



New Hire Orientation Done Right

By Mike Bryde

Think back to the most recent addition to your team. How did you ensure the right messages were communicated upfront to that new person? If you can't remember doing much more than dropping off your company's employee manual and taking him or her to the usual welcome lunch, you might want to rethink your approach to orientation. Companies spend significant resources attracting the best people, and those costs will grow even more as the workforce shrinks dramatically over the next decade. So why do so many of us drop the ball the moment someone signs an employment contract?

The fact is it's not enough to be helpful and nice to a new hire. What you do and say in those first few days can have a lasting impact on what that person will accomplish during their time at your company. Imagine the performance of a new employee who is immediately made to feel welcome. Now imagine the performance of a new employee who is made to feel welcome, trusted and valued.

I offer my own first week with The Refinery as an example. On a Friday afternoon, four days before I was scheduled to begin work, I received a call from my new manager. Two Refinery consultants were scheduled to kick off a leadership development program for a large client. One of the consultants had fallen ill, and, while the other consultant could run the session alone, everyone agreed that an extra set of eyes, ears and hands would be invaluable. "Could you get on a plane this Sunday?" my manager asked, completely serious. It seemed a little crazy that they'd want me to go—I didn't even have business cards or a company email address yet—but I was thrilled by the opportunity. Of course I said yes.

So there I was, flying across Canada the day before I technically started my new job, about to spend a week on the front lines of the business. Since it was my first position out of university and really the beginning of my career, naturally I was nervous. But beneath that was a deep and powerful realization: The Refinery was sending me on this trip because I was truly trusted and valued. Not surprisingly, I felt determined to excel in my new role and prove to my company that they'd chosen to trust and value the right person.

Now I realize that sending all your new employees jet setting around the continent could get costly, so let me make it clear that it wasn't the trip that affected me most but its underlying message. As I was sitting on that plane, going over my colleague's notes, it struck me that the things I was told in my interviews—the reasons I chose to come on board in the first place—were actually being put into action. For your next new hires, make a point of doing something early on that demonstrates your intentions as an employer, as well as your expectations of them as employees. Assign an important project to the new gal. Invite the new guy to an important meeting. You'll show new employees that you're prepared to make good on those interview promises, and inspire them to do the same.