Induction Training

Induction Training is absolutely vital for new starters. Good induction training ensures new starters are retained, and then settled in quickly and happily to a productive role. Induction training is more than skills training. It's about the basics that seasoned employees all take for granted: what the shifts are; where the notice-board is; what's the routine for holidays, sickness; where's the canteen; what's the dress code; where the toilets are. New employees also need to understand the organisation's mission, goals, values and philosophy; personnel practices, health and safety rules, and of course the job they're required to do, with clear methods, timescales and expectations.

On the point of [values and philosophy](http://www.businessballs.com/ethical_management_leadership.htm), induction training offers a wonderful early opportunity to establish clear foundations and expectations in terms of ethics, integrity, corporate social responsibility, and all the other converging concepts in this area that are the bedrock of all good modern responsible organisations. See also [love and spirituality in organisations](http://www.businessballs.com/love.htm): trainers and new starters - anyone - can bring compassion and humanity to work. The starting point is actually putting these fundamantal life-forces on the workplace agenda.

Professionally organized and delivered induction training is your new employees' first proper impression of you and your organization, so it's also an excellent opportunity to reinforce their decision to come and work for you.

Proper induction training is increasingly a legal requirement. Employers have a formal duty to provide new employees with all relevant information and training relating to health and safety particularly.

As a manager for new employees it's your responsibility to ensure that induction training is properly planned. Even if head office or another 'centre' handles induction training - you must make sure it's planned and organised properly for your new starter. An induction training plan must be issued to each new employee, before the new employee starts, and copied to everyone in the organisation who's involved in providing the training, so the new starter and everyone else involved can see what's happening and that everything is included. Creating and issuing a suitable induction plan for each new starter will help them do their job better and quicker, and with less dependence on your time in the future. Employees who are not properly inducted need a lot more looking after, so failing to provide good induction training is utterly false economy.

As with other types of training, the learning can and development can be achieved through very many different methods - use as many as you need to and which suit the individuals and the group, but remember that induction training by its nature requires a lot more hand-holding than other types of training. Err on the side of caution - ensure people are looked after properly and not left on their own to work things out unless you have a very specific purpose for doing so, or if the position is a senior one.

As with other forms of training there are alternatives to 'chalk and talk' classroom-style training. Participation and 'GAAFOFY' methods (Go Away And Find Out For Yourself) can be effective, particularly for groups and roles which require a good level of initiative. Here are some examples of training methods which can be used to augment the basics normally covered in classroom format:

* on the job coaching
* mentoring
* delegated tasks and projects
* reading assignments
* presentation assignments
* attending internal briefings and presentations, eg 'lunch and learn' format
* special responsibilities which require obtaining new skills or knowledge or exposure
* video
* internet and e-learning
* customer and supplier visits
* attachment to project or other teams
* job-swap
* shadowing (shadowing another employee to see how they do it and what's involved).

Be creative as far as is realistic and practicable. Necessarily induction training will have to include some fairly dry subjects, so anything you can do to inject interest, variety, different formats and experiences will greatