



ORIENTATION AND TRAINING

CHAPTER 10

NEW-EMPLOYEE ORIENTATION

We will orient you to who we are—our heart, our soul, our goals, our vision, our dreams, so you can join us and not just work for us. You have the right to know our hopes, our dreams, and our goals.¹

Horst Schultz, former president and COO, Ritz-Carlton Hotel Company

CHAPTER OBJECTIVES

After completing this chapter, you will be able to

- Describe the benefits of providing new-employee orientation.
- Identify areas that should be covered in new-employee orientation.
- Explain why orientation should precede job training.
- Recognize that a new-employee orientation program helps to improve employee retention.
- Identify the manager or supervisor's role in new-employee orientation.



HRM IN ACTION

As a new hospitality manager or supervisor, you have worked very hard to recruit, interview, and select the perfect applicant to fill the job opening in your restaurant or lodging operation. You have made the all-important job offer, and the applicant has accepted! However, if industry statistics ring true, sometime within the next three to four months, your new employee will have moved on to another job in your competition's restaurant or hotel. Perhaps you did not do a good job of matching the right ap-

plicant with the right job opening. Or perhaps you failed to successfully familiarize your employee with the company's mission and policies or didn't train him adequately from the start. One of the primary reasons for conducting **workplace orientation** with brand-new employees is to ease their transition into your place of business and to make them feel good about their decision to come to work for you.

STARTING OFF ON THE RIGHT FOOT

If you have ever taken a brand-new job, then you know what it is like to show up on your first day of work, not knowing much of anything or anybody. Most new employees who are thrown into this kind of environment will feel a certain level of anxiety, and they certainly do not yet have the knowledge or experience to become a valuable and productive member of the team. An employee orientation program that is well-thought-out can work wonders when it comes to new employees socializing in the workplace. **Socialization** is the ongoing process through which new employees begin to understand and accept the values, norms, and beliefs held by others in the organization. Good orientation programs are designed to familiarize new employees with their roles, the organization, its policies, and other employees. Some organizations refer to this process as a "gentle brainwashing;" others simply see orientation as getting the new employee started on the right foot.

Large hospitality organizations such as hotel and restaurant chains may have rather extensive employee orientation programs. New food and beverage servers who are employed at Nashville's famous Opryland Hotel may spend as much as two and one-half days in new-employee orientation before they ever begin actual on-the-job training. Of course, this makes sense when you consider that the Tennessee hotel has nearly 3000 guest rooms and more than 16 different restaurants, lounges, and bars. In general, the larger the facility and the more extensive the operation, the lengthier and more in-depth the orientation program will need to be.

THE NEED FOR NEW-EMPLOYEE ORIENTATION

Many small hospitality business managers make the mistake of assuming that because their operation is small in scope, new-employee orientation is a waste of time and money. Nothing could be further from the truth! Even the smallest lodging or restaurant operation can benefit from offering a new-employee orientation program, and the good news is that it requires a lot less time and costs considerably less money than a larger corporation's orientation program.

TALES FROM THE FIELD

When I was getting my hotel-restaurant management degree, I was hired as a part-time desk clerk in one of the area's largest hotels. I was soon fully trained, and after about six months, the front-office manager called a meeting to determine why the front-desk staff was not selling the hotel rooms more aggressively to walk-ins. He was shocked to learn that several of us had never seen any of the hotel's guest rooms because we had never gone through orientation. How can you really sell something that you've never seen? Needless to say, we got a very thorough guided tour that day!

Jennifer, 23, Indianapolis, Indiana

Hospitality operations, large and small, devote a considerable amount of time and resources to hiring people. An employer has already made a considerable investment in a new employee by the time she starts the first day on the job. At the same time, the new worker has anxieties that may hinder the transition from recruit to productive employee. These first-day jitters normally manifest themselves with thoughts such as "Will I be able to do the job?" "Will I fit in around here?" or "Will the other employees like me?" These feelings are natural, but they do hinder both the employee's initial job satisfaction and his or her ability to learn the job. In the workplace, initial impressions are strong and lasting because new employees have little else on which to base judgments. Management must work to make those initial impressions favorable so that new employees become satisfied and productive members of the team. New-employee orientation helps to make newly hired employees feel more comfortable in their new surroundings and helps them to understand the key goals of the organization, important policies, and procedures. They feel valued as members of a team helping to achieve a common goal at the workplace.

