

Induction is a powerful retention tool

USE YOUR INDUCTION PROGRAMME TO CREATE A GOOD FIRST IMPRESSION.

VICKI MARAIS-SWANEPOEL

(t) The old saying, “First impressions are lasting,” is still valid. Some experts say that it takes as little as ten seconds to create the first impression. While candidates for job interviews are always told to ensure that they create a very good first impression, employers are never told that they too need to create a good first impression.

Induction creates the first impression: it also reinforces why the new employee chose to work for your organisation. Careful thought and preparation can transform staff induction from a “must do,” a matter of compliance, to a powerful productivity and staff retention tool.

Induction should always form part of an organisation’s “blue carpet treatment” - treating new employees like royalty, and making them feel welcome, cared for and supported. The process starts long before the new employee joins the organisation.

Last month I pointed out that before their first day of work, new employees should be given a pre-employment or “guardian angel” pack, containing a letter of welcome, a proper job description, vision and value statements, company policies, and information about company

structure and products. It would be helpful to also include photographs of key people with whom the new employee will interact.

Don’t forget that proper planning ensures that even before the new employee sets foot in the building for her first day of work, a desk and a telephone line has already been assigned, a computer profile has been set up, stationery has been issued and, where applicable, a mentor has been assigned.

Induction should always be a centralised HR function. This approach ensures that new appointees receive a company perspective rather than a departmental perspective. Such an approach prevents a situation from arising where employees are told, “While this is the official company line, we do things differently in our department.” An added benefit is that friendships are forged with other new appointees across departments and divisions. This is very good for business.

Line management, however, remains fully accountable for proper induction. HR needs to hold line management’s hand throughout the process, ensuring that all relevant induction sessions are booked well in advance, and that the new employee is never left “at a loose end”.

Induction should commence the moment the new employee walks through the door. She should be given an Induction Programme outlining activities, topics and meetings that have been scheduled, and any training that will be provided. Proper planning ensures that relevant staff members or managers are available to meet with the new employee, and that sufficient time has been allocated to address issues and topics properly.

The Induction Programme should cover the basics, the location of

the notice board, the canteen, the organisation’s mission and goals, values, ethics, the importance of integrity, corporate social responsibility, safety and emergency procedures and the organisation’s dress code. Organisations should never lose sight of the fact that induction also provides a wonderful opportunity to develop existing staff, by involving them in the process.

Having been fully inducted into the organisation the new employee should not only have a very good understanding of her role, but a clear understanding of her employer’s expectations. Properly inducted, she is able to hit the ground running soon after joining. This should translate into higher levels of productivity, greater loyalty, better morale and increased job satisfaction.

A cautionary, however, is to ensure that the new employee is not overloaded with information. It is important, too, to ensure that any concerns that the individual may have are addressed upfront.

Hiring costs are high and, given the shortage of skills, there is an ongoing war for talent. Organisations do not want to squander time or money recruiting people only to discover that some of these individuals leave their organisation shortly after joining.

Research confirms that proper induction can play a critical role in employee retention. Although individuals are often blamed when there are early day fall-offs, organisations should accept their share of the blame for not doing enough to make new employees feel welcome, valued and empowered.

Fortunately, organisations can avoid this situation by ensuring that their Induction Programmes create the right impression. *(HRJ)*