

# **Section B**

***Welcoming New Employees***

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# Welcoming New Employees

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## **Make Them Say, “I Am Welcomed, Therefore I Belong!”**

Most organizations are great at celebrating the departure of a beloved co-worker. Why are we often so awful at welcoming a new one? Have you experienced starting a new job only to have your co-workers and supervisor ignore you during the first week? If so, you understand the effectiveness of even a little enthusiasm! Some simple celebration methods might include: a letter of welcome signed by the director, a company t-shirt or hat, and have pizza or a cake.

Old-fashioned welcome wagons were once used to deliver goodies to new members of a community. You can establish your own “welcome wagon.” Freebies that aid the new hire in their job and reinforce the belief that company employees are glad they are there and want them to succeed. As an example, a map showing nearby eateries is helpful and appreciated. (An invitation to lunch from co-workers each day during the employee’s first week is even more welcoming!)

Examine your process for welcoming new employees from the perspective of the new employee. Anticipate their anxieties, as well as their questions. Provide a glossary of company acronyms, buzzwords and FAQ’s so they don’t have to ask the most basic questions. Distribute a “Help Source” card that provides the names and e-mail addresses of people who are pre-designated for questions. You may also want to assign a departmental “mentor” to assist with questions and the new employee orientation process during the employee’s first month.

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## Guiding Principles

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*The following are the Guiding Principles for Welcoming New Employees developed by the Workforce and Economic Research Division.*

1. Welcoming new employees begins with the **job announcement**. We try to make the announcement exciting and welcoming. We want people to apply, and to come to their interview, excited about the potential of working with us.
2. The **interview** itself is a wonderful opportunity to welcome new employees, and beyond that, to make sure everyone who gets an interview leaves with a favorable impression of the Oregon Military Department as a work place. How do you make the interview such a positive experience? First, make every interaction -- even as you're contacting the applicants to set up the interviews -- friendly. Second, help them to feel as relaxed as possible in the interview. Welcome them; carefully explain the process; include some appropriate humor to lighten things up; encourage them as they answer the questions. Third, let them know the time frames for next steps once the interview is completed ... and stick to those time frames. And fourth, whenever possible, personally contact (i.e. phone) those who got as far as an interview, but who are not moving forward to second interviews or job offers.
3. When you make **the job offer**, bend over backwards to meet their requests. Be flexible on starting dates, their need to finish up projects in their old job, salary steps (when appropriate), flex time, etc. Demonstrate caring leadership before they even start as our employee.
4. When they show up for **their first day** on the job, make them welcome. Make sure managers and other staff (those who will help with training and orientation) are ready for them. Make sure there's an organized list of things they need to do (paperwork, logistics of the office, parking, etc.). Let them see that we've given thought to making this as easy as possible for them.

Each of our managers has their own particular style on “Day One.” One of them shared the following list of things he specifically covers with the new employee ...

*My Commitments to You*

- *Clearly communicating mission and goals of the organization to staff.*
- *Consistently advocating for quality information.*
- *Ensuring that the program meets the needs of our customers.*
- *Providing regular ongoing feedback to staff.*
- *Facilitating, coaching and supporting staff's efforts to succeed.*
- *Providing meaningful recognition of staff success.*
- *Supporting diversity in the workplace.*
- *Setting clear direction and following through.*
- *Making effective employee selection and promotion decisions.*
- *Exhibiting integrity and honesty.*
- *Trusting staff to perform professionally.*
- *Dealing courageously with difficult situations.*
- *Giving special treatment when the situation allows.*

5. Within their **first week**, take new employees to lunch. Introduce them to the Oregon Military Department, and emphasize that it's a noble and good thing to be a public servant.
6. And finally, demonstrate your **core values** -- Confidence, Competence, Commitment and Courage -- daily. It's not just about the first day on the job. It's about checking in with the new employee frequently, asking how things are going, if they need anything, do they have any questions, etc.

## **Top 10 Things New Employees Should Know**

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1. Welcome. You are very welcome here. We're glad to have you as part of the team.
2. This is a wonderful place to work. Interesting. Challenging. Great people. Opportunities for growth. Fun. Caring. Honorable vocation.
3. We believe in Quality Information.
4. We believe in Customer Service.

### ***We – the leaders of Oregon Military ...***

5. ... will be honest with you, Always. We expect you to be honest with us, too.
6. ... will trust you to do a good job. We expect you to accept that trust.
7. ... must meet all requirements of law, policy, and of the contract, and we must meet the business needs of our Department. With those criteria met, we will make every effort to provide you with a flexible, supportive, positive, encouraging, and fun work environment. "Everyone gets special treatment around here."
8. ... will be courageous. If we need to talk to you about something that's not quite right, we'll do it in a caring, courteous and polite manner – but we will have the conversation. We won't shirk our responsibility to deal with difficult issues.
9. ... set high standards and we expect a lot from our staff. Show us that you're willing to meet these expectations, and we'll provide training, advice, guidance, and we'll do everything we can to help move your career forward in coming years.
10. ... believe confidentiality is very, very important. Make sure you understand our confidentiality rules; be cautious in your handling of confidential information and if you have any doubts at all, check with your manager.

