Work Sheet – Inducting New Team Members

Most businesses under-estimate the importance of ensuring a smooth entry for new staff members. Yet, if you create a written and structured system for all new team members, and a happy and open environment, there are many advantages:

1. You will not forget to include anything you know from previous experience is important.
2. The new team member will immediately see you as an efficient business, giving high priority to team welfare.
3. You will get the most out of a person if you give them clear structure at the start, and at a time when they are naturally feeling confused and nervous.
4. The new team member is not left to draw negative or inaccurate picture of the company, its customers, and its processes. By encouraging feedback (by asking questions and giving them time) from the new team member regularly, you not only find out what they are not completely happy about or have misunderstood, but also create an environment for the new employee to see the company culture is open. Any team member, asked for their input, will always put more energy into the business because they feel part of it.
5. Everyone understands your clearly defined Rules of the Game (or Culture Statement) which means that the team members have greater flexibility to develop their skills within the rules. People often misunderstand the word ‘Rules’ because it sounds restrictive. Rules are, after all, generally there to be broken. However, we use the term *Rules of the Game* because sport provides a great analogy and explanation of the purpose.

*Tennis games always start with a knock-up when the rules don’t apply (balls can be hit outside the lines, returns can be made on the double-bounce, and you keep on serving until one goes in). Yet within a few minutes most of us are bored and are ready to move on to the match itself. As soon as the match starts we have to focus, try hard, move around more, think more intelligently, and concentrate on improving each shot so that we keep on getting better.*

Just as in tennis, team members will get bored if they don’t have the freedom to move around and develop their skills. Yet most companies don’t define the rules, and the team members don’t stretch themselves. Notice that, if your only rules are about time-keeping, your employee will treat the job as a ‘9 to 5’ experience instead of a business being run for everyone’s benefit.

1. One of the common experiences of new team members is that they feel out of their depth, out of their comfort zone, and unnecessary to the daily function of the business (which as new members they probably are). Commonly, it takes weeks or even months for us to find our feet. You can change that experience by making sure that they are on a structured Learning Programme from Week 1 and that you check up with them regularly. The Learning Programme should include some new experience every week (interaction with other departments, meeting customers or suppliers, lunch with other team members, new software programmes).
2. At the end of the first month, take them to lunch. Talk to them about other things than work to build rapport, then ask them for feedback on their first month: is there anything else they need, what would they like to see done differently for new team members in the future, etc. Remember to give them feedback too: make sure some of it is positive! Let the person have an idea of what you want to talk about so that they can give some thought to their response.

After the first month, modify the Job Description and set new goals to take the new employee up to the first 3 months of employment.