



3 TIPS TO HELP NEW EMPLOYEES GET A JUMP START ON PRODUCTIVITY

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Attorneys who employ associates and staff know all too well how costly it can be to maintain even one or two part time employees. However, it is even more expensive to replace those who leave for greener pastures. After all, you have invested significant time training the person and now you have to start all over again.

Hiring decisions made after adhering to an established process will yield better results than those made on the basis of a “gut” reaction. Hopefully, your firm already has such a process in place that includes a series of structured interviews, testing and checking references.

Once the successful candidate passes extreme vetting and accepts the position, the likelihood of a successful employment outcome is increased with implementation of a formal onboarding process. While the following suggestions require a commitment of time, the benefits far exceed the investment in terms of enhanced employee productivity as well as stability.

Prepare Ahead for Arrival

Most would agree that completing forms mandated by governmental agencies is boring. Keeping that in mind, why on earth would we ask a new person to spend part of her first day engaged in such tedium?

One suggestion is to create a Welcome Packet that can be accessed prior to the first day through Dropbox or by other means. The packet could include:

- Welcome letter
- Documents required by federal, state & local governments such as W-2, W-4 and I-9 forms.
- Documents needed by the firm such as direct deposit authorizations and completed health insurance applications.

- Short video uploaded onto YouTube which provides an overview of the firm's mission, culture and operational structure. While the orientation video produced by Sebben and Sebben is phenomenally entertaining, it would not necessarily be my style. Let me know what you think after you check it out: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zA-KBijGYzk>.
- FAQ designed to provide new hires with pertinent information. Ask your existing staff and new hires to add to this "living and breathing" document as they stumble across material that would have been helpful earlier on had they only known of its existence.

Extend a Hearty First Day's Welcome

To start your new hire off on the right foot, have a plan for the first day so that she feels comfortable and valued. You expect the "newbie" to put her best foot forward and your firm has the same obligation.

- Arrange for someone to be on hand (if you are personally unavailable) to greet the employee immediately upon arrival on the first day. After being shown to the desk or work space (which should be clean and cleared of unnecessary items), a complete tour of the office along with an introduction to other team members should be on the agenda. Naturally, lunch will be offered as a welcome gesture.
- As part of the orientation, provide the following items (as appropriate) along with an inventory checklist which is signed by the individual acknowledging receipt:
 - All basic office supplies
 - Business cards
 - Computer
 - Key
 - Credit card
 - Cell phone
 - Phone manual for cell phone and land line (Each person should be capable of making conference calls, utilizing voice mail as well as performing other basic functions)
 - Employee manual

Facilitate Integration into Firm Culture

- Time spent clarifying terms of the employee manual and answering questions is a good starting point for integration. Don't forget to have an acknowledgement signed that the personal review of the manual took place. Discuss expectations with respect to conduct in the firm including dress code, personal use of e-mail and internet as well as the required work hours for the individual.
- Talk about the types of clients the firm typically represents and outline the client onboarding process. Attorney rules of professional conduct should be explained to new staff members with

particular emphasis on the duty of confidentiality. New lawyers should be required to at least skim the rules as a reminder.

- Provide an overview of the technology utilized by the practice, emphasizing your expectation that the new hire will participate in training and diligently follow all processes in this arena. I have been told of new associates who are stuck “in the old ways” and can’t or won’t comply. Modern firms must operate with modern technology or they will be surpassed by those that do.
- Review the job description with the new employee, fleshing out what success will look like. All too often, supervisors fail to create concrete expectations and are disappointed when an unarticulated standard remains unmet.
- Outline when performance reviews will be given as well as the criteria for awarding bonuses and raises.

Moving Forward

At some point, the onboarding phase morphs into the retention phase. By helping your staff and associates live up to and even exceed your clear standards, the firm’s productivity will improve with the clients being the ultimate beneficiaries.