BENEFITS OF ORIENTATION

The benefits of a well-conducted employee orientation program far outweigh any potential pitfalls that may occur. Employee orientation helps to reduce new-employee anxieties, so new workers are able to learn their duties and are more productive. Orientation also helps new employees to learn their duties faster so they quickly become valuable members of the team, which benefits both the employee and company.

**The Benefits to
the Company
Overall**

Almost all organizations will realize the overall benefits of providing orientation because it provides a consistent overview of the company. Other benefits to the organization may include the following:

- Helps new employees feel good about their decision to work for your company
- Introduces new employees to the owner and managers of the organization
- Improves employees' understanding of company goals and priorities
- Decreases employee turnover because employees are aware of the company's goals and policies from the start of their employment, which ensures that they work to achieve the company's goals and priorities

Another primary goal of an effective new-employee orientation program is to create a positive mind-set about the company and the job. In other words, you want the new employee to feel good about his or her decision to come to work for you. Remember, there is a lot of competition among hospitality businesses when it comes to recruiting and hiring the very best employees—when a qualified applicant chooses *your* place of business, that applicant has cast a vote of confidence for you and your business over all the others.

**The Benefits to
the Supervisor
and to
Management**

Managers and supervisors will benefit from an orientation program because well-adjusted employees with positive attitudes toward the company learn their specific job-related tasks more quickly and effectively and are more likely to make it through the first 10 to 14 critical days, a period during which many newly hired employees make up their minds about whether they should stay in their new job or whether they should quit. Other benefits that orientation provides to the supervisor as well as management include the following:

- Having a well-trained staff
- Consistency in performance of all employees
- Aids in evaluating employee performance
- Supports the supervisor's role
- Lower rate of employee turnover

**The Benefits to
the Employee**

Perhaps no other party benefits from a solid new-employee orientation program more than the actual new employee. Some benefits include the following:

- Builds an important foundation for employee motivation
- Builds higher levels of job satisfaction
- Properly sets the stage for the training that is to follow
- Builds self-esteem from the feeling of being part of a successful team

Setting the stage for new employees within the organization will make things easier as management and supervisors begin the training process. Employees will feel more positive, less anxious, and more receptive to the training program. A well-trained and self-motivated staff is the most valuable resource that a small restaurant or lodging operation can have, and this lends itself extremely well to the overall success of the operation. A short but thorough new-employee orientation program is essential to ensure that the operation's goals and priorities are clear to the new employees who are motivated to achieve the company's goals.

ORIENTATION PROGRAMS

Whether an orientation program is a two-day event or takes place in a mere one to two hours, most orientation programs will cover many of the same categories. In larger hospitality organizations, more formal orientation programs usually rely on the human resources department. In smaller operations, the general manager or even the owner assumes the lead role. Often, orientation

is broken down into two broad areas: general topics of interest to almost all new employees and specific job-related issues that may only apply to the workers in a specific area or department. It is important to note that orientation should *not* be confused with training. Orientation always comes first because it lays the foundation for the training that follows. Figure 10.1 illustrates the general topics of interest that most new employees within a large organization tend to learn about during orientation. A representative of the human resources department would normally cover these areas.

ORGANIZATIONAL ISSUES

- History of the business or company
- Organization chart
- Names and titles of key personnel
- Employee's department and where it fits in
- Layout and tour of the physical facilities
- Overview of services and products provided
- Employee handbook covering policies and rules
- Safety and security procedures

EMPLOYEE BENEFITS

- Pay scales and paydays
- Vacations and holidays
- Rest breaks
- Training and education benefits
- Counseling
- Insurance and retirement benefits
- Rehab programs

Figure 10.1

A representative from the organization's human resources department may cover the topics on this list with new employees.

