

Williston State College

Onboarding: Guidelines for Conducting New Employee Orientation



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Introduction

Onboarding and new employee orientation are terms that can be used interchangeably. Onboarding (as defined by the Corporate Leadership Council) is:

“The process of performing all the agency actions that support new hire assimilation. These actions occur in the period between offer acceptance and full integration of the new hire into the agency.”

Our collection of new employee orientation materials can also be referred to as an "orienting kit." These guidelines are based on a collaboration of best practices found in New Employee Orientation.

First impressions are important! An effective employee orientation provides new employees with a positive impression of employment with the College and greatly impacts the new employee's motivation, productivity and job satisfaction. An employee who gets off on the right foot is more likely to have better job performance and to want to stay on the job longer. Recruiting and training a new employee involves considerable staff time and effort and you want the investment to be a long-term one.

It is key to prepare for a new employee orientation in advance of the new employee's start date. The last thing you want a new employee to say on the first day is "Nobody knew I was starting today." At the end of their first day and in subsequent weeks, you want new employees to be able to confirm/believe that they made the right decision to accept the position. Starting a new job can make new employees feel that it is "sink or swim" time. Be careful not to overwhelm employees during their first few days on the job. Meeting and trying to remember names of 20 or more people per day can be very stressful. Being assigned the task of reading voluminous materials for hours at a time can also crush enthusiasm for the job as new employees feel there is no "real work" to do yet.

Who is Responsible for Orientation?

While a Human Resources Representative may play a role in recruiting new employees and ensuring they have received all relevant policies/forms, the managers and supervisors of new employees should “own” or take the lead on the rest of the orientation process. There are many reasons for this, including:

- The work team needs to understand how important it is to get new team members assimilated and performing successfully.
- Managers and supervisors are responsible for getting new employees “up to speed” at work, and they are the ones who will be negatively impacted if the orientation is not done correctly.

The new employee’s manager, supervisor, co-workers, and buddy if assigned (i.e. someone to help answer general questions about the workplace) are the ones who can most effectively listen to and understand what the new employee needs in order to succeed. Some agencies may decide it is beneficial to include hands-on training, rotation, or job shadowing as part of the onboarding process.

Objectives of Onboarding

According to research it is critical for new employees to:

- Acclimate to the environment
- Assimilate into work group
- Affiliate with colleagues
- Foster a sense of purpose and belonging
- Socialize with others in department including those outside the work unit
- Transition into the organization

Advantages to Onboarding from the Employee/College Perspective

- Promote Williston State College as employer of choice
- Reduce grievances/complaints/lawsuits over misinformation or lack of information
- Enhance communication with employees about what is expected
- Reduce questions and mistakes by sharing information at the start of employment
- Reduce attrition – if people are confused or undervalued they may leave a position early in their career
- Reduce amount of time a supervisor or colleagues of a new employee spend reviewing the subjects of the Orientation Guide

Common objectives of onboarding:

- To build employee identification with employer
- To build positive attitude in new employees
- To communicate company culture, values, and priorities
- To encourage socialization and team building
- To help avoid misunderstandings
- To make new employees feel valued
- To model good customer service behavior to employees
- To prevent problems before they happen
- To relieve new employees anxiety and set expectations
- To shorten the learning curve of new employees

There are several reasons why new employees may be dissatisfied with their job including:

- Expectations about the job do not match reality
- The supervisor and manager have not taken the time to get to know the new employee and develop a good working relationship
- The new employee has not made any friends in the workplace

First Work Assignment

It is important to have new employees begin work on an assignment as soon as possible during the first week. Not only will it give new employees a sense of what is involved in the job, it will help them feel they are making an immediate contribution to your agency. Explain to new employees your management style and that used by other management levels. In addition, spell out the schedule and format of staff meetings and discuss how work is routed/assigned/approved.

Guidelines and Recommended Activities Pre-Arrival to Three Months on the Job

The information listed below is intended to help the new employee's manager or supervisor structure orientation activities during the first four weeks of employment plus an assessment of success of orientation at three months.

