# 6. Employing and managing people

## 6.7 Induction, training and development

### Preparing for the new employee

It is easy to forget that the selection process is only the beginning of the employment relationship, and the future of that relationship depends to a considerable extent on how the new employee is settled into the job.

Most labour turnover is among new employees, and work efficiency is reached only after a period of learning and adjusting to the new environment.

Once the candidate has accepted the job offer, the organisation must then prepare for the new employee's arrival and induction. Failure to attend to this can create a poor impression and undo much of the positive view the candidate has gained throughout the recruitment and selection process. A good induction programme reinforces positive first impressions and makes new employees feel welcome and ready to contribute fully.

By planning an induction programme, in consultation with trade union or other employee representatives if available, the organisation can quickly build on the positive attitude of the successful candidate. However keen new recruits may be, they may have anxieties about how well they will:

- get on with their co-workers
- understand the standards and rules (written and unwritten) of the organisation
- make a good impression on their new manager or supervisor
- be able to do the job.

A good induction programme makes business sense, whatever the size of the organisation, and whatever the job.

It introduces the newcomer not only to their immediate colleagues, but to other workers with whom they may have less day-to-day contact, including trade union representatives (if they are recognised in the organisation) or employee representatives on any staff committee or council.

### The induction timetable

Induction often begins before the person has actually started, in that the organisation will supply material as part of an initial 'information pack', or with the invitation to interview, or with the letter of job offer. This may be particularly important in jobs of a technical nature, where it is helpful for the new starter to be as well informed as possible about that side of the work. Clearly, learning the particular projects and

initiatives will have to be done in the workplace but much 'mental preparedness' can be undertaken in advance. The Company Handbook, and the Written Statement of Employment Particulars, can also provide essential information about the organisation and the job.

A good reception, with the line or personnel manager spending time with the new employee, is important on the first day. There may be further documentation to complete, perhaps a preliminary discussion about training either immediately or in the future, an explanation of the development opportunities that are available, and of course enough information to give the new starter a good grasp of the working practices of the organisation. Any particular health and safety requirements should be made known, together with details of whom to go to for help and advice during the course of their employment. Many companies use a 'buddy' system, where an experienced worker is nominated to assist the new recruit in all the day-to-day questions that may arise. It is useful to have a written checklist of the items that need to be covered in the induction programme. Not only does this give some structure to the induction but it also ensures that both the new starter and the manager know what has or has not been covered at any given time. In large organisations, such a checklist is normally drawn up by the personnel section in consultation with other involved staff, such as safety officers, line manager/supervisors, employee representatives (if appropriate), and training officers. In smaller organisations, the line manager normally co-ordinates this.

The induction programme may be spread over several days or weeks, and may incorporate specific job training, but the following points should be borne in mind:

- all employees need to be able to work in a safe and healthy manner. Recruitment and placement procedures should ensure that employees (including managers) have the necessary physical and mental abilities to do their jobs, or can acquire them through training and experience. Employers should have systems in place to identify health and safety training needs arising from recruitment
- people can take in only so much information at any given time, and should not be overloaded. It is important that health and safety is introduced in a structured way
- if there are special health and safety requirements, make sure the new starter fully understands their importance - otherwise there is the risk of being exposed to unnecessary danger or endangering their co-workers. All employees must know what to do in the event of a fire or other emergency
- setting out the plan of induction at the beginning avoids the problems that can arise in trying to arrange time in the future, when the employee is established in the job
- don't forget induction needs for shift workers or night workers. They may need some time on days, or modified shifts, to cover the induction period
- even if the induction period covers job training, try to let new starters do some practical work, as this will assist their learning and enable them to relate what they are being taught to what they will be doing.

The outcome of all this is that the new starter should have a good feel for the organisation, and should continue to feel that they made the right decision in joining the organisation.

## The induction process

Induction need not be a very formal process but it needs to be properly managed. In many organisations it will be carried out informally by the new starter's manager or supervisor on a day-to-day basis. Nevertheless, having a structured checklist to follow is useful for both parties. Most induction will consist of meeting and talking with new colleagues, watching activities and asking questions. It may be appropriate to provide certain information in written form; and if the organisation has a company handbook, this can often act as an aide memoire covering important aspects of the company organisation and how it functions.

