

Best Practices in Developing an Orientation Program for Your New Medical Practice Employees



My personal list of new employee orientation best practices has been shaped by my experiences in private practices as well as hospitals. Every organization has different resources to draw upon, but each group has core goals that must be fulfilled by a good orientation:

- completion of paperwork including federal and state W-4s, I-9, direct deposit and benefit elections
- emergency contact information (included in hospital employee health intake)
- orientation to the organization, including designations, specialties, departments, sites, affiliates and an organizational chart
- completion of mandatory annual training such as safety, standard precautions, and HIPAA
- mechanics of name tags, parking tags, lockers, keys and codes
- signing off on understanding and agreement to confidentiality, compliance and personnel policies

In addition to these core goals, critical information to be shared during this time should minimally include:

- personnel policy review with emphasis on important (typically abused?) policies
- code of conduct/ shared basic competencies (mission and values, professionalism, communication, chain of command)

- computer security (passwords, internet policy, protection of PHI)
- workstation ergonomics and patient lifting policy (sadly lacking in many medical practices)

Important training that is rarely covered:

- Customer service (what is it and how do we measure our success or lack thereof?)
- Cultural sensitivity and diversity training
- Non-clinical employees' role in medical emergencies
- Personal safety (coming in early or leaving late, patients threatening staff by phone or in person)
- Expectations for the first 90 days (training, communication, questions, problems)

Making Orientation Memorable

Most managers do not have the expertise to design a custom orientation program to address all types of learning styles (see below), but you can try to integrate a variety of techniques to assist learning and retention of information. For instance, you can incorporate PowerPoint programs, videos, worksheets, lectures, interactive discussion, a physical activity and a team activity. Not only will you keep your program from being boring (for you and your new employees), but you will increase the potential for a prepared employee stepping into the clinic. According to **learning-styles-online.com**, the major types of learning styles are:

- **Visual (spatial)**. You prefer using pictures, images, and spatial understanding.
- **Aural (auditory-musical)**. You prefer using sound and music.
- **Verbal (linguistic)**. You prefer using words, both in speech and writing.
- **Physical (kinesthetic)**. You prefer using your body,

hands and sense of touch.

- **Logical (mathematical).** You prefer using logic, reasoning and systems.
- **Social (interpersonal).** You prefer to learn in groups or with other people.
- **Solitary (intrapersonal).** You prefer to work alone and use self-study.

Characteristics of a Successful Program:

- The employee has been given adequate breaks, and has been regularly fed and watered.
- The employee feels welcome.
- The employee feels informed and excited about the organization s/he is joining.
- The employee feels that the information delivered is truly important and the orientation team is not just “going through the motions.”
- The employee feels confident that the employer cares about the employee’s safety, satisfaction and success.
- The employee has a sense of belonging, and feels prepared to start workstation training.

What other aspects of orientation (also called “onboarding” – a new buzzword!) do you place importance on, or what ways do you help your new employees to assimilate a lot of information in a short amount of time?

**Field Trip: Camping,
Blogging, Twittering,**

Vlogging!

☒ My husband and I are away this weekend attending blogging camp. No, we're not at a logging camp, we're at blogging camp. If you remember, hubby and I both launched blogs in July (you're reading mine right now,) so we're newbies trying to learn more and meet others who are blogging. My passion is taking interesting ideas from other worlds and applying them to mine. Here are a few things I'm taking away:

- I just joined Twitter. This means I can communicate with others and they know what I'm doing and I can find out what they are doing via text messages. As I explore this more I'll write about it. I'd like to use Twitter at MGMA in San Diego in October. **If anyone out there is going to MGMA and using Twitter, please get in touch with me by leaving a comment, or emailing me at marypatwhaley@gmail.com.**
- Some who know me will say I am obsessed with toilet paper dispensers and hand towel dispensers and they would be correct. My theory is: If you're not paying attention to the tissue and hand towel dispensers (the little things) in your practice, you probably aren't paying attention to the big things. More on this topic later as I am building out a new site for my practice and will write about making design and fixture choices in the future. Anyway, the conference we're attending is being held at CubeSpace which is a very cool place where folks can come and use workstations and technology. The bathroom here has a very cool hand towel dispenser (picture above) that you work with your forearm! I will be checking it out for my new office.
- Backchannels are the new intranets. I am working on a knowledge management tool for my practice to help document important information that tends to be lost

when staff leave the practice. I got some different ideas about accomplishing this goal from camp.

- The camp presentations were also streamed live and I learned a little about vlogging (video blogging.) The last time I thought about making an orientation video I was told it would probably cost \$10,000! With some practice, I think my staff and I can make “videos” for just about any topic. We can do video tours of our facilities for our website, we can film our meetings for absent staff, we can do narrated PowerPoint presentations.

Whew. So much technology, so much fun!