Clearly, many of the topics listed in Figure 10.1 would not be applicable to a smaller lodging or restaurant operation. But it is relatively easy to downsize the list to make it more appropriate for smaller operations. Consider the following list of general topics for a small restaurant and bar operation:

- Provide a short history of the business and the owner's philosophy.
- Introduce employees to the owner, executive chef, and general manager.
- Describe how the new employee's job fits into the overall operation.
- Explain layout of the dining room and kitchen areas.
- Provide a tour of the facility both inside and outside.
- Provide an overview of the menu and how it is used as a marketing tool.
- Review of the employee handbook.

At some stage in the orientation process, the new employee is typically "passed off" to his or her immediate supervisor. This is true even in larger operations where human resources personnel normally cover the broader organizational issues. The supervisor must resist the temptation to begin the training process at this point in time; training will follow, but this orientation period is necessary so that management can set the stage for eventual job-specific training. There are still a few department-specific items that should be covered to ensure a smooth transition to effective training. Figure 10.2 illustrates the topics that the new employee's immediate supervisor should cover during orientation.

Figure 10.2

The new employee's supervisor would cover these department-specific topics during new-employee orientation.

INTRODUCTIONS

To the new employee's supervisor
To trainers
To coworkers

JOB DUTIES

Tour of the job location
Review the job description and job tasks
Review the job safety requirements
Provide a broad overview of the job
Review the job's objectives
Review the relationship to other jobs and departments



Photo 10.1

New-employee orientation should cover simple things like showing a new employee where and how to clock in each day.

While each of the items on Figure 10.2 may not be applicable to the smallest of operations, the list is easily customized. Consider the following list, which would be more applicable to a very small hospitality business operation:

- Introduce new employee to coworkers
- Introduce employee to other supervisors
- Tour the job location, including storage and supply areas
- Review the job description and job tasks
- Explain parking, time clock, and uniform procedures

Most new-employee orientation sessions in a small hospitality business operation should take less than two hours to complete. As the new employee is exposed to orientation, coworkers, and, later, to training, the company's values, beliefs, and traditions are slowly absorbed.

ethical dilemma

Susan is the manager of a medium-sized restaurant and bar that is successful and privately owned. The restaurant's turnover is high, and Susan desperately needed to hire a new busperson. She hired Michael, but now she realizes that she made a mistake because he is just not a good fit for the position. During training, Michael painfully realizes that Susan and some of the other staff seem to be making fun of him. Susan realizes that she made a snap decision when she hired Michael, and now she will need to figure out how to get rid of him. If Susan follows through with her plan, which of the *10 Ethical Principles for Hospitality Managers* could she be in danger of violating? What would be the negative or positive consequences of her decision? Who else would be affected besides her and Michael? How could this ethical dilemma be avoided?

MAKE NEW-EMPLOYEE ORIENTATION FUN

New-employee orientation should be a positive event, and many hospitality organizations work hard to make it so. Isn't it interesting that companies will often throw a festive celebration to honor a long-time employee who has now decided to leave the organization, yet rarely do companies "celebrate" the hiring of a new employee? Consider some of the following activities that would go a long way in making new-employee orientation more welcoming and even more productive:

- Have a cake with candles on the new employee's desk or work area on her first day on the job.
- Make sure that the new employee's supervisor is present to welcome her on day one.
- Ensure that the new employee has someone to eat lunch or dinner with during the first few days on the job.
- Try to send the new employee home after the first day with some positive experience that he will likely share with family members or friends.

Remember, too, that individuals learn new things in different ways. Rather than subjecting the new employee to a constant stream of new faces during employee introductions, break up the learning process and perhaps institute "learning games." Examples might include the following:

- Have contests where new employees are shown photographs of key managers and supervisors and award prizes to those new employees who correctly match the most names with faces.
- Take the new employees on a tour of the property and ask them to obtain the signatures of the employees to whom they are introduced.

AVOID COMMON MISTAKES

There are some common pitfalls that occur during orientation that should be avoided at all costs. Hospitality managers and supervisors are responsible for ensuring that the new employee is not

- Overwhelmed with too much information in a short period of time.
- Overloaded with forms to complete.
- Given only menial tasks that discourage job interest and company loyalty.
- Pushed into the job with only a sketchy orientation.

It is important that hospitality managers and supervisors do not work under the mistaken impression that “trial by fire” is the best orientation.² Consider some of the “Tales from the Field” on page 201. You must ask yourself: “What were these organization’s thinking?”

WORK WITH A CHECKLIST

One of the best ways to ensure that new-employee orientation is productive for both the employee and the organization is to create a checklist that managers and supervisors may consult. In larger hospitality operations, such a checklist may be provided by the human resources department. In smaller operations, the owner or the general manager may be responsible for preparing it. If different tasks on the checklist are going to be performed by different people, then the individual’s name should be specified and appear next to the task. In general, the larger the hospitality business is, the larger the checklist. In the example that follows, the checklist has been broken into three broad categories: (1) Things to do before the new employee arrives, (2) things to do on the employee’s first day at work, and (3) things to do by the end of the first week of employment.

**Before the
New Employee
Arrives**

In preparation of the new employee's arrival, you should do the following:

- Notify everyone in the new employee's department that a new person is starting and what the person's job will be.
- Ask other staff members to welcome the new employee and encourage support.
- If possible, identify an employee to act as a mentor to the new employee for the first week.
- Enroll the employee in new-employee orientation.
- Send the new employee a welcome letter and a schedule for the first week.

**First Day on
the Job**

A new employee may be anxious about starting a new job. Try to create a comfortable environment and remember not to overwhelm the employee. On the first day you should do the following:

- Give a warm welcome and discuss the plan for the first day.
- Tour the employee's assigned work area.
- Explain where restrooms, refreshments, and break areas are located.
- Provide any required keys.
- Arrange to have lunch with the new employee.
- Tour the property and introduce the new employee to key personnel.
- Introduce the new employee to his or her mentor.
- Review the company's organizational chart and explain the department's relationship to the big picture.
- Review the employee handbook.

**During the
First Week**

Be sure the following items are handled in the first week of employment:

- Review the employee work area to ensure that any needed equipment or supplies are in place.
- Ensure that the employee has received a proper uniform and name tag.
- Set up a brief meeting with the new employee and his or her mentor to review the first week's activities.
- Schedule a meeting with human resources to ensure that the new employee has completed all necessary paperwork.

When planning a new-employee orientation program and checklist, it is important to remember that many new hires in the hospitality industry question their decision to work for your company by the end of their first day. Their anx-

TALES FROM THE FIELD

1. A hotel front-desk clerk was forced to endure two days of orientation during which the human resources department makes presentation after presentation that are followed by hours of boring videotapes. The clerk had already worked for the hotel for nearly six months.
2. A new kitchen line cook was assigned as a mentor to the one employee with the worst attitude, negative company outlook, and the least amount of interpersonal skills.
3. A new hotel bellhop was asked to sit in a noisy lobby for an hour to read and sign-off on the 100-page employee handbook.
4. A new dining room host's first week of work was scheduled to coincide with his supervisor's vacation.
5. A new hotel reservationist was left to sit at her workstation to figure things out on her own while everyone else paired off to go to lunch.
6. A new maintenance supervisor had not been assigned a work area, so he was asked to sit in the hallway for the first four days and then asked to share a desk with another employee after that.
7. A new accounting clerk, after standing at the front desk for more than 20 minutes while front-desk personnel figured out what to do with her, was accidentally sent to the restaurant, where she was given an apron and instructed to "get started on the dishes."
8. A new part-time pastry chef was not introduced to coworkers, and another pastry chef, thinking his job had been taken away from him, stormed out of the restaurant and quit. The new employee was hired as a part-time assistant to the full-time pastry chef.
9. A new front-desk clerk hired to work the 3- to-11 shift was asked to straighten a lobby brochure rack—for eight hours—because the front desk had heavy arrivals and no one had time to train him.
10. A new administrative assistant began her job in a hotel sales office when the entire staff was under intense pressure to complete the hotel's marketing plan in 48 hours.

