

ORIENTATION FOR NEW EMPLOYEES PROMOTES RETENTION

Although studies have shown that improving orientation programs for new employees can increase employee retention by up to twenty-five percent, many companies bore new employees with lackluster programs that are little more than discussions of retirement and other benefits programs or reviews of the employee handbook. Traditional orientation programs stand in stark contrast to a company's aggressive recruitment and courtship of new employees. Some companies work harder getting new employees to the wedding than in getting the marriage off to a good start.

Since good employees are hard to retain, the welcome is very important. Corning Glass discovered that new employees who went through a structured orientation program were sixty-nine percent more likely to be with the company after three years than were those who were left on their own to sort out the job.

How can new employee orientations be improved? First, hiring managers and their teams should be responsible for new employee orientation. Most orientations are conducted by human resource personnel, who are well-intended but ill-equipped to assure that new employees are welcomed, assimilated, and prepared to produce. Senior managers in the new employee's specialty area should be involved in the orientation program, beginning *before* the first day of work and continuing for at least one month afterward. There is no substitute for having a top manager involved right at the beginning. An introduction to the leader is impressive, whether it be a welcoming telephone call from the general manager or face-to-face time with a senior executive on the first day on the job.

Take Your Best Shot

Orientation is a company's first and best shot at instilling core organizational beliefs and spirit. A new employee's joining a department should be celebrated by the group. Why? Employees who are not adequately welcomed feel no sense of loyalty or gratitude toward a company and, consequently, are inclined to leave. Who wants to spend the first days on the job reading the policy manual?

While there are no quick fixes for orientation programs, there are strategies that can increase employee retention and reduce the time needed to make newcomers productive. New employee orientation is a process, not an event. It takes time but actually speeds up the adaptation process. The best orientation programs:

- ❖ make new employees feel welcome;
- ❖ provide a broad view of the company — its past, present, and vision for the future; and
- ❖ clarify expectations about employee work and behavior.

Excellent employee orientation programs also include first-day introductions to the supervisor, the human resources manager and a "buddy."

The Little Things Count

In orientation programs, little things mean a lot. Getting a "heads up" on unwritten rules such as dress code, gaining acceptance, the "real" rules, and the boss's expectations are necessary to employee assimilation and retention. A small tangible gift, preferably with the company logo, helps the employee feel valued as part of the organization. Finally, new employees should understand how their jobs fit into the company's big picture. Employees stay, in part, because they know their importance in the organization's success. New employees want to feel that they are doing something that contributes to the bottom line.



Many companies now provide pre-start orientation to new employees. Before the first day on the job, they can receive their business cards, a company welcoming video, their new e-mail addresses, organizational charts, and booklets listing frequently asked questions. For out-of-towners, information on the locale is also included. Some companies identify a "welcoming coordinator" to help new employees prior to the first day on the job.

Successful employee orientation programs change the early weeks of employment from a "probation period" to a time of welcome, education and productivity — and in the process retain an employee for the long term.

PSP: A UNIQUE DIFFERENCE FOR OUR CLIENTS

Fifty years ago, PSP pioneered the application of psychological measurement to business decision-making for the selection of employees, based on the research of such notable industrial psychologists as Frederick Herzberg (then PSP's Director of Research). The professional rigor of PSP's testing met all of the requirements of Title VII of the 1964 Equal Employment Opportunity Act and survived the legal challenges that doomed other testing approaches during the 1970s. PSP's commitment to well-grounded research continues today, and our psychologists use hundreds of empirical research studies to relate individual characteristics and abilities to superior business results.

Unique Measurement Systems

Today PSP's research expertise continues to develop unique measurement systems. For example, PSP has developed standards for the selection of high-performing production workers in China, the United Kingdom, Australia and Mexico. We also own a research-based

software program which uses paired comparisons to gather data for 360° evaluations and organizational climate assessments. PSP's OJQ (Objective Judgment Quotient) approach has passed judicial muster as a valid and objective approach for decision-making in corporate downsizing. Our clients regularly call on us for strategic planning and sensitive decision-making assistance in all areas where objectivity and reliability are required.

Objectivity and Reliability

Because PSP is committed to assessment processes that are statistically valid and reliable, we have been able to refine our measurement techniques continually, creating databases of benchmarks for individual positions that are used worldwide, in five languages, at over 500 locations. Our clients can be confident that regardless of the challenges they face in today's (and even

tomorrow's) economy, PSP can help them make the right decisions, whether it be selecting CEOs to lead effectively in a team-oriented workplace or hiring production workers who learn fast and exceed production goals. For example, a new client's use of PSP's employee selection process enabled it to eliminate two weeks of a five-week training course because the new employees learned faster than had the previous new hires.

PSP's commitment to continual learning and improvement has enabled us to use technology effectively for our clients. Turn-around time has been decreased, helping clients to make the fast decisions required in today's highly competitive employee market while retaining the research-based statistical validity and reliability necessary for the decisions to be correct.

PSP's Flexible Processes

PSP's flexibility allows us to adapt to the individual needs of our clients. Recently, we conducted a customized executive teambuilding session for one client and a few weeks later

conducted an entirely different teambuilding session for a second client who wanted to initiate self-directed production work teams. Succession planning is another area where PSP has such broad experience that we can work equally well with both family-owned businesses and multinational corporations. All PSP solutions are customized to address the client's particu-



lar situation. Our popular career development assessments, for example, are customized for each individual; we do not believe that one size fits all.

Meeting Clients' Changing Needs

By adapting and upgrading our services through continual research and feedback from our customers, we continue to develop systems and services for successful human resource decisions in the 21st century.

BEHIND THE FAÇADE – THE IMPORTANCE OF TESTING FOR WORK BEHAVIORS

Why do people fail in their jobs? If you think it is usually because they lack the skills or ability to handle the technical or intellectual demands of the job, you would be wrong. It is much more likely that they can't get along with their co-workers and superiors, or that they don't have the necessary drive and work motivation to

get the job done, or that they can't tolerate the stress of the job. People usually fail at work because they lack certain personal qualities, qualities that are both measurable and quantifiable. At PSP, we refer to these measured qualities as **Work Behaviors**.



Every job, from an entry-level position to CEO, requires its own set of skills and abilities, and each job also requires its own work behaviors. For example, outside sales candidates need a lot of physical drive and energy if they are to become high sales producers. On the other hand, air traffic controllers do not need a great deal of physical drive and energy, but they must be careful, well-organized and extremely attentive to detail.

Personal Relations: Key to Success

The work behavior we term **Personal Relations** is a critical quality we can measure, and it is often more important than skills and abilities. It determines whether job candidates will get along well with those around them or be abrasive and abusive — a disruptive element in the work team. If there is one key advantage to Work Behavior Testing, it is the ability to identify and screen out hostile and belligerent job candidates before they enter the workforce. Once hired, they affect not only their own jobs but also harm the performance of everyone around them.

While skills and knowledge are amenable to training and education, work behaviors are intractable. High-energy adults were probably high-energy infants; no amount of training will transform a slow, lethargic person into a dynamo. Likewise, positive and negative attitudes toward other people are developed throughout childhood and are well entrenched by

adulthood. Training is not likely to transform a hostile employee into a warm and caring person with whom people like to work.

Interviews Are Not Enough

Skills and knowledge are easier to evaluate than work behaviors in the traditional human resources setting. Diplomas, degrees and certificates, coupled with job knowledge and skills testing, are available to evaluate job-related abilities. On the other hand, the evaluation of work behaviors is generally determined in pre-employment interviews. This is particularly true today since past employment information is often difficult to obtain. Unfortunately, sophisticated job candidates with good social skills are very adept at hiding their negative qualities in interviews, while the less socially skilled are often assumed to be more negative than they really are.

Even the most skilled interviewers often fail to uncover those rudimentary negative qualities that will eventually lead to failure. Work behaviors testing reaches behind the façade to identify and quantify a job candidate's negative as well as positive personal qualities.





WHAT'S
NEW
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PSP

- ❖ Provided succession planning and career development for a 600-employee, three-state, automotive company in the Midwest that has been a PSP client for 30 years.
- ❖ Led an executive team-building session for an industrial minerals company to realign its leadership and culture with its strategic mission and objectives.
- ❖ Initiated a training and development program for self-directed work teams at a manufacturing facility in the north of England.
- ❖ Developed a large-scale downsizing project required by the merger of two large chemical companies, by using PSP's Wyvern OJQ process to assure its objectivity.
- ❖ Conducted a large-scale employee retention study at a Fortune 1000 company.
- ❖ Launched a succession development program in a regional financial institution, using a 360° survey and executive assessment process.
- ❖ Designed a behavioral interview tool for screening applicants at a steel cord manufacturing plant.
- ❖ Completed a major validation study in a national homebuilding company that established significant links between pre-employment test results and job performance for both its sales and production positions .
- ❖ Welcomed new PSP support staff members Janine Thomas and Mildred McGough.



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TRAINING RESOURCES ON LEADERSHIP

Exemplary leadership is detailed in the harrowing story of *The Endurance*, the polar expedition ship that, during the early part of World War I, was trapped in a drifting icepack, then splintered into pieces, leaving the expedition stranded on ice floes for nearly two years. Its captain, the explorer Ernest Shackleton, through sheer dint of personality and leadership ability, managed to save every member of his desperate crew. **The Endurance: Shackleton's Legendary Antarctic Expedition** by Caroline Alexander, comes complete with photographs taken by the expedition photographer, Frank Hurley. The author describes Shackleton as "a leader who put his men first," showing, throughout the grueling ordeal, what courage and leadership are all about.

Learning his lessons from Shackleton's leadership during this excruciating adventure, Dennis Perkins has distilled Shackleton's exceptional skills into ten principles in his new book, **Leading at the Edge: Leadership Lessons from the Limits of Human Endurance – The Extraordinary Saga of Shackleton's Antarctic Expedition**.

One reviewer noted, "Anyone attempting to lead in the face of uncertainty and adversity will learn much from this engaging and compelling book." Mr. Perkins also gives us the benefit of leadership lessons he learned "leading at the edge" as a Marine Corps Infantry Officer in Vietnam and as an organizational leadership consultant. Published in May 2000, **Leading at the Edge** is extremely well-written, contrasting exemplary cases of leadership with examples from unsuccessful expeditions and businesses. We highly recommend both books.



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