



Helpful Tips For Training New Staff Members

Providing appropriate initial and ongoing training for new staff members is essential, not only in terms of preparing individuals for their new position, but also in retaining them for a longer period of time. Trained staff members are more knowledgeable and possess a diverse array of skills, enabling them to provide quality services that help the organization accomplish its mission. This article provides useful tips for training new staff members.

1. Upon hire, all new staff members should participate in an employee orientation program. Determine who and how many individuals will orient the new staff member. Will it be the new hire's immediate supervisor, a human resources (HR) employee, some other individual (e.g., former employee), or a combination of these individuals? For example, the immediate supervisor may provide specific training regarding the new employee's job duties and responsibilities, while a HR representative may provide a general orientation to the organization's programs and services. Regardless of who conducts the training, an orientation training schedule should be developed for each new employee (e.g., who s/he will meet with, when they will meet, and what will be covered).
2. Develop an employee orientation program that includes, but is not limited to, the following components:
 - a. An overview of the organization, including its mission, vision, programs, services, staff members, board of directors, collaborative relationships, funding sources, etc.
 - b. An overview of the position's job duties (highlighting all essential functions), responsibilities, and work expectations (e.g., travel, evening and weekend hours).
 - c. An overview of all employee benefits, including, but not limited to, medical, dental, and vision insurance; short-term and long-term disability insurance; life insurance policy; 401 k plan or other retirement plan; vacation, sick, and other types of leave; and other benefits, if applicable.
 - d. An overview of the organization's regular and personnel policies and procedures.

- e. A tour of the organization's facility and introduction to all staff members.
 - f. Where the individual's office is, what equipment (with passwords, if needed) is available for him/her to use, and where s/he can access office supplies.
3. After orientation, there is usually training specific to the new employee's probationary period. Training during this period is generally more extensive, as you're trying to bring the employee up to speed, as quickly as possible. The main focus should be on the employee learning and becoming proficient at his/her job, how it relates to the organization's other positions, and how it helps the organization accomplish its mission. The new employee and his/her immediate supervisor should meet at least weekly to ensure the employee is learning and applying the knowledge and skills necessary for ultimate success.
4. As information and technology changes, new ideas and theories emerge, and research findings are made available daily, you'll want to provide opportunities for your staff to increase their knowledge and skills in areas critical to their respective jobs. Thus, an ongoing training program should be developed and implemented. Items to consider for an ongoing training program include:
- a. Do you want the training to be conducted internally, by current members, former staff members, or board members? The latter two groups may include individuals who possess expertise in certain areas. You can also invite staff members from other organizations to present at a staff meeting.
 - b. What external training opportunities are available for your staff? Are there other nonprofit organizations or governmental agencies that provide training that could benefit your staff? Which organizations have workshops or annual conferences that your staff members have attended in the past?
 - c. Are you taking advantage of all of the different training modalities available today, such as teleclasses, teleseminars, and webinars? Your staff members can easily participate in these training events while remaining in the office, as they only need access to a computer and/or a phone.
 - d. Are there specific work-related books, e-books, newsletters, journals, magazines, or other publications that you want your staff members to read initially and/or on a regular basis?
 - e. Do you have a training budget in place for staff that provides ample opportunities for learning and growth? Although many organizations cut training when they are forced to tighten their belts, this may harm the organization in the long run, as their staff will have outdated knowledge and skills. In addition, when staff

salaries are low, many employees see training opportunities as a benefit or plus, which could contribute to employee retention.

- f. Do you maintain a list of training programs and resources that staff can easily access and review? Responsibility for updating and maintaining this list should be assigned to one employee (e.g., HR representative, training coordinator).
- g. Have you developed and implemented an approval process for handling individual requests for training, including the appointment of a staff member (e.g., HR representative, training coordinator) to approve training requests? You want to ensure that all staff members are provided an opportunity for attending training events.

Providing initial and ongoing training to staff members is necessary in order to maintain a qualified pool of employees. The provision of diverse training opportunities can also result in employee retention, as staff members value training, understanding how important it is to keep their knowledge and skills fresh and current. Trained staff are better service providers, helping the organization carry out its mission in a more effective and efficient manner.

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If you want to make positive changes in your professional life, and create the job or career you desire and deserve, then working with Executive & Life Coach, Sharon L. Mikrut, is the solution. Although her specialty is in partnering with nonprofit executive directors and managers to maximize their resources in a competitive environment, she is passionate about working with all individuals committed to personal and/or professional growth. Visit her website (<http://www.createitcoaching.org>), Nonprofit Professionals blog (<http://www.createitcoaching.com>), or Empowerment blog (<http://www.createitcoaching.net>) and sign up for her free nonprofit or life coaching newsletter.