

A Red Carpet Welcome

Remember your first few days at your present job? Were you excited? Nervous? Did you worry about your ability to complete the tasks given to you or the impression you would make on your new co-workers? Perhaps you were concerned about the impression your new co-workers would make on YOU.

You would not be alone if you were feeling a little lost during your probationary period. Many people do. Since you know how it feels to be the “new kid on the block,” you are the perfect person to put new employees for your company at ease.

An employee’s first impression of your company is one key to whether they stay or go, and whether they engage or become disengaged.

Here are just a few tips to help you give them a great first impression.

It Starts BEFORE the First Day

SEND A WELCOME LETTER – When you hang up the phone after having said “You’re Hired” take five minutes to write a welcome letter to your new team member. Better yet, send a letter to their loved ones!! Welcome their spouse and/or children to your “family” and outline, specifically, the qualities their loved one has that got them the job! You’ll blow your new recruit away with your thoughtfulness and be letting her know that family is important to you too.

SET UP REALISTIC EXPECTATIONS – One reason why turnover occurs within the first 90 days is that the employee’s expectations of the job are incongruent with the reality once they arrive. If there are difficulties attached to the job, be up front about them during the interview process. Be honest, clear and forthcoming. It’s part of ensuring you’ve got a good fit!

CALL IN THE TROOPS – Early turnover also occurs when new recruits don’t feel part of the team. Enlist the aide of your current employees by having them send welcoming emails, make phone calls and write notes to welcome their new co-worker.

On The First Day!

BE THERE! Be sure you schedule new employees to come in on days when you and their immediate supervisor are available. One HR Director scheduled new employees to come in at the same time as current team members. On their first day the newcomers would be sitting in the lobby, 15 minutes early, while their new co-workers ran in 5 minutes late, chatting, rushing, grabbing coffee and ignoring them. To solve this problem, she now has new recruits come in a half an hour after everyone else, and ensures that plenty of people are available to give a good welcome.

BE PREPARED! Have their work area stocked with all the tools they need to do their job effectively!

MAKE ORIENTATION FUN! Just say NO to boring training videos. C'mon, you know you've walked into the training room and found new recruits asleep in front of the television. What does that say about the effectiveness of your training? (Might even be a clue as to the type of workers you're hiring – but that's another topic for another day.) One company sends their newcomers on a scavenger hunt to find key people, the copy machine, and other important information! It's a great way to break the ice, have fun with training and encourage others to mingle with their new co-workers.

HAVE A WELCOME PARTY! Invite co-workers to a coffee and chat event and include ice-breakers and games that will help them get to know their new team member. One company had teams of long-time employees interview their new co-workers and then perform a song or rap about what they learned. Laughter filled the room and as comedian Victor Borge once said, "Laughter is the shortest distance between two people."

GET TO KNOW THEM! Offer a form that your new recruits can fill out that will tell you a little about their life outside the office. Learn about their family, their hobbies, their favorite restaurants, etc. This will give you the information you need to effectively reward them for a job well done – with a gift certificate to their favorite store! Be sure to personally introduce them to co-workers with similar interests.

Keep It Comin'

CHOOSE PARTNERS CAREFULLY! Pairing newcomers with a mentor or ambassador is a great idea. However, make sure you are pairing him with someone who loves their job. You don't want your new recruit spending the day with someone who will "sing like a canary" about everything that is WRONG with the company.

LUNCH WITH THE BOSS! Have lunch with your new team members periodically and proactively ask for their feedback, opinions and how you can help them succeed in their job. Be sure to follow up!

GO TO THE SOURCE! If you want to know how to best welcome your new employees ASK your current ones this question: "On a scale of one-to-five how welcome did you feel when you first started your job here." If their answer is anything less than a five (being the best) then ask, "What could we have done to have made it a five?" Then make changes accordingly.

Finally, ask yourself, when the first 90 days are up, how do you keep that red carpet out? Do you continually reward and recognize employees? Do you strive to care about them as human beings with lives outside of your company? Do you continually ask for feedback and try to improve your employee relations? As a co-worker to others, do you refrain from gossip and appreciate each other's differences?

If you are hiring well, laying out the red carpet and keeping it out for the long haul, you may find that employee turnover lessens and superstar spirit just grows and grows. Never miss an opportunity to say – “Welcome. We’re glad you’re here.”

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