An effective orientation begins as soon as the employee is hired and continues well into the employee's first month on the job. These guidelines include a list of recommended activities designed to assist you with new employee orientations, organized by time period, from pre-arrival to the third month of employment.

These guidelines are intended to assist you, the manager or supervisor, with orientation activities related to a new employee's job, specifics of their duties, the workplace and workplace culture, and management expectations. They are not intended to cover topics that are part of the Human Resources hiring process. If you or the new employee has human resources related questions, please contact your Human Resources Representative.

Pre-Arrival

Payroll/HR Paperwork

- Complete Williston State College employment application and other agency employment application(s), if necessary.
- Send welcome letter confirming position, title, salary, supervisor, and location and time to report (see sample).
- Assemble an orientation packet including:
 - Copy of job description
 - Agency organization chart
 - Agency mission statement
 - Agency publications: newsletter, brochures, etc.
 - Agency-specific employee handbook, if any
 - Jargon and acronyms list (i.e. the Employee Guide)

Planning

- Call the new employee to welcome him to the job.
- Assign a "welcome coordinator" a new employee can call before they start their job.
- Select and work with the new employee's buddy on buddy role and responsibilities. Please see details on how to select a buddy under the separate section entitled, "The Buddy System."

Facilities/Systems

- Prepare the employee's work area and ensure sufficient office supplies, computer equipment, office keys, and telephone access.
- A new employee should be taken to a space that is neat, orderly, and ready for work to begin. It may contain a desk, chair, telephone, telephone list, locker, and other appropriate equipment such as a computer, as appropriate to the position.
- Make sure computer passwords are assigned.

Day 1

Announcing the new employee

- Send an announcement welcoming an employee to unit/department via global e-mail announcing the arrival of the new employee and the orientation timetable. Make a copy of it and give it to the new employees as well. It should include the employee's name and nickname (if appropriate), starting date, office telephone number, and a brief description of the employee's background and other relevant information.

Tours

- Supervisor should make every effort to be available to new employee on the first day to provide attention and convey a clear message that the new employee is important to the team.
- Meet in previously designated location for arrival and escort a new employee to work area.
- Show the new employee his workspace. Give the new employee an orientation schedule and a folder in which to place additional material.
- Tour the agency/building.
- Explain locations of bathrooms, vending machines or coffee shop, kitchen, microwave, water fountain or bottled water, ATM, and smoking areas if applicable.
- Show location of printer, fax, conference rooms, and recycling receptacles.

Introductions

- Current employees should wear nametags to facilitate a new employee learning the names of colleagues.
- Introduce the new employee to key personnel including co-workers, colleagues, and the receptionist.
- Introduce the new employee to the agency head and/or unit director, if possible.
- Introduce the new employee to his buddy.

Review Schedules

- Inform the new employee about what is going to happen the first day and first week.
- Review time and length of lunch and breaks.
- Review work schedule, including time and attendance requirements.
- Describe absence call-in protocol.
- Review the contents of the orientation packet (see "pre-arrival").

Facilities/Systems

- Review evacuation plan and other emergency procedures.
- Explain policy regarding eating food or drinking beverages at the work area.
- Explain the procedure for procuring supplies and show supply area(s).
- Explain parking provisions and/or public transportation options; provide local map.
- Explain mail system including showing mailroom or describing deliver/pick-up procedures.
- Explain telephone system including telephone number assigned and voicemail recording and retrieval. Distribute copy of telephone list.
- Explain computer systems, request password and access to any required programs.
- Explain policies/expectations for fax machine, copier, telephones, etc.

Week 1

Payroll/HR Paperwork

- Review pay schedule.
- Ensure new employee completes I-9 paperwork within three days (HR).
- Ensure new employee completes payroll paperwork for direct deposit and tax withholding (HR).

