



New Employee Development



HARVARD
Human Resources

CENTER FOR WORKPLACE DEVELOPMENT



Succeeding
in Your New Job



INTRODUCTION

As you begin a new job, many questions and uncertainties face you. This guide was prepared to help you orient yourself to your new job as quickly as possible by providing essential “survival” information and by answering some common questions about your new job.

The best way to survive the first weeks in a new job is to take a proactive approach. Make it your first job to find out as much as you can about your new job. Observe what others do. Ask lots of questions. Learn as much as you can to become a productive team member. Find out how to fit in to your new surroundings and affirm for yourself and others that it was a good idea to hire you.

This guide offers a combination of suggestions and checklists to succeed during the first weeks on your new job. Review the suggestions and checklists and decide which of them makes sense for you in your particular job. Follow the suggestions and checklist items that you believe will make you a productive team member.

NORMAL CONCERNS

Most new employees have lots of concerns about their new job. They ask themselves questions such as:

- ✓ Will I fit in?
- ✓ Will I be able to do the job?
- ✓ Am I “in over my head”?
- ✓ Everyone around here is so busy. How can I contribute as quickly as possible?
- ✓ Is this the right job for me?
- ✓ How do I make the right impression?

Most of our concerns or fears never materialize. You can fit in with co-workers by observing and identifying what’s typical. Try to:

- ✓ Listen more than you talk
- ✓ Read and learn as much as you can
- ✓ Ask questions to understand what you are seeing (You will be challenged as you begin to take on new responsibilities and others will be watching how you handle yourself.)
- ✓ Ask what others expect from you and find the right way to meet those expectations



STAGES OF NEW EMPLOYEE DEVELOPMENT

There are usually four stages of development that occur to a new employee in a typical new position. Employees may progress through the stages more slowly or rapidly than shown. If you get “stuck” in one of the first three stages, seek help from your manager, colleagues, or HR representative.

The four stages of development are:

1 Orientation: Hire date to three months

The first three months of work, stage one, is called “orientation.” The new employee is exposed to how work is done and begins to see what the new job is all about. Dependency on others for information, direction, and decision making is typical.

A shared understanding of expectations and job goals is critical.

2 Productivity: Three to six months

Once the new employee finds the way around and the job is learned, the realities of the new job begins to dawn on the employee. The new employee’s prior expectations about the new job have been confirmed or altered. The new employee has discovered how things really work and has a clear grasp of “this is my work and here’s how it’s done.”

Clarifying responsibilities, work rules, limits, and rewards is critical to become productive.

4 Productivity: Nine to twelve months

The new employee has usually learned and participated in all work cycles and has been trained to be a productive member of the team. The manager and co-workers expect full participation from the new employee, who is rarely referred to as “new” any more. **Job tasks are well-defined, and there is usually a high commitment to work activity.**

3 Open Exchange: Nine to twelve months

The new employee has gained skills and can work productively most of the time. It is appropriate at this stage to expect the new employee to offer suggestions, to still make mistakes, and to need training and coaching to work productively. **The new employee fits into the work group and usually enjoys feeling a part of the group.**





HOW TO HANDLE BEING THE NEW EMPLOYEE

Co-workers and your manager will be noticing how you navigate as the “new” employee. From the suggestions below, select the ones you feel comfortable trying:

- ✓ Observe and study the new work environment.
- ✓ Respect co-workers for their knowledge and experience.
- ✓ Spend considerably more time listening than talking. Avoid pre-judging others.
- ✓ Always join a new group as a neutral party.
- ✓ Treat others fairly. Graciously extend assistance in areas where your expertise adds value.
- ✓ Recognize going in that you are the new employee and that it may take some time for you to be fully acclimated into the work team.
- ✓ Figure out how things get done and what is valued. Identify priorities of your manager and co-workers.
- ✓ Learn about what other people do at your workplace.
- ✓ What are their skills and talents? Find out where to turn for help.
- ✓ Identify resources to answer your questions.
- ✓ Identify the “go to” people at an early stage.
- ✓ Take advantage of the orientation period to meet people, and get a feel for how the organization operates.



COMMONLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Below is a list of questions new employees usually ask. Answer these questions for yourself or find someone in your organization who can help you answer them.

- What do I have to do first? Who will tell me the priorities?
- What do I need to know to become productive?
- What resources are available when I need help or more information?
- What are the immediate priorities for the first day, first week, etc.?
- How do I relate to these co-workers?
- What are the likely barriers when trying to get the job done?
- Who do I go to for answers to problems?
- Where's the rest room, lunch room, break room, coat closet, copy machine?
- What is the dress code?
- Who do I contact (and how) if I'm late or need to be out?
- How available is my manager when I need help?

EXPECTATIONS CONVERSATION

In this conversation you seek to understand and explore expectations with your manager.

Remember to:

- Discuss your short-term and medium-term goals
- Ask for regular check ins with your manager
- Inform your manager on your progress
- Obtain clear information about deadlines and how success will be evaluated