

Give new employees blue carpet treatment

MEETING A NEW EMPLOYEE'S EXPECTATIONS WILL ENSURE A HIGHER RETENTION RATE.

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Meeting expectations is undoubtedly one of the most critical elements in ensuring a successful placement, and yet this

is an area that often receives scant attention from HR professionals. Having made a job offer, which has been accepted, HR professionals need to ensure that the new employee receives "blue carpet treatment". Not to be confused with the name of rapper, Snoop Dogg's eighth album, "Blue Carpet Treatment," my reference to "blue carpet treatment," alludes to the importance of treating new employees like royalty, making them feel welcome, cared for and supported throughout the notice and the transition period.

Robert Gallagher observed that: change is inevitable – except from a vending machine. While this may be true, it is important too to recognise that change is always uncomfortable. Having accepted a job offer, candidates will inevitably feel insecure, as they leave the old and familiar and transition into the new and unknown. Candidates will inevitably ask, "Have I made the right decision? How can I be certain?"

The employer needs to be aware of these concerns. They also need to recognise that it is during this period that the new employee is particularly vulnerable to counter-offers, from their current employer and other prospective employers.

Talent is scarce and that is why we can justifiably speak about a global war for talent. Finding the right person is often very difficult, time consuming and it may be very expensive. Having found the right person, it is imperative that the new employee has a great employment experience from the first interview onwards. This is what is meant by receiving "blue carpet treatment".

HR professionals need to guide new employees through the transition period. This entails covering the basics, such as making regular follow-up phone calls to reassure the new employee that they have made the right decision. HR professionals should ask – have you resigned? How did it go? Is there anything I can do to assist you?

Undoubtedly, one of the most important aspects is to ensure that expectations of both parties are met. Here, I am reminded of Dennis Wholey's observation that "expecting the world to treat you fairly because you are a good person is a little like expecting a bull not to charge you because you are a vegetarian."

When the offer is finalised, it is imperative that both parties have a common understanding of what to expect. Although organisations often email their offer of employment, I believe it is always advisable to meet with the candidate. This provides the new employee with an opportunity to ask questions, to clarify issues and to ensure that both parties are on the

same page.

HR professionals need to ensure that the new employee understands the rules and benefits. There may be instances where the total costs to company may be higher, but the new employee will clear far less cash than expected. Discussions upfront will prevent such a situation from arising. Different interpretations around salaries and benefits are detrimental to the relationship. They may damage the employer/employee relationship, irrevocably causing the parties to part company within the first three months.

The "blue carpet treatment" also entails ensuring that long before the employee starts work, all documentation has been completed, a desk and a telephone line has been assigned, the computer profile has been set up, stationery has been issued and formal meetings have been scheduled so that the new employee can be briefed properly.

Even before their first day at work, new employees should, ideally, receive "guardian packs." Packs should include company information and policies, information about the company structure, values and even photos of people with whom the new employee will interact.

Collectively, these measures will not only make the new employee feel very welcome, are more likely to stay, but will also enable the individual to "hit the ground running" from day one.

People are undoubtedly an organisation's greatest asset. Ensuring that expectations are properly managed is clearly a business imperative. It also goes a long way towards making your organisation one of the best companies to work for.

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