If a group of new employees is recruited at the same time, it may make sense to hold group induction sessions on the common topics to be covered - discussion, videos, slide presentations can all add to the effectiveness of the programme.

Even people transferring from one part of the organisation to another need induction into their new area. Don't assume that they will know the relevant people or the skills they will need in the new job. However, they may need a more individually tailored induction programme to meet their particular needs.

## Employees who may need special attention

The new starter who has considerable recent work experience and is a confident, out-going individual may have a different induction need from the person with little or no experience, and who may be shy or reserved in this new work setting.

## School and college leavers

For school or college leavers, who may be nervous but excited at their first job, it is particularly important for the employer to encourage a positive attitude to work, and to allay any fears the new recruit may have. They need to be sure of their position in the company, and of the opportunities they will have to train and develop their skills.

Health and safety is a particularly important area to stress. Young people often have no feel for workplace hazards, and may be vulnerable to accidents. A group of young people together may get high spirited and, without proper guidance on safety, be unaware of the potential dangers. Young workers are seen as being particularly at risk, and employers are required to:

- assess risks to young people under 18, before they start work
- take into account their inexperience, lack of awareness of existing or potential risks, and immaturity
- address specific factors in the risk assessment. Employers are required to make a suitable and sufficient assessment of the risks to the health and safety of employees and identify groups of workers who might be particularly at risk.

## People returning to work after a break in employment, or changing their work situation

Men or women returning to work after some years caring for children or other relatives may feel apprehensive about the new job - even when they may have worked for the company in the past.

They may feel out of touch with developments, and in need of re-establishing themselves. Their induction programme needs to take this into account, offering training and extra help to settle in and become valuable members of the organisation.

This is also true of those who might have been living/working abroad, or who are changing their career focus.

## Employees with disabilities

Careful pre-planning can reduce the problems which may arise for employees with disabilities, whether in terms of access, equipment or dealing with colleagues. Specialist advice is available from the Disability Employment Adviser and the Disability Service Teams of the Department for Work and Pensions. The Department for Work and Pensions also operates the Access to Work Scheme, whereby assistance may be available in meeting the cost of any aids and adaptations required. These services can be contacted via the Job Centre network.

## Management/professional trainees

Commonly, management and professional trainees are not recruited for specific jobs but undergo further education and training after their employment commences. This may mean they are less able to be involved with practical work, and without care this can lead to a loss of interest and motivation. Their induction period should attempt to include them in appropriate work in the organisation if at all possible.

## Minorities

They should have the same induction programme as any other new starter, but attention should be paid to any sensitivities. Employers may need to be aware and take account of any particular cultural or religious customs of new employees who are part of an ethnic or religious minority so that misunderstandings do not occur.

ACAS' Equality Service can assist employers with free advice on the development and implementation of policies and practices for greater equality among the workforce.

## Who is responsible for the induction process?

There may well be several people involved in the planning and delivery of the induction programme. In a small company it may be the personnel officer, the manager or supervisor, and perhaps a 'buddy'. A larger organisation may call on the abilities and skills of many people.

These could include:

- the personnel or human resource manager. Their likely involvement would be to go over the terms and conditions, complete any necessary paperwork, and perhaps give an overview of the company organisation
- a competent health and safety adviser, particularly if there is a need for specific safety procedures or protective clothing, etc. This person assists an employer in applying the provisions of health and safety law
- the training officer
- the line or department manager. This person will normally provide the more local welcome to the organisation, explaining where that particular department or section fits with the whole, and providing the first round of introductions to the department
- the supervisor, who will have the greatest responsibility and interest in getting the new starter settled in and effective as soon as possible. This is generally where the use of a checklist can best be made, with the supervisor able to check easily what has been covered, what needs to be done, and any particular points that may need further explanationthe trade union or employee representative, and safety representative, to explain their role.

It is often useful to have a co-worker to act as a guide and adviser to the new recruit, even if the organisation does not have a formal 'buddy' system. This person can help in those everyday questions such as canteen facilities, introducing other co-workers, explaining the layout of the building, etc in an informal way as they occur. This process can also be a good way of providing a development opportunity to the person who acts as guide and mentor.

Try to follow up the new employee after a suitable period, perhaps six months, to check that the induction went well. This could be part of a general review for the individual.

## Further information

ACAS
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