

## **Onboarding...More than New Employee Orientation HR X-Change Jan. 20, 2009**

Our January HR X-Change was facilitated by our MVHRA Newsletter Chair Rosalie M. Catalano, who cited a few definitions of onboarding vs. orientation from multiple sources. The point was to differentiate between the orientation 'event' and the onboarding 'process.' Rosalie presented the attendees with three questions that they discussed during the jam-packed hour and following are those questions and summaries of the group's responses:

### **1. What can we do as HR professionals – even before we advertise, interview, and hire – to extend onboarding into our internal/employee brands to ultimately save time and money by ensuring good matches and hires?**

- Establish a mentoring group to receive and assist new hires.
- Involve your organization in community efforts to help ensure a positive reputation to all.
- Make sure your website (especially the career section) includes your organization's philosophy, history, mission, vision, and core values.
- Ensure that those employees who represent your company know your company well enough to speak intelligently about it.
- Engage in outreach – e.g., with educational institutions (one company represented gets involved with professors and their classes).
- Hold onsite events; e.g., learning events or open houses.
- Sponsor internships so that you foster a good reputation among relevant students.

### **2. What are some of the more common mistakes you've experienced personally or observed in organizations' failures to properly and effectively orient new employees?**

- Workstations are not ready on new employee's first day.
- Former employee's 'stuff' is still in the new employee's workplace.
- Trainer(s) are disenfranchised or insincere.
- New employee is not expected and/or no introductions are made.
- Management is not in tune with the orientation/onboarding process and/or doesn't engage in any sessions.
- New employee is forced to use the visitor's entrance rather than the employee entrance on day one.
- Poorly structured or poorly implemented interview process.

### **3. What does your organization do to distinguish between orientation and onboarding?**

- Lay out career pathing.
- Have managers conduct 90-day performance reviews.
- Have HR conduct 60- or 90-day surveys with new employees.
- Provide a mentor or buddy to show the new employee the ropes.
- Provide for inter-departmental orientation.
- Create and use a checklist for the employee's first year to ensure that all critical factors get covered.

- Develop and give each new employee a personalized book w/ FAQs for the company but also tailored to their specific role.
- Set up a lunch for day one.
- Hold quarterly social forums, at least for the first year.
- Recognize the new employee at an appropriate function early in their tenure.
- Provide for informal fun on day one.

The bottom line, upon which all agreed, is that it is necessary that HR professionals help ensure that their organizations conduct both orientation events to provide the nuts and bolts needed by each employee, but also to engage in the process of onboarding to ensure bonding from pre-employment throughout year one and beyond.