



New Hires – How soon will they become High Performers?

Historically, the first 90 days has been the time employers “test out” the new hire. It’s even been called the “probationary period”. This mindset generally does little to set up the new hire for lasting professional success – it only serves to add stress and chaos to an already impressionable time period.

Consider this: *“Up to 25 percent of new hires leave their job in the first 12 months [22% within the first 45 days] and more than 50 percent of new hires disappoint management within their first year on the job,”* says Tom Armour, co-founder of a Toronto-based human resources consulting company.

Instead, how about looking at the first 90 days as a launch pad; an investment in the future – the new hire’s and your company’s. Strong starts tell your new employee that you have strategically added this role, find his/her expertise and experience vital to your company’s growth and that you are invested in his/her success. Without a proper plan to indoctrinate new hires, employers risk creating more havoc than value through miscommunications and unnecessary missteps. *This initial time period sets the tone – what message are you conveying?*

Set them up for success. You can do a number of proactive simple steps to launch a new hire’s career at your company. As basic as it sounds, make sure they start with the necessary tools! I’ve seen many employees start without a computer, phone, email address or business card. Getting a head start with a “ready-to-go” workstation, a warm welcome, the employee guidebook, access to the company intranet, an organizational chart, their job description, and the first week’s orientation schedule (including one-on-one conversations with their new team members and mentor, project meetings, site visits, tour of the office, lunches, etc.) are all straight forward initiatives to build trust and excitement.

Share the Company’s Road Map – Goals, Key Initiatives & Priorities. While you may have discussed this during the interview process, it’s important to reinforce the direction you see the company going and how you plan to get there. You want your new recruits to not only buy into your vision, but be inspired by it. This helps your new employee understand how to best make decisions and allocate resources. If your new hire is a departmental lead, this will make the business plan for which he/she is accountable congruent with your big picture. You are always building alignment.



Set Expectations & Provide Feedback. If you want your newest employees to achieve peak performance, make sure you are clear about your expectations, provide regular feedback and coach them for excellence. Let's face it – you have expectations for them in their new role. Why not tell them explicitly what you want and need from them?! Set immediate, attainable goals to keep the focus on execution. If they are off track, it's important to course correct quickly, and equally important to acknowledge specific successes to cultivate their potential. Remember to share with them why you hired them in the first place – explain specifically how their job creates value.

Some firms start key personnel with a customized "Integration Plan" that spells out the purpose of their position, key objectives, roles and responsibilities, critical success factors with timelines, as well as identification of resources for support and training. This can be a powerful aligning and expectation-defining tool.

Fresh Eyes, Fresh Perspective. Take advantage of the fact that you have just hired a professional with a fresh look at your business. This new person may have experience to leverage about how you can operate more efficiently, add increased value or open up new markets. Be open to how they see their new professional home – they may see things you don't! You can balance that new employee eagerness with some structure, focus and direction so they have context of the organization, making their fresh perspective helpful, not distracting.

Build a Brand Ambassador. No matter what your new employee's role is, you'll want them to truly understand your business, your core values and how you create value for your clients. Not only will it be a source of pride for them as they assimilate into the team, but it will ensure they "walk the talk" of what differentiates your company.

Be Accountable for their Success: Employers need to own the success of their employees. Not only is turnover costly, but rapid turnover creates an unhealthy culture. Consider providing a mentor—someone different from the supervisor—who can help coach the employee through the first 6 months of employment. Set up regular check ins with new employees—and make keeping those appointments a high priority.

How will you transform your new hires into high performers?

Recognize that integrating on a new person into the team isn't simply about filling out the paperwork. Encourage your new team member to ask questions and get a deep understanding



of each department's contributions to the whole and the dynamics of the team. From day one, your new hire should experience a sense of belonging and an indication about how they will fit in – and contribute to - the organization and its culture. As a leader, you set the tone for the company culture, and culture drives performance. The more intentional you are about it, the more likely you will create a rich environment for growth.

Serving as business therapist, Karen Natzel of K Communications helps leaders cultivate robust, high performing company cultures. Contact: Karen@natzel.net | 503.806.4361