

CULTURE HACKER
REPROGRAMMING THE EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE™

How to Build a General Orientation



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As we all well know from our interactions with people throughout our lives, first impressions are critical. We've all heard the saying, "you don't get a second chance to make a first impression," and while that's not entirely true, overcoming a poor first impression is definitely much more difficult than putting in the effort to get it right the first time.

When it comes to your new hires, the orientation day is a perfect chance to form a strong first impression. Orientation is an employee's first day (or two) on the job. It should provide an experience to the new employee that helps them connect emotionally to the business while also establishing the key elements of the brand, culture, and customers. And it is one of the moments an employee will remember often—so make it memorable in a positive way. This guide outlines the important parts of an orientation day, as well as provide some ideas for how to make those experiences memorable and impactful for your new hires.

Start with a Welcome

We recommend that a senior manager or owner be involved in the first day by personally welcoming the new hires, if possible. This helps the new hires feel that they are important, and know that their arrival was not only expected, but highly anticipated by the company. Knowing that this is one of the very first interactions the new hires have with the organization, ensure that this welcome helps them feel out what the culture of the organization is like—as owners and senior managers should be well-prepared to do.

During the welcome, the manager or owner should go over the new hire schedule, and the goals or desired outcomes of the onboarding and training period. They should also note who will be the new employees' point of contact, should they have questions about the schedule, or about the content they're learning. Finally, if hiring on multiple people, the welcome should include a getting-to-know-you activity for the new hires to get to know each other a bit and begin forming relationships.

Introduce the Brand

As we mentioned to start, the first day is a great time for new hires to learn about the brand, business or customers, and culture. When introducing the brand, here are some key points to hit:

- Review the history of the company and its ownership.
- Introduce the company's mission and vision.
- Review the brand pillars/standards that define the company's product, services, and customer experience.
- Review the brand promise: what your customers expect from the company.

Once you've reviewed the brand with your new hires, we recommend involving them in a quick activity to help bring the brand information to life. Have each new hire create a 30- to 60-second elevator pitch where they have to introduce the company to someone who knows nothing about it. Then, have them present it to the group. Give positive feedback, while ensuring that they understand the brand and are able to incorporate some of the key ideas shared in the session.

Introduce Your Business and Customers

When introducing the business and customers, be sure to include the following:

- Review the key demographics of your customer or client base.
- Review key accounts.
- Ideally, have a video of some of your customers talking about what they value most about the company and its products/services. If you don't have a video of this kind yet, share some recent customer feedback from surveys or other feedback tools.

To help your new hires connect with the business and customers, we recommend another activity. Provide new hires with a story about one of your customers (it can be made up) and ask the new hires to consider how they could deliver the best possible experience to them. Have them present their ideas to the group, and then be prepared to share any feedback on those presentations.

Introduce the Company's Values and Culture

It is critical for new hires to get a sense of what working for your company will be like. We recommend a thorough review of the values that all employees, including managers, should adhere to when they act and interact while at work. Each value should have clearly defined behaviors that allow others to see if the values are being upheld. This is a great time to reinforce as well that these values are the price of entry into the organization, and employees will not be successful without adhering to them. This should not be news to your new hires, as, ideally, these values were introduced in the interview process. Hopefully, your new hires even recognize them.

We have an activity to help new hires get in touch with the values of the organization as well. We recommend having them split into small groups or pairs. In those pairs, instruct them to talk together about each value, what it means to them, and how they plan to bring each value to life through the listed behaviors and others. Then, have each group share their major discussion points.

Reflection

At the end of the welcome day activities, we recommend inviting your new hires to reflect on what they learned so far. Ask open-ended questions, such as “What did you learn about today that you are most excited to experience?” or “What about our brand, customers, or culture stands out most to you?” Ensure each new hire shares with the group. Ask as well for any questions that may have surfaced—this should be done throughout the day, often, to ensure questions are answered as they come up.

Handover to Department

Towards the end of the orientation day, the new employee should be introduced to someone from their new department and given an overview of some critical information. We recommend covering at least the following:

- Where and how to clock in, if necessary.
- Where the nearest restrooms and employee entrance are in relation to their workspace.
- Where to have lunch or take a break.
- Who their direct supervisor is, or, who they should contact in case of questions or concerns starting on the next work day.

Orientation Best Practices: Creating a Memorable Moment

Finally, we'd like to leave you with some ideas for best practices you can incorporate to make your new hires' first day a memorable experience:

- Have a welcome breakfast to allow new hires to meet each other over food.
- Provide a lunch for new hires with owners or senior executives who can give additional insights into the brand and culture.
- Give new hires the opportunity to take home or experience some of the company's products/services. New employees are not always former customers—they need to experience the company's products or services in the first week to be able to really understand how they fit into the brand.
- When the new employee is handed over to their department, ensure there is a card or gift to make them feel welcome. Have their new coworkers all sign the card, indicating their excitement at having the new hire join the team.
- If possible, try to avoid completing paperwork or reviewing rules on the first day. Have the new hire complete any paperwork at home prior to or after their first day. Make the handbook available online for the employee to look over as needed. Make reviewing any rules a part of the new employee's onboarding with their new department, which will begin once orientation is complete.

Ensuring that new hires gain a positive first impression of your organization is a challenge. By making each moment intentional, we know you will make that experience a great one and set them up for a successful future with your organization.