

THE FIRST DAYS IN A NEW JOB – WHAT TO EXPECT

So, you accepted a new job and you are anxiously awaiting your first day in the new role. What can you expect? Is there anything to prepare for? Some of your clues may come from your interview. For example, if you met with your new company at their offices, you will at least have some idea of attire and office surroundings. But, this is just a start and in most cases you will have lots of questions. This is all quite normal. Every company has a different way of handling the “Onboarding” process it seems, everything from the insurance programs, to the types of forms to fill out and file away.

Companies are increasingly recognizing the need for a more formalized “Onboarding” process as evidenced in a study done by the Aberdeen Group in August, 2006. In 2005, nearly 60% of all companies did not implement or plan to have a formal process to bring new hires on. Today, this number has increased dramatically and only 24% of companies do not implement or plan to implement a formalized onboarding process. For you as a new hire, just realize that not all companies are there yet. Good onboarding programs include Forms Management (getting the required paperwork done), Tasks Management (notification of activities required of the new hire), and Socialization (making new employees feel engaged and connected).

Here is what you, the new employee can do. We recommend being proactive. The first place to start is to **open up the lines of communication**. Once you have accepted the job, you should begin to list out all the questions that come to your mind and begin asking. You will naturally have questions, and you are entitled to ask them. Your part in the process of communication is to be efficient about it and find out with whom to ask the questions. Do your best to group your questions together so that you are not contacting someone several times a day, but rather will have most ready to ask when the time is right. The key here is that the only dumb question is the one not asked. In most cases, companies will be organized well enough to have all the right answers and forms together for you in the appropriate time. Simply asking the hiring manager what their process is and what to expect is where you could start. Most questions will be answered right away. But, expect that you will have more questions over the first few days and again this is quite normal.

Have and open mind. What you have dreamed about what your first day of work might be like could be quite different than what actually happens. This is no one’s fault. It is again just natural to have some pre-conceived notions of what it would be like, based largely on previous experiences and in many cases your actual experience may be quite different than what you dreamed about. Remember this is not the movies, it is

real. A lot of companies recognize that the Onboarding process is important, but yet have some considerable work to do to improve the process. This is where your “open mind” comes into play. Recognize that there will likely be several required forms, trainings, and introductions that must be done and some of them will be a bit dry. Actually, if you are starting a new job in a fairly high level at your new company, you can use the “experience” to sometime later help your company to improve its process, so take some notes.

To Bring: Don’t be afraid to ask what to bring to your first day, such as identification, personal numbers, etc. If you weren’t given paperwork to fill out in advance of your first day, expect that you will have a good deal of it to fill out on that first day. A good suggestion is to simply bring your own note book, or planner if you keep one. Chances are, you will be introduced to a number of new people, and it can be easy to forget a name or two, so having something to write in will not only be handy for you, but will give others the appearance that you came prepared.

To Ask and Prepare: Generally some of the first things in an orientation you may learn, include some of the first objectives in your new role. It is important that you not only listen in carefully, but also take some notes. Don’t be afraid to ask your new supervisor what is expected to be accomplished in the first 60 to 90 days. Everyone, even CEO’s, need their first period objectives in mind. In some cases, it is you that will make out the objectives. In fact, for most new candidates into jobs, especially sales and management one of the very best things you can do after the interview and acceptance and before you start work is to build a **90 day plan**. Some employers are even requiring their new hires to bring a 90 day plan to the first day of work. The plan could include lists of contacts, target markets, objectives, and a general feel for the types of resources needed to accomplish the goal in the first 90 days.

Day one, be a sponge, listen in. This is the time to find out who’s “plugged in” and who will be your best internal resources. Make notes, observe, and listen carefully. Active listening is the key here. That means watching also for what is inferred. Many believe that the best managers start their job and almost exclusively ask questions and listen for the first month or so. Resist the impulse to introduce yourself to new co-workers by telling them everything you’ve done and how good you are. You did that in the interview and you have the job. Find out what is important to your manager, or whomever you will report to. In some cases this is a board of directors. Take notes on what is important to report timely, important metrics that are expected and what dates are important on your calendar.

Feedback: Feedback is generally always welcome. Both your employer and your recruiting consultant will appreciate feedback, good, bad, or indifferent. Your recruiting consultant can be not only a valuable counselor, but also could help work out possible

issues that might crop up after you start. Most things can be worked out even if there is a surprise that comes up. Your recruiting consultant is also available to act as a sounding board and offer suggestions, and in some cases help resolve issues, but the key is without proper feedback, nothing can get changed.

Companies that hire you, through no matter what source will invest heavily into your “onboarding” and orientation. They have a vested interest in making sure that the process goes well, but as stated earlier, some do a better job and are more prepared than others. No matter who the company, it takes months to recapture the investment in new hires, no matter what level the job. A measure of patience coupled with a good dose of open communication on your part does go a long way to helping the process. After all, you want to be successful in this exciting new job, just as much as the company that is investing in you. They will be looking for active productivity as soon as possible. The sooner both you the employee and the employer can make that happen, the happier all will be. In the Aberdeen Group report, 65% of Best in Class employers cited that time to productivity had the biggest impact on developing good onboarding programs compared to Laggard companies, so take notes. You may make such a good impression in your first few months that they will make you the new mentor for new hires and assign you to help improve the company onboarding experience.