ieties are fueled by mistakes that companies often make during that first-day orientation program. Hospitality managers and supervisors who are planning a new-employee orientation program should ask themselves: "What do we want to achieve during orientation? What first impression do we want to make?" There is no doubt that a hospitality company's positive first impressions can "cement the deal" for a newly recruited employee.

SUMMARY

- Employees who are brand-new to an organization often have feelings of anxiety and wonder if they will fit in or if they will be able to do the job.
- It is important to help the new employee fit in, especially in the critical first 10 to 14 days on the job.
- Orientation programs set up for new employees provide both a broad overview of the company's goals and its philosophy as well as a more targeted view of the specific job itself.
- When new employees feel good about their decision to work for your company, morale increases, retention increases, and employee turnover can be diminished.
- Within the first 30 days of employment, many hospitality industry employees have already made up their minds about whether they plan to stay or leave their new job.
- While feelings of anxiety for a new employee are normal, they do hinder the learning process, which can be an obstacle to effective training.

PRACTICE QUIZ

1. Employee orientation should only be conducted after a new employee has been fully trained.
A. True B. False
2. In large hospitality organizations, the human resources department is responsible for conducting the entire new-employee orientation program.
A. True B. False
3. Most new-employee orientation sessions in small hospitality operations take less than two hours to complete.
A. True B. False
4. The most successful orientation programs can best be characterized as “trial by fire.”
A. True B. False
5. New-employee orientation benefits the company, management, and the new employee.
A. True B. False
6. Which of the following topics should *not* be covered during new-employee orientation?
A. An overview of the company and its philosophy
B. Meeting managers, supervisors, and coworkers
C. Specific job-related training
D. Physical tour of the facility inside and out

7. In smaller hospitality operations, who should assume the role of conducting new-employee orientation?
 - A. The human resources department
 - B. The general manager or the owner
 - C. The employee's immediate supervisor
 - D. B and C only
8. Which is *not* a benefit to employee orientation?
 - A. Helps new employees see how they "fit" into the organization overall
 - B. Could possibly reduce employee turnover
 - C. Provides time for new employees to complete paperwork, no matter how many forms there may be to complete
 - D. Helps new employees feel good about their decision to work for that company
9. The critical period between the time a new employee begins a new job and the time that the employee makes up his or her mind about staying or quitting is usually
 - A. 90 or more days
 - B. 60 to 90 days
 - C. 30 to 60 days
 - D. 10 to 14 days
10. When a new employee has feelings of anxiety, the result could be which of the following?
 - A. Learning could be hindered.
 - B. Such feelings could be an obstacle to effective training.
 - C. New workers may decide to quit and go somewhere else.
 - D. All of the above.

**REVIEW
QUESTIONS**

1. Explain in your own words the process of socialization, and give examples from your own work experiences in which you may have undergone this process. If you have no specific work experiences to draw upon, use the example of starting classes in a new school. Did the process affect you in a negative way or in a positive way? How exactly? Use examples and be specific.
2. Assume you own or manage a small food service or lodging operation. Prepare an outline that details each of the topics you will cover during new-employee orientation. Also, determine who among your staff will be responsible for delivering each topic in your orientation program. Explain

your choices, and be specific, using examples from both the lecture and your textbook.

3. Prepare some ideas for two or three learning games that could be implemented during new-employee orientation. Try to match the “game” with one of the learning objectives in the orientation plan you wrote for question 2. For example, you might play the “name game” as described earlier in this chapter as a fun way to help a new employee remember the names and faces of key personnel. Be prepared to share your ideas with the rest of the class.
4. Write an orientation checklist that would be appropriate for either a large hospitality operation or a smaller operation. Locate a student in your class who has written a checklist that is different from your own. Compare and contrast the two checklists, and be prepared to discuss any similarities and differences between the two lists with the rest of the class. Which elements of the orientation checklist do you feel are most important and why? If you had to delete an element or two as being less important, what is your rationale for doing so? Explain in full.
5. Because it is important to send a new employee home after his first day of work with some positive experience, come up with two or three ways that this could be done in a typical hospitality setting. What would you do on the employee’s first day that would be so positive that the new employee would likely go home and tell his family members or friends about it? Be specific and give examples.

HANDS-ON HRM

Alma and Louise first met when they both enrolled in a culinary arts degree program at the local community college. Both women were career changers: Alma was leaving a legal secretary’s position that she had held for nearly 12 years, and Louise, who had worked at an auto assembly plant, was recently laid off when the factory closed and moved its operations overseas. Both women were divorced and were struggling to balance school, work, and the challenges of raising young children in a single-parent household. As their friendship developed, they decided that they would pool their resources and open the restaurant of their dreams as soon as they graduated from culinary school.

Alma felt that she had a “better head for business” than Louise, so before opening the new restaurant, they agreed that Alma would spend three weeks training their newly hired staff. The costs were quickly piling up, and Louise was worried. “We haven’t even served our first guest yet,” she said to Alma, “and our preopening budget is already shot.” Alma explained that many restaurants fail “right off the bat” because of poor training, and while she agreed that the costs were high, she convinced Louise that the efforts

would pay off down the road in the form of lower-employee turnover and enhanced customer service.

Eight months after opening, the restaurant really began to take off. Even though the turnover rate was about 60 percent, far below the industry average, Alma and Louise found that they were hiring and training new employees almost every week. As business continued to grow, the owners had their hands full with the daily operation of the restaurant. Louise, as executive chef, was primarily responsible for all aspects of the kitchen, and Alma focused her efforts on standardizing procedures and setting up systems to control food, beverage, and labor costs.

The new owners were pleased that they were able to make a small profit after their first year of operation, but they were concerned that employee turnover rates had escalated to just over 100 percent. While still below industry averages, they realized that if they did not somehow stop the “revolving door of employees,” their business would run the risk of failure. Alma understood that as her responsibilities had grown, she no longer was able to devote her full attention to new-employee orientation. She decided to turn this task over to a small team of loyal employees who had been with the restaurant from the start. She reasoned that if anyone “knows how things work around here,” these employees do.

Less than three months into the second year of operation, turnover had increased to nearly 200 percent. Alma and Louise both felt that they were hiring quality applicants, and they agreed that the problem lay somewhere within the orientation and training program. One night, after a particularly grueling day, the two sat down over a bottle of wine to discuss the problem and explore their options.

QUESTIONS

1. What should the owners' first step be to control the escalating turnover rates? What areas of the operation should they focus on to uncover the apparent flaws in the orientation and training program?
2. How might Alma have better prepared her “loyal team” for taking over orientation and training responsibilities? Which aspects of orientation and training should a restaurant's owner or manager be responsible for, and which aspects should be turned over to other employees?
3. If the restaurant were franchised and part of a large chain, how might a chain's system of orientation and training differ from that which Alma and Louise have put into place? What similarities might there be?
4. Are the challenges Alma and Louise are facing unique to such independent restaurant owners and operators or are they commonplace? Explain your answer in detail.

KEY TERMS

Workplace orientation An introduction of new employees to the workplace so that they can learn what is important to the organization, to management, and to fellow employees.

Socialization A process through which new employees begin to understand and accept the values, norms, and beliefs held by others in the organization.

NOTES

1. Sandra Sucher and Stacy McManus, “The Ritz-Carlton Hotel Company,” *Harvard Business Review* (March 2001).
2. William Werther, *Human Resources and Personnel Management* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1983), 280.