Managing an Effective Department Orientation

Do you remember your first day on the job? Were you confident or anxious? Were you introduced around? Did you feel welcomed and informed? Did you feel you had all the information necessary to perform your job satisfactorily? Did you understand what was expected of you? Chances are, your early experiences help shaped your impressions and perceptions about your work, colleagues and the University in general.

Most employees begin their new job feeling a bit anxious. They worry about how their supervisor and colleagues will receive them and they worry about measuring up to their new job duties and expectations. They have many questions about their work environment, university policies and procedures, benefits and services and the overall culture and climate of the University.

Effectively orienting new employees does take considerable time and effort, but the time invested will pay huge dividends. A positive transition can leave a lasting impression with a new employee for years to come, but negative impressions brought about by bad experiences with colleagues, unclear expectations and an unpleasant work environment are next to impossible to undo.

Additionally, employees tend to establish either good or bad patterns early in their employment. Once bad work habits or unacceptable job performance are tolerated or become ingrained, they are hard to change. University orientation programs and resources can help with the transition, but steering employees onto desirable paths is the primary responsibility of supervisors and managers.

An Effective Departmental Orientation:

- Creates a favorable impression of the University and the employee’s work environment.
- Introduces the employee to departmental goals, policies, procedures and protocols.
- Conveys the supervisor or manager’s expectations.
- Assists employees in developing quality working relationships with colleagues, supervisors and students.
- Addresses the anxieties and uncertainties of the new employee’s experience in the early stages of employment.
- Provides employees access to information and resources necessary to ease their transition into the workplace.
- Introduces employees to the benefits and support services available to help them maintain a high quality of life.
- Forges a "partnership" between the employee, the hiring department and other service units to help the employee become an effective member of the university community.