Review Schedules

- Ensure a new employee has a meeting time with his buddy.
- Explain office hours and review rules for after-hours or weekend access to the building.
- Stress punctuality and timesheet procedures.
- Explain the agency's emergency personnel policy regarding essential vs. non-essential staff.
- Explain policy on personal telephone calls and visitors.

Review policies/other important information

- Explain acronyms unique to the office/agency/secretariat.
- Explain the chain of command.
- Discuss performance expectations.
- Define the first job assignment.

Facilities/Systems

- Make arrangements for employee ID.
- Make arrangements for parking (if any).
- Add new employee to e-mail system, e-mail distribution lists, telephone directories, and telephone operator lists.
- Schedule technical training as necessary, including telephone or PC training.

Week 2

Human Resources items

- Remind new employee to complete and return any outstanding HR forms. Ensure new employee completes forms and returns them to HR within thirty calendar days of hire.

Communication/meetings

- Take a new employee to lunch.
- Supervisor should meet regularly with the new employee to answer questions.
- Have a new employee meet with his buddy on a weekly basis.
- Continue regular contact between buddy and assigned employee(s).

Week 3

- Solicit feedback from the new employee on the orientation process and job expectations.
- Buddy should meet with new employee on a weekly basis.
- Supervisor should meet regularly with the new employee to answer questions.
- Continue regular contact between buddy and new employee.

Week 4

- Establish performance goals.
- Supervisor should meet regularly with the new employee to answer questions.
- Have new employee meet with buddy on a weekly basis.

Months 1 and 2

- Supervisor should meet regularly with the new employee to answer questions.
- Have new employee meet with buddy on a weekly basis.
- Continue regular contact between buddy and new employee.

Month 3

- Employee Call Back Meeting: Should be completed within three to six months of hire. This meeting provides an opportunity for the new employee to ask additional questions, raise any concerns, get clarification, etc.

***Other Ideas to Welcome a New Employee
(If time and resources permit)***

- Pre-planned introductions: ask staff to introduce themselves and have them mention how they will be working with the new employee. It is also beneficial to include some personal element (i.e., hobbies) to help remember who is who and to help put the new employee more at ease. This also will assist in establishing a sense of place and meaning between employees.
- Make initial introductions either by walking the new employee around or having staff members meet in a group at a specified time and location.
- Host a 1/2 hour session with coffee or refreshments for the new employee and his colleagues and invite the agency head or unit director.
- Have agency employees sign a card welcoming the new employee.
- Prepare a welcome wagon/ “goodie bag” with discount coupons or brochures from area restaurants and stores.

The Buddy System

A new employee's orientation is greatly enhanced by setting up a buddy for the employee. Alternative terms to buddy include "sponsor" or "peer advisor." A buddy is not a substitute for the supervisor, but is someone who can answer the new employee's questions about the work environment and the workplace culture in a positive and encouraging way. Everyone remembers how difficult the first few weeks on a new job can be. The use of a buddy can supplement the team of managers, supervisors, and colleagues who work towards a common goal: ensuring that new employees feel welcome and have the resources to find any answers they need.

Preferred Qualities of a Buddy

A successful buddy will meet many of the following criteria:

- Has volunteered to be a buddy and will be available to the employee
- Can be given the time to be accessible to the employee
- Holds a job similar to that of the new employee (i.e. peer)
- Possesses a full understanding of the work environment (minimum length of service of six months or a year)
- Has a good performance record
- Enjoys working for the agency/department/work unit
- Is proud of the organization and enjoys his/her job
- Is well regarded by peers
- Has good communication and interpersonal skills
- Has patience and is empathetic
- Is trustworthy
- Exhibits a positive attitude
- Possesses a strong sense of confidentiality

The Role of a Buddy

A buddy's responsibilities include:

- Providing as much clear and concise information as possible to help the new employees feel comfortable in their work environment
- Being a resource on work rules, workplace culture and norms, and unwritten policies and procedures.
- Helping socialize the new employees with peers, joining them for lunch, etc.
- Identifying resources in the workplace
- Providing a tour of the workplace if the supervisor has not already done so
- Being available to answer questions
- Reporting any serious issues/concerns to HR or manager/supervisor
- Referring to appropriate resource
- Instilling a sense of belonging

Tips for Buddies

- You don't need to be an “expert.” Your personal work experience is important to new employees.
- It takes time to develop a relationship. Don't try to cover everything right away. Growth occurs over time.
- Don't try to force a relationship. Follow the lead of the new employee if he is receptive to being mentored by you.
- Accept that a new employee has his own perspective and work style that may be different than yours. Don't try to turn a new employee into your clone or best friend.
- Try to be an active listener.
- Keep a good attitude and stay in a teaching spirit.

Buddy Benefits

- Contribute to your team.
- Share accumulated knowledge and experience.
- Gain a better understanding of yourself through helping others.
- Maintain or create a fresh perspective.
- Develop leadership qualities.
- Make new friends in the workplace!

Williston State College Human Resources Division
Suggested Onboarding Checklist for New Employees

Please check off items below when completed.

Employee Name: _____	Hire Date: _____
Position: _____	Employee ID: _____

Pre-Arrival

- Schedule HR/Payroll meeting
- Send offer/welcome letter
- Assemble agency orientation packet
- Prepare employee work area
- Arrange telephone and computer access
- Select employee ‘buddy’
- Make “welcome call” to new employee
- Plan employee’s initial work assignment

Day 1

- Send email announcement to unit/dept.
- Provide orientation schedule to new hire
- Provide bldg./agency tour
- Key personnel introductions
- Introduction to “buddy”
- Review time/attendance requirements incl. lunch, breaks & absence call-in
- Review evacuation plan
- Provide office supplies if necessary
- Explain transportation/parking options
- Explain telephone/voicemail/email systems and policies
- Explain mail/fax/copier procedures

Week 1

- I-9 paperwork completed by 3rd day
- Ensure direct dep./tax w/h forms returned
- Add new hire to email system, email distribution lists & telephone directories
- Schedule weekly buddy meetings
- Explain pay schedule/timesheet policies
- Arrange security ID and parking (if any)
- Explain after-hours bldg. access
- Explain agency’s emergency policy regarding essential/non-essential staff
- Define first job assignment and performance expectations
- Schedule req. training i.e. PC/telephone

Week 2

- Ensure all outstanding forms are returned to HR within 10 days of hire
- Ensure all other outstanding HR forms completed and returned to HR
- Take new employee to lunch
- Continue regular meetings with supervisor and buddy

Week 3

- ❑ Solicit feedback from new employee re: orientation process and job expectations
- ❑ Continue regular meetings with supervisor and buddy

Week 4

- ❑ Hold planning stage to establish performance goals
- ❑ Continue regular meetings with supervisor and buddy

Months 1 and 2

- ❑ Continue regular meetings with supervisor and buddy

Month 3

- ❑ Schedule Employee Call Back Meeting to provide opportunity for new employee to ask questions, raise concerns, etc.

Optional

- ❑ Host dept. “coffee” session for employee
- ❑ Circulate “welcome” card for employee
- ❑ Present “goodie bag” to new hire
- ❑ _____
- ❑ _____

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- Arrange security ID and parking (if any)
- Explain after-hours bldg. access
- Explain agency’s emergency policy regarding essential/non-essential staff
- Define first job assignment and performance expectations
- Schedule req. training i.e. PC/telephone

Week 2

- Ensure all outstanding GIC forms returned to HR within 10 days of hire
- Ensure all other outstanding HR forms completed and returned to HR
- Take new employee to lunch
- Continue regular meetings with supervisor and buddy

Week 3

- Solicit feedback from new employee re: orientation process and job expectations
- Continue regular meetings with supervisor and buddy

Week 4

- Hold planning stage for EPRS/ACES & establish performance goals
- Continue regular meetings with supervisor and buddy

Months 1 and 2

- Continue regular meetings with supervisor and buddy

Month 3

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