

Basic Elements of New Employee Orientation

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SUMMARY

New employee orientation provides firms with an opportunity to impart valuable information to new hires. Some aspects of the orientation occur during the first few days of employment while others extend over a period of weeks or months.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS ARE LASTING

An individual's experiences during the initial few days or weeks in a new position will often determine whether he or she becomes a satisfied long-term employee. An employee's introduction to the firm is the beginning of the employment relationship, and as such should be carefully planned and executed.

ORIENTATION AND EDUCATION

While certain aspects of employee orientation take place in the first few days of employment, an effective orientation process may extend over weeks or months. Among the information a firm may wish to impart to employees are the following:

- Mission, culture, and values
- Markets and projects
- Available internal resources and support services
- Available technology and other special tools
- Employee policies, handbook, or guidelines
- Compensation and employee benefits
- Job responsibilities, project team organization, organizational structure
- Professional development and learning opportunities

INITIAL STEPS

Beginning work in a new environment can seem alien to anyone; covering the basics early helps new employees understand the "rules of the road" and feel comfortable in their new firm. The following activities are among the more prosaic elements of

an employee's initial orientation. Overlooking these basics can cause a new employee to think that the firm is poorly managed, a first impression that may be difficult to dispel later.

- Review and assist the employee in the completion of all necessary payroll, tax, and employment-related forms; verification of employment eligibility; emergency notification forms; and home contact records.
- Introduce the employee to the studio, project team, or other relevant work group. Consider asking the employee to share his or her portfolio or work samples with coworkers.
- Give a complete tour of the firm, including introductions to support service teams—reception, shipping, payroll, and information services.
- Review all employee benefits and assist the employee in completing all necessary benefit enrollment forms and payroll deduction forms.
- Provide the employee with a copy of the employee handbook, and review all employment policies and office procedures, including items such as use of company cars, travel reimbursement, meeting room scheduling, and safety procedures.
- Review telephone systems and messaging programs, computer equipment, software, and networks, e-mail systems, and CAD standards.

ENTRY LEVEL DESIGNERS

In addition to general orientation, when hiring a new graduate into an entry-level position, it may be necessary to orient the individual to the business environment and to his or her responsibilities as a professional in the firm. Architects beginning their first job need to learn what makes a firm profitable, how to manage their time, and how to work effectively in an environment that is very different from academia. Work processes, billable percentage targets, reporting and accounting systems, and role

expectations may need to be explained to employees just entering the profession.

ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTORS

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RESOURCES

More Best Practices

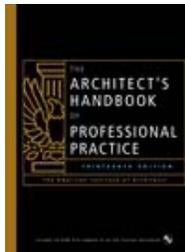
The following AIA Best Practices provide additional information related to this topic:

- 07.05.01 Five Factors of Employee Satisfaction
- 07.02.01 Sample Interview Questions
- 07.03.01 Definition of Architect Positions

For More Information on This Topic

See also “Recruiting and Hiring,” by the same authors, *The Architect’s Handbook of Professional Practice*, 13th edition, Chapter 9, page 229.

See also the 14th edition of the *Handbook*, which can be ordered from the AIA Bookstore by calling 800-242-3837 (option 4) or by email at bookstore@aia.org.



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- Employment