

Introduction to the organization

It is important to ensure that care is taken over introducing people to the organization through effective induction arrangements as described in this chapter.

INDUCTION DEFINED

Induction is the process of receiving and welcoming employees when they first join a company and giving them the basic information they need to settle down quickly and happily and start work. Induction has four aims:

- to smooth the preliminary stages when everything is likely to be strange and unfamiliar to the starter;
- to establish quickly a favourable attitude to the company in the mind of the new employee so that he or she is more likely to stay;
- to obtain effective output from the new employee in the shortest possible time;
- to reduce the likelihood of the employee leaving quickly.

WHY TAKING CARE ABOUT INDUCTION IS IMPORTANT

Induction is important for the reasons given below.

Reducing the cost and inconvenience of early leavers

As pointed out by Fowler (1996), employees are far more likely to resign during their first months after joining the organization. The costs can include:

- recruitment costs of replacement;
- induction costs (training etc);
- costs of temporary agency replacement;
- cost of extra supervision and error correction;
- gap between the employee's value to the company and the cost of the employee's pay and benefits.

These costs can be considerable. The cost for a professional employee could be 75 per cent of annual salary. For a support worker the cost could easily reach 50 per cent of pay. If 15 out of 100 staff paid an average of £12,500 a year leave during the year, the total cost could amount to £90,000 – 7.5 per cent of the payroll. It is worth making an effort to reduce that cost. First impressions are important, as are the impact of the first four weeks of employment. Giving more attention to induction pays off.

Increasing commitment

A committed employee is one who identifies with the organization, wants to stay with it and is prepared to work hard on behalf of the organization. The first step in achieving commitment is to present the organization as one that is worth working for and to ensure that this first impression is reinforced during the first weeks of employment.

Clarifying the psychological contract

The psychological contract, as described in Chapter 16, consists of implicit, unwritten beliefs and assumptions about how employees are expected to behave and what responses they can expect from their employer. It is concerned with norms, values and attitudes. The psychological contract provides the basis for the employment

relationship, and the more this can be clarified from the outset, the better. Induction arrangements can indicate what the organization expects in terms of behavioural norms and the values that employees should uphold. Induction provides an opportunity to inform people of 'the way things are done around here' so that misapprehensions are reduced even if they cannot be eliminated.

Accelerating progress up the learning curve

New employees will be on a learning curve – they will take time to reach the required level of performance. Clearly, the length of the learning curve and rates of learning vary, but it is important to provide for it to take place in a planned and systematic manner from the first day to maximize individual contributions as quickly as possible.

Socialization

New employees are likely to settle in more quickly and enjoy working for the organization if the process of socialization takes place smoothly. The social aspects of work – relationships with colleagues – are very important for many people. The extent to which employees can directly influence the quality of socialization may often be limited, but it is a feature of introduction to the organization to which they should pay attention, as far as this is possible, during the induction arrangements described below, which are concerned with reception, documentation, initial briefing, introduction to the workplace, formal induction courses and formal and informal training activities.

RECEPTION

Most people suffer from some feelings of trepidation when they start a new job. However outwardly confident they may appear, they may well be asking themselves such questions as: What will the company be like? How will my boss behave to me? Will I get on with the other workers? Will I be able to do the job?

These questions may not be answered immediately, but at least general fears may be alleviated by ensuring that the first contacts are friendly and helpful.

The following checklist for reception is recommended by Fowler (1996):

- Ensure that the person whom the starter first meets (ie the receptionist, personnel assistant or supervisor) knows of their pending arrival and what to do next.

- Set a reporting time, which will avoid the risk of the starter turning up before the reception or office staff arrive.
- Train reception staff in the need for friendly and efficient helpfulness towards new starters.
- If the new starter has to go to another location immediately after reporting, provide a guide, unless the route to the other location is very straightforward.
- Avoid keeping the new starter waiting; steady, unhurried, guided activity is an excellent antidote to first-day nerves.

DOCUMENTATION

The new employee will be asked to hand over the P45 income tax form from the previous employer. A variety of documents may then be issued to employees, including safety rules and safety literature, a company rule book containing details of disciplinary and grievance procedures and an employee handbook as described below.

The employee handbook

An employee handbook is useful for this purpose. It need not be too glossy, but it should convey clearly and simply what new staff need to know under the following headings:

- a brief description of the company – its history, products, organization and management;
- basic conditions of employment – hours of work, holidays, pension scheme, insurance;
- pay – scales, when paid and how, deductions, queries;
- sickness – notification of absence, certificates, pay;
- leave of absence;
- company rules;
- disciplinary procedure;
- capability procedure;
- grievance procedure;
- promotion procedure;
- union and joint consultation arrangements;
- education and training facilities;
- health and safety arrangements;
- medical and first-aid facilities;

- restaurant and canteen facilities;
- social and welfare arrangements;
- telephone calls and correspondence;
- rules for using e-mail;
- travelling and subsistence expenses.

