



The 6 things all new employees should be told

When you started your job, were there things you wish you were told? Here's what should be communicated, but often isn't.

By Robert J. Holland | Posted: October 4, 2012

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Among the most important communication activities an organization can perform occurs in the first few months of a new employee's tenure. Human resources folks often call it "onboarding"—orienting new hires to their environment, their jobs and the company's culture. In my experience, few organizations do it right, but they would reap great benefits if they did.

My experiences as a new employee ran the gamut from literally being stuck in a closet with a typewriter until a workspace opened up to arriving with all the tools in place—phone, computer, office supplies—but lacking other things that would enable me to hit the ground running.

Here are some of the basic things an organization should communicate to new employees in the first weeks of their tenure:

- 1. Roles and responsibilities.** Employees should understand exactly what their jobs consist of, what they are responsible for doing, and the parameters within which they can operate. These should be clearly outlined before an employee is hired, of course, but they should be reinforced during orientation.
- 2. Expectations.** Employees should know what is expected of them, both from a job performance perspective and behaviorally. The more specific the expectations—with examples of desired behaviors and performance milestones—the better.
- 3. Culture.** New employees should understand "how we do things around here." This is perhaps the most critical information a supervisor can share. Each organization has a unique culture. Moving from one to another can be difficult. Mentorship by longer-term employees can greatly benefit newcomers when it comes to navigating the organization's culture.
- 4. Where to find information and who to go to.** In order to be productive from day one, new employees must know where they can go to learn all they can about the organization and to get answers to their questions. A culture of honesty is important here; employees must be safe in asking even tough questions and they must expect the answers to be candid.
- 5. How to get things done.** Each organization has its unwritten rules about how things get done. Supervisors must coach their employees in the politics of the organization and how to build support for employees' projects and ideas.
- 6. Organizational values.** It's rare to find an organization without a stated set of values these days. The values should be clearly communicated and defined so that new employees understand what is expected of them from an ethical standpoint.

Orienting new employees properly is critical, for the employee and organization. An employee who is given little guidance on navigating the organization may end up going in the wrong direction and making the wrong decisions. Her co-workers might then perceive that she lacks good judgment and can't get things done—a perception that is difficult to overcome once it takes hold. An organization

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that does a poor job of orienting employees misses the opportunity to get the most out of employees from the start because the employees and their supervisors are busy rectifying problems instead of moving forward.

Employees who miss out on a good onboarding experience could end up disengaged and perform poorly or, worse, they might leave the organization. This means the organization incurs higher recruitment costs and perhaps even damage to its reputation as a great place to work.

The bottom line issue is communication. By effectively orienting new employees, an organization communicates that it values its employees, wants them to be engaged from day one, and is willing to do its part to make the working relationship a positive, productive one. Also, new employees who have a good experience are better able to communicate their value and worth to the company and demonstrate an eagerness to succeed.

What other concepts and information do new employees need to know in order to succeed in a new job? Share them here using the comments feature.

Robert Holland blogs at [Communication at Work](#), where a version of this article first appeared.

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