is included in organizational functions as appropriate.</td>
<td>• New employee is left out of organizational functions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Input is appropriate, relevant and timely.</td>
<td>• Input is inappropriate, not relevant, premature or too late.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Employee is seen as “one of us.”</td>
<td>• Employee is still seen as an outsider.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**New Employee:  __________________________________________**

1. What specific behaviors are you noticing or observing in the new employee?

2. What are you hearing from other employees or colleagues?

3. What is the new employee saying?
Conclusion/Summary Points

With the tangible and intangible costs so high, it makes sense to invest the time and energy into welcoming and integrating a new employee.

1. Helping a new employee build effective relationships within and outside your unit is critical to their success.
2. Connecting the new employee to the internal and external resources of your unit and the institution will enable them to do their job better.
3. Establishing regular, on-going, and straight forward communication on how well they are doing in their job and in building their network allows you to reinforce what is going well and help make corrections while they are minor concerns.

By implementing an internal unit/department integration plan you increase the likelihood of the employee succeeding and speed up their ability to contribute and be productive.
New Classified Employee Orientation Checklist

Purpose

1. Ensures that new employees receive information regarding conditions of employment, rights as university employees, and available benefits; and
2. Complies with a provision of the collective bargaining agreement that requires each new employee to be provided an orientation to university service.

Instructions

Within one week of employee’s hire date...
Discuss with your new employee all items on the checklist. The employee and supervisor are to sign the form as verification that the required orientation discussion took place. Questions may be directed to the Employment Services office. Once the form is signed, return it to Employee Records and Information, 204 Kerr Administration, OSU Campus.

Helpful Web Sites

- Office of Human Resources website: http://oregonstate.edu/admin/hr
- Environmental Health & Safety (EH&S) website: http://oregonstate.edu/ehs
- Faculty & Staff website: http://oregonstate.edu/main/faculty-staff
- Inside OSU for new employees website: http://oregonstate.edu/admin/hr/orient/newemplres
Employee Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Last Name</th>
<th>First Name</th>
<th>MI</th>
<th>University ID#</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department</td>
<td>Classification</td>
<td></td>
<td>Employee Date</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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</tbody>
</table>

Check or initial each item as discussed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chk</th>
<th>Initials</th>
<th>Discussion Area</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Organization</td>
<td>Give overview of administrative unit, department or college, in relation to overall university organization. If available, show organizational chart.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Position</td>
<td>Review position description, explain duties and responsibilities. Explain line of administrative authority and to what extent this position supervises others. Sign position description and send to the Office of Human Resources.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Trial Service</td>
<td>Discuss 6-month trial service period. Explain how employee will qualify for regular status. Explain on-the-job training arrangements, if any.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Performance</td>
<td>Explain performance appraisal system. Give date due for trial service appraisal and subsequent annual appraisals.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Working Hours</td>
<td>Review work schedule, lunch and break schedule and overtime policy.</td>
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<td>Leave</td>
<td>Review vacation, sick leave, holidays, personal leave, leave without pay. Instruct employee of his/her responsibility for obtaining prior approval of supervisor for all, except emergency, absences from work. Explain procedure for call-in when absent. Review time reporting procedures and leave slips.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Pay Matters</td>
<td>Provide pay period and payday information.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Salary</td>
<td>Explain steps in salary range and annual merit pay increases and periodic cost-of-living adjustments through collective bargaining and legislative action.</td>
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<td>Employee</td>
<td>Explain employee’s representation by appropriate collective bargaining contract: SEIU/OPEU-Oregon Public Employee’s Union; GCIU-Graphic Communications International Union. (Employee may contact union for a copy of the CBA.)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Layoff</td>
<td>Discuss rights while in trial service versus regular status. Explain bumping procedures and recall rights. (Refer to Article 51 of the CBA)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Check or initial each item as discussed

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<thead>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>_____</td>
<td>Safety &amp; Security</td>
<td>Review applicable sections of the Safety Procedures Handbook and Safety Rules. Review fire, emergency, and security procedures and complete the “Acknowledgement of Safety Rules, Emergency Procedures, and Hazard Communication” form. Reinforce the importance of letting the supervisor know as soon as possible of an employee’s on-the-job injury. Complete the “Safety Training Identification Worksheet” form with the employee. Return both of these forms to EH&amp;S. (Copies of the forms, Safety Procedures Handbook, and Safety Rules are on the EH&amp;S web page <a href="http://oregonstate.orst.edu/ehs">http://oregonstate.orst.edu/ehs</a>).</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Benefits</td>
<td>Verify that employee has received a benefits packet, if eligible. If employee is on campus, verify with employee that benefits orientation was attended or is scheduled. Make clear that enrollment forms for all insurance plans must be completed within 60 days of employment; coverage will begin on the first of the month following receipt of completed applications in the Employee Benefits Section of the Office of Human Resources.</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>FLSA/Overtime</td>
<td>Review employee’s FLSA status and eligibility for overtime compensation at time and one-half or straight time. Explain cap of 120 hours of compensatory or exchange time. Explain department’s procedure for requiring overtime and/or need for prior approval to work overtime.</td>
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<td>Retirement Plan*</td>
<td>Explain when PERS begins and the employee contribution is 6% of gross salary that is currently paid by OSU. If employee has already been on PERS, advise them to check with the Employee Benefits Section of OHR for their PERS eligibility date.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>_____</td>
<td>Department Procedures</td>
<td>As appropriate, explain use of telephone system, equipment checkout procedures, uniforms, name tags, keys, employee bulletin boards, campus/federal/shuttle mail, copiers, recycling procedures, letterhead and correspondence formats, ordering supplies, travel policies, use of state vehicles, attending workshops, first aid, parking, smoking areas, use of computers etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>_____</td>
<td>OSU Online Services</td>
<td>Advise employee to access OSU online services, after first payday to verify current address, telephone number, web directory, profile, benefit selections, leave balances.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Supervisor’s Signature  Date  Employee’s Signature  Date

**NOTE:** For a downloadable New Classified Employee Orientation Checklist form, visit the “Recruit/Appoint” section of the Oregon State Central Administrative Resource (OSCAR) website at: [https://oscar.oregonstate.edu/](https://oscar.oregonstate.edu/)