If the organization is not large enough to justify a printed handbook, the least that can be done is to prepare a typed summary of this information.

COMPANY INDUCTION – INITIAL BRIEFING

Company induction procedures, however, should not rely on the printed word. The member of the HR department or other individual who is looking after new employees should run through the main points with each individual or, when larger numbers are being taken on, with groups of people. In this way, a more personal touch is provided and queries can be answered.

When the initial briefing has been completed, new employees should be taken to their place of work and introduced to their manager or team leader for the departmental induction programme. Alternatively, they may go straight to a training school and join the department later.

INTRODUCTION TO THE WORKPLACE

New starters will be concerned about who they are going to work for (their immediate manager or team leader), who they are going to work with, what work they are going to do on their first day, and the geographical layout of their place of work (location of entrances, exits, lavatories, restrooms and the canteen).

Some of this information may be provided by a member of the HR department, or an assistant in the new employee's place of work. But the most important source of information is the immediate manager, supervisor or team leader.

The departmental induction programme should, wherever possible, start with the departmental manager, not the immediate team leader. The manager may give only a general welcome and a brief description of the work of the department before handing new employees over to their team leaders for the more detailed induction. But it is important for the manager to be involved at this stage so that he or she is not seen as a remote figure by the new employee. And at least this means that the starter will not be simply a name or a number to the manager.

The detailed induction is probably best carried out by the immediate team leader, who should have five main aims:

- to put the new employee at ease;
- to interest the employee in the job and the organization;
- to provide basic information about working arrangements;
- to indicate the standards of performance and behaviour expected from the employee;
- to tell the employee about training arrangements and how he or she can progress in the company.

The team leader should introduce new starters to their fellow team members. It is best to get one member of the team to act as a guide or 'starter's friend'. As Fowler suggests, there is much to be said for these initial guides to be people who have not been long with the organization. As relative newcomers they are likely to remember all the small points that were a source of worry to them when they started work, and so help new employees to settle in quickly.

FORMAL INDUCTION COURSES

Reason for

Formal induction courses can provide for recruits to be assembled in groups so that a number of people can be given consistent and comprehensive information at the same time, which may not be forthcoming if reliance is placed solely on supervisors. A formal course is an opportunity to deliver messages about the organization, its products and services, its mission and values, using a range of media such as videos and other visual aids that would not be available within departments. But formal induction courses cannot replace informal induction arrangements at the workplace, where the most important need – settling people well – can best be satisfied.

Arrangements

Decisions will have to be made about who attends and when. It is normal to mix people from different departments but less common to have people from widely different levels on the same course. In practice, managers and senior professional staff are often dealt with individually.

Ideally, induction courses should take place as soon as possible after starting. If there are sufficient new employees available, this could be half the first day or a half

or whole day during the first week. If a lot of information is to be conveyed, supplementary half or one-day courses may be held later. However, the course may have to be delayed until sufficient numbers of new starters are available. If such delays are unavoidable, it is essential to ensure that key information is provided on the first day by personnel and the departmental supervisor. Organizations with branches or a number of different locations often hold formal induction courses at headquarters, which helps employees to feel that they are part of the total business and gives an opportunity to convey information about the role of head office.

Content

The content of formal induction courses may be selected according to the needs of the organization from the following list of subject areas:

- *information about the organization* – its products/services, structure, mission and core values;
- *learning arrangements and opportunities* – formal training, self-managed learning, personal development plans;
- *performance management processes* – how they work and the parts people play;
- *health and safety* – occupational health, prevention of injuries and accidents, protective clothing, basic safety rules;
- *conditions of service* – hours, holidays, leave, sick pay arrangements, maternity/paternity leave;
- *pay and benefits* – arrangements for paying salaries or wages, the pay structure, allowances, details of performance, competence- or skill-based pay schemes, details of profit sharing, gainsharing or share ownership arrangements, pension and life or medical insurance schemes;
- *policies, procedures and working arrangements* – equal opportunities policies, rules regarding sexual and racial harassment and bullying, disciplinary and grievance procedures, no-smoking arrangements;
- *trade unions and employee involvement* – trade union membership and recognition, consultative systems, agreements, suggestion schemes.

ON-THE-JOB INDUCTION TRAINING

Most new starters other than those on formal training schemes will learn on the job, although this may be supplemented with special off-the-job courses to develop particular skills or knowledge. On-the-job training can be haphazard, inefficient and wasteful. A planned, systematic approach is very desirable. This can incorporate:

- job or skills analysis to prepare a learning specification;
- an initial assessment of what the new starter needs to learn;
- the use of designated colleagues to act as guides and mentors – these individuals should be trained in how to carry out this role;
- coaching by team leaders or specially appointed and trained departmental trainers;
- special assignments.

These on-the-job arrangements can be supplemented by self-managed learning arrangements, e-learning and by providing advice on learning opportunities.