

Put Out The Welcome Mat Before Your New Hire Starts Their First Day.

Once a candidate accepts your job offer and schedules a start date, most managers (and even HR departments) completely forget about that employee until they show up on their first day. But this awkward "in between" period is one of the most critical times if you really want to build a high-retention culture.

Before your new hire even steps through the door to start their first day, you want them to feel welcomed, wanted, and prepared for the start of their career at your organization. Before their first day of work comes, send them a card (to their home).

Given our propensity for card-driven holidays, you probably won't be shocked to learn that American Greetings makes a "Welcome" card for new employees. Get or make a card, get all your employees to sign it, and send it to your new employee's home. This is done so rarely that this one simple gesture ensures that they'll be feeling excited about joining your team. (Muffin baskets, fruit baskets, cheese baskets, candy, etc. all work as well).

You'll also eliminate any regrets they may have had about quitting their previous job. And just as importantly, you'll win-over their spouse or partner (a critical, and usually ignored, factor in every employee's decision-making about whether to join or leave an organization). Remember, the number one reason why overseas employees don't last is their spouse.

When you're excited and/or anxious about a new situation, do you conduct some extra research? If you're about to take your first African safari, wouldn't you buy some travel books and do some reading? Or spend a few hours Googling African safaris? Of course you would. And that's just how your new employees feel (in fact, starting a new job is a lot like a safari). They'll spend hours learning about your company before they show up on Day 1.

So this is a great time to give them some of the key reading materials - the handbook, any marketing materials, the policies and procedures. Because they're excited, and a little anxious, they're much more likely to read now than they are at any other point in employment. And this will make them feel a little better.

Another great idea is to assemble a roster of your current team. Don't make it too serious or intimidating, but provide a basic "who's who." The best ones we've seen include everyone's name, title, years of service, one sentence about their job functions, and then something off-the-wall like their favorite tree or vacation or food. The trick is to give the new employee something really memorable to read, and nothing accomplishes that like humor. It also disarms them and makes your staff seem approachable. Finally, it's a good idea to stay away from things that might make the lawyers unhappy, like religion, race, sex, medical history, etc.

Also, tell your employees that a new employee is joining the team. It's truly remarkable how many managers forget to tell their current employees that a new employee is arriving. So prep them. Schedule meetings with all of your team members, and make sure that every current employee attends. In the meeting you need to prep current staff and assuage whatever fears and

anxieties they may have. You want to make sure that the team is going to be friendly and helpful, not unwelcoming and antagonistic.

First impressions count for a lot, and teams have been known to sabotage new hires out of loyalty to former colleagues or competitiveness or cliquishness. The best way to get teams to be friendly is to have each person pick one thing they can do to welcome the new employee. Then pick someone (or ask for a volunteer) to be the new hire's "buddy" and acclimate them to the team and the organization.

Finally, ensure your calendar is open on their first day. There is nothing worse than starting a new job where your boss is in meetings all day and you've been relegated to filling out forms in the break room.

Source: Mark Murphy, CEO, Leadership IQ

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