# **Culturally Competent Environment**

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## **Ensure a Welcoming and Culturally Competent Environment**

Cultural Competence refers to the process by which individuals and systems respond respectfully and effectively to people of all cultures, languages, classes, races, ethnic backgrounds, disabilities, religions, genders, sexual orientation and other diversity factors in a manner that recognizes, affirms and values the worth of individuals, families and communities and protects and preserves the dignity of each employee.

Operationally defined, cultural competence is the integration and transformation of knowledge about individuals and groups of people into specific standards, policies, practices, and attitudes used in appropriate cultural settings to increase the quality of services, thereby producing better outcomes.

Here are some ideas to help you create and maintain a culturally competent and welcoming environment in your section or unit.

- Make sure your offices are easily identifiable, clean, free of clutter, accessible, and in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act.
- Ensure that decor reflects/celebrates the people we serve.
- Call HR for guidance if employees need special equipment.
- Remind staff that some individuals may be sensitive to smells.
- Conduct conversations containing confidential information in an area where they cannot be over heard.
- SMILE - this is seen as welcoming in most cultures.
- Be careful about assumptions or stereotypes that you may have.
- Treat employees as individuals. Let them lead you in how to behave culturally; i.e., mirror their eye contact, personal space and timing in communication.

- The goal is to treat all people as individuals, find out their needs, and meet or exceed their expectations. To meet the needs of our multicultural employees, be flexible and sensitive. We may need to spend extra time and adapt our traditional skills to meet the variety of cultures of employees.
- Help preserve dignity and respect with positive reinforcements and mutual respect for one another.
- Employ active listening techniques by confirming you understand what is said and meant.

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- **To Reduce Employee Turnover:** Employee turnover increases as employees feel they are not valued, or are put in positions where they can't possibly do their jobs. Orientation shows that the organization values the employee and helps provide the tools necessary for succeeding in the job.
- **To Save Time for the Supervisor:** Simply put, the better the initial orientation, the less likely supervisors and co-workers will have to spend time teaching the employee.
- **To Develop Realistic Job Expectations, Positive Attitudes and Job Satisfaction:** It is important that employees learn as soon as possible what is expected of them, and what to expect from others, in addition to learning about the values and attitudes of the organization. While people can learn from experience, they will make many mistakes that are unnecessary and potentially damaging. The main reasons orientation programs fail: The program was not planned; the employee was unaware of the job requirements; the employee does not feel welcome.

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All new employees should complete a new employee orientation program that is designed to assist them in adjusting to their jobs and work environment and to instill a positive work attitude and motivation at the onset.

A thoughtful new employee orientation program can reduce turnover and save an organization thousands of dollars. One reason people change jobs is because they never feel welcome or part of the organization they join. The most important principle to convey during an orientation is your commitment to continuous improvement and continual learning. That way, new employees become comfortable with asking questions to obtain the information they need to learn, problem solve and make decisions.

## **Tips for Orienting New Employees**

Human Resource professionals and managers need to consider key orientation planning questions before implementing or revamping a current process.

*What are some key questions you might ask before revising your existing orientation process?*

1. What things do new employees need to know about this work environment that would make them more comfortable?
2. What impression and impact do I want to have on a new employee's first day?
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*This excerpt is taken from a Society For Human Resource Management (SHRM) white paper written by Lin Grensing-Pophal in August 2001.*

When a new employee joins your section/organization you have an opportunity to "make or break" the relationship. What new employees experience in their first days on the job will determine whether their tenure is long or short-lived. What employees really need and want to know during those critical first days is often very different from what their organizations focus on.

Employees first need to know about the issues that impact them individually and to feel secure on a personal level before they can look beyond their needs to the needs of the department or organization. That's why the first day on the job probably isn't the best time to talk, in any detail, about the organization's strategic goals, budget, or competitive strategies.

Orientation, therefore, can be viewed as a three-step process, from the specific (where should I park?) to the general (what are the organization's long-range goals?). Employees are first interested in "*the things that affect me, personally*". Next they want to know about "*the things that affect me as a member of my department*". Finally, they are interested in "*the things that affect me as a member of the organization*".

### ***Personal***

- Parking
- Attire
- Reporting
- Sense of belonging
- Hours
- Travel
- Flex schedule
- Phone/PC
- Approval processes
- Time Sheet

### ***Section/Department***

- Sense of contribution
- Assignments/Duties
- Communication preferences
- Coworkers

### ***Organization***

- Mission, vision, values
- Strategic plan
- External issues
- Partners
- Recognition