

# Introduction to the Organization

## Learning outcomes

On completing this chapter you should know about:

- The aims of induction
- Reception of employees
- Initial briefing
- Formal induction courses
- The importance of induction
- Documentation requirements
- Introduction to the workplace
- On-the-job induction training

## Introduction

It is important to ensure that care is taken over introducing people to the organization through effective induction arrangements, as described in this chapter.

### Induction: what it is and why it is important

Induction is the process of receiving and welcoming employees when they first join a company and giving them the basic information they need to settle down quickly and happily and start work.

#### *Aims of induction*

1. Smooth the preliminary stages when everything is likely to be strange and unfamiliar to the starter.
2. Establish quickly a favourable attitude to the organization in the mind of new employees so that they are more likely to stay.
3. Obtain effective output from the new employee in the shortest possible time.
4. Reduce the likelihood of the employee leaving quickly.

Induction is important because it reduces the cost and inconvenience of early leavers. Employees are far more likely to resign during the initial months after joining the organization. First impressions are important as is the impact of the first four weeks of employment. Such early resignations cause disruption and create recurrent costs such as the costs of obtaining replacements, induction costs – training and the costs of lower productivity from new starters – and the costs arising from the gaps that occur before a leaver is replaced.

These costs can be considerable. The cost for a professional employee could be 75 per cent of annual salary. For a support worker the cost could easily reach 50 per cent of pay. If 15 out of 100 staff paid an average of £20,000 a year leave during a year, the total cost could amount to £150,000 – 7.5 per cent of the pay roll for those staff. It is worth making an effort to reduce that cost; giving more attention to induction pays off. This means considering the reception of newcomers, the information they are given when they join, the initial briefing, how people are introduced to their workplace, a formal induction course and induction training.

## Reception

Most people suffer from some feelings of trepidation when they start a new job. However outwardly confident, they may well be asking themselves, what will the company be like? How will my boss behave to me? Will I get on with the other workers? Will I be able to do the job?

These questions may not be answered immediately but at least general fears may be alleviated by ensuring that the first contacts are friendly and helpful.

### SOURCE REVIEW

#### Checklist for reception, Fowler (1996)

- Ensure that the person whom the starter first meets (ie the receptionist, HR assistant or supervisor) knows of their pending arrival and what to do next.
- Set a reporting time, which will avoid the risk of the starter turning up before the reception or office staff arrive.
- Train reception staff in the need for friendly and efficient helpfulness towards new starters.
- If the new starter has to go to another location immediately after reporting, provide a guide, unless the route to the other location is very straightforward.
- Avoid keeping the new starter waiting; steady, unhurried, guided activity is an excellent antidote to first day nerves.

## Documentation

A variety of documents may then be issued to employees, including safety rules and safety literature, a company rule book or an employee handbook. The latter should include the following.

#### *Employee handbook contents*

- A brief description of the organization.
- Details of basic terms and conditions of employment (hours of work, holidays, pension scheme, insurance, payment arrangements).

- Sickness and absence – notification of absence, leave of absence, certificates, pay.
- Company rules.
- Company procedures – disciplinary, capability and grievance.
- Union and joint consultation arrangements.
- Education and training facilities.
- Health and safety arrangements.
- Medical and first aid facilities.
- Restaurant facilities.

If the organization is not large enough to justify a printed handbook, the least that can be done is to prepare a word-processed summary of this information.

## Company induction – initial briefing

Company induction procedures should not rely on the printed word. The member of the HR department or other individual who is looking after new employees should run through the main points with each individual or, when larger numbers are being taken on, with groups of people. In this way, a more personal touch is provided and queries can be answered.

When the initial briefing has been completed, new employees should be taken to their place of work and introduced to their manager or team leader for the departmental induction programme. Alternatively, they may go straight to a training school and join the department later.

## Introduction to the workplace

New starters will be concerned about who they are going to work for (their immediate manager or team leader), who they are going to work with, what work they are going to do on their first day and the geographical layout of their place of work (location of entrances, exits, lavatories, restrooms and the canteen).

Some of this information may be provided by a member of the HR department, or an assistant in the new employee's place of work. But the most important source of information is the immediate manager, supervisor or team leader.

The departmental induction programme should, wherever possible, start with the departmental manager, not the immediate team leader. The manager may give only a general welcome and a brief description of the work of the department before handing new employees over to their team leaders for the more detailed induction. But it is important for the manager to be involved at this stage so that he or she is not seen as a remote figure by the new employee. At least this means that the starter will not be simply a name or a number to the manager.

The detailed induction is probably best carried out by the immediate team leader, who should have the following five main aims.

### *Induction to the workplace – aims*

1. Put the new employee at ease.
2. Interest the employee in the job and the organization.
3. Provide basic information about working arrangements.
4. Indicate the standards of performance and behaviour expected from the employee.
5. Tell the employee about training arrangements and how he or she can progress in the company.

The team leader should introduce new starters to their fellow team members. It is best to get one member of the team to act as a guide or ‘starter’s friend’. There is much to be said for these initial guides being people who have not been long with the organization. As relative newcomers they are likely to remember all the small points that were a source of worry to them when they started work, and so help new employees to settle in quickly.

## **Formal induction courses**

Formal induction courses can provide for new starters to be assembled in groups so that a number of people can be given consistent and comprehensive information at the same time that may not be forthcoming if reliance is placed solely on team leaders. A formal course is an opportunity to deliver messages about the organization, its products and services, its mission and values, using a range of media such as DVDs and other visual aids that would not be available within departments. But formal induction courses cannot replace informal induction arrangements at the workplace where the most important need – settling people well – can best be satisfied.

## On-the-job induction training

Most new starters other than those on formal training schemes will learn on-the-job, although this may be supplemented with special off-the-job courses to develop particular skills or knowledge. On-the-job training can be haphazard, inefficient and wasteful. A planned, systematic approach is desirable. This can incorporate an assessment of what the new starter needs to learn, the use of designated and trained colleagues to act as guides and mentors, and coaching by team leaders or specially appointed and trained departmental trainers.

These on-the-job arrangements can be supplemented by self-managed learning arrangements by offering access to flexible learning packages and by providing advice on learning opportunities.

### Introduction to the organization – key learning points

#### The aims of induction

- Smooth the preliminary stages when everything is likely to be strange and unfamiliar to the starter.
- Establish quickly a favourable attitude to the organization in the mind of new employees so that they are more likely to stay.
- Obtain effective output from the new employee in the shortest possible time.
- Reduce the likelihood of the employee leaving quickly.

#### The importance of induction

Induction is important because it reduces the cost and inconvenience of early leavers. Employees are far more likely to resign during the initial months after joining the organization. First impressions are important as are the impact of the first four weeks

of employment. Such early resignations cause disruption and create recurrent costs.

#### Reception of employees

Ensure that the first contacts are friendly and helpful.

#### Documentation

A variety of documents can be issued to employees, including safety rules and safety literature, a company rule book or an employee handbook.

#### Initial briefing

Company induction procedures should not rely on the printed word. The member of the HR department or other individual who is looking after new employees should run through the main points with each individual or, when larger numbers are being taken on, with groups of people.

## Introduction to the organization – key learning points (continued)

### Introduction to the workplace

New starters will be concerned about who they are going to work for (their immediate manager or team leader), who they are going to work with, what work they are going to do on their first day and the geographical layout of their place of work (location of entrances, exits, lavatories, restrooms and the canteen).

### Formal induction courses

Formal induction courses can provide for new starters to be assembled in groups so that a number of people can be given

consistent and comprehensive information at the same time that may not be forthcoming if reliance is placed solely on team leaders. A formal course is an opportunity to deliver messages about the organization, its products and services, its mission and values.

### On-the-job induction training

Most new starters other than those on formal training schemes will learn on-the-job, although this may be supplemented with special off-the-job courses to develop particular skills or knowledge.

## Questions

1. Why is it important to get induction right?
2. What are the essential elements of induction?
3. How should people be introduced to their workplace?

## Reference

Fowler, A (1996) *Induction*, IPD, London