10 Elements of a New Employee Orientation Plan

By Cheryl Toth, MBA
1. A welcoming "Day 1"

Make Day 1 fun and comfortable. For instance, honor each new employee's arrival by putting his name on a welcome board and providing continental breakfast for the team. Or, put a welcome flyer or handwritten note on the new employee's desk. If you have them, practice branded t-shirts, hats, or travel mugs are thoughtful new employee gifts.
2. New hire checklist

This keeps orientation efficient and ensures you don't forget important steps. Government, tax, and employee benefit forms are a given. Include the assignment of computer login credentials, office keys, uniforms, and time cards. Add the review of the job description and employee manual as well as activities in this list of 10 essentials, and any job-specific training that must be completed.
3. A complete practice tour

It's important the new employee see the entire practice so she understands how her role fits into the organization. Don't just tour the front desk and exam-room hallway. Include additional office sites and ancillary areas. A manager or supervisor should conduct this tour, and introduce the new employee to everyone along the way. A name tag for the new hire can help existing staff remember her name.
Print all physician CVs (and mid-level providers if the practice has them) and ask the new employee to read them. Give him a week to absorb the material and ask questions. At the end of his second week, administer a verbal quiz to ensure the new hire can recite the education, training, and areas of specialty for each provider.
5. Lunch with a physician and the practice manager

A welcome lunch makes new hires feel valued and special — particularly when physicians participate.

Explain the vision for the practice's future, as well as the past. Hearing about goals and upcoming projects from practice leaders demonstrates transparency, and goes a long way to build trust.
6. A deep dive into the practice website, social media sites, & online rating sites

This provides new hires with a vast amount of knowledge quickly. Ask each to read the entire website, visit all social media sites, and read patient reviews on top physician rating sites.

Allow at least several hours for this activity, which should also include a website review of three to five competitor websites as well, chosen by you.
7. A buddy

The buddy system ensures new employees don't only interact with people who do the same job, and provides the chance to learn from someone who works in a different area of the practice. Assign each new employee a buddy and ask her to spend 90 days mentoring and cultivating a relationship, as well as being a go-to person for questions.
8. Vendor-led technology training

It's the rare staff person who can train new employees as effectively as vendor trainers can. Unless your practice has a dedicated trainer role, most peer-to-peer training efforts skip features the peer trainer doesn't use, or that were released after his own training. Vendor training is more thorough and ensures the new hire learns the newest bells and whistles. You might even consider having the new employee give a short in-service about newly released features he learned.
9. Job-role training

In addition to all these general orientation essentials, each new hire must learn the job she was hired for. Pair her with a peer who can teach the basics and assess knowledge gaps so you know what kind of additional training is needed. And remember that learning the ropes will take more than a few weeks. Sure, she'll be able to complete basic tasks, but gaining true expertise can take months. Be patient.
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10. 90-day plan

Establish 90-day professional growth objectives within the first week. Assign journals and/or books to expand knowledge and build confidence. Meet monthly during the first 90 days to ask questions that assure the employee is on the road to success. Mix multiple-choice questions with open-ended ones and provide scenarios that require the new employee to use what he has learned in context. Identify additional training needs, provide feedback, and celebrate success.