



TenStep Supplemental Paper

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Corporate Kick Start!

From the word go, new employees are being made responsible for organizational success...

Employee orientation takes a detour ...

People beware! Do not be shocked if you are escorted directly to the conference room for a session on some strategic issue on the very first day of your new job! The detour from the traditional approach to employee orientation is becoming part of the new age phenomenon. Companies are by passing the “HR procedural sessions” with more intense, real-time, expertise oriented introduction to organizational working. They seem to believe that employees taken straight to the decision-making table can handle work-related challenges better than those who come through a rather soft and relaxed orientation module. The “jumpstart” encourages employees to deliver better and faster.

Does this imply that the traditional approach to employee induction and orientation is on its way out? No, not really. It would be incorrect to assume that employee orientation has become superfluous and obsolete. The process however has undergone a change. The change has been drastic and hence the number of corporations adopting the practice is rather low. The number however is steadily rising.

Circumventing obstacles

The proposition of speeding up employee induction definitely seems tempting. However, the ride is not as smooth as it sounds. For starters, most senior managers invest stingily in new managers’ terms of time and support. They believe that the latter’s experience with the corporate work culture is adequate to help them find their bearings. This assumption cannot however be applied across the board. Most new entrants are apprehensive about taking initiatives and exercising their social skills.

Workplace diversity (both cultural and generational) compounds the challenge. Cultural differences apart, the generation gap causes greater problems. New senior managers hesitate to approach their younger counterparts and vice versa. The most difficult hurdle though is the mindset of new managers. They are hesitant and so invest very little in terms of time and effort.

So, how does one circumvent these obstacles to ‘jump-start’ the careers of new managers?

Guidelines

Following are a set of guidelines that can help overcome hurdles and accelerate the process of “onboarding” new managers:

Interactive sessions

Engaging new employees in interactive sessions where senior managers apprise them of the company’s expectations during the first 90 days, the performance metrics adopted and

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feedback mechanisms is an effective way of getting new managers to hit the road. Such sessions help provide the former a better perspective of the organization and give them an idea of how they could contribute towards the accomplishment of organizational objectives.

Through these sessions senior managers can also get insight into the strengths and weaknesses of new managers.

Networks management

Senior managers need to have a good understanding of their new managers' span of professional network. Professional networks encompass close work relationships. This includes peers, subordinates and superiors with whom the new manager is likely to interact frequently. Starting from people who would assign jobs and responsibilities to the new managers to people who would help them accomplish the task, introduction to professional networks can be very effective in new manager onboarding.

In addition to networking with people who matter, a few corporations also include corporate values in their new manager networking agenda. For instance Brandz Corp., a retail giant, lists customer experience as a core corporate value, which is also an integral part of employee orientation. All new managers are required to spend a few days at the call centers and retail stores to experience cross-selling, merchandising and other operations that make customer experience enjoyable. Moreover, while mapping the professional network of a new manager, senior managers should ensure a right mix of experienced and the not-so-experienced employees.

Once the members of a network are identified, senior managers should arrange for interactive sessions between the new manager and his network of colleagues.

Reinforce

A single meeting with the network members is futile. Thus, senior managers should ascertain that they need to interact regularly to discuss issues of concern. If not, the meetings should be arranged to reinforce the significance of these professional relationships.

Technology and social bonds

Apart from the regular face-to-face interactions, use of technological interventions like the Internet and Intranet enhance the level of interaction between members of a network. Sending company-wide emails about new managers, listing their likes, hobbies and interests and their achievements in the previous job is a good way to start a professional relationship. This helps establish informal networks of people with similar interest. These networks play a critical role in the working of an organization, since they command the communication channels within an organization.

Traditional employee orientation is now limited to freshers from business school campuses. In the case of lateral induction it is employee onboarding that is taking the call. With an increasing number of corporations opting to jump-start the careers of their new managers, circumventing the hurdles is a challenge that needs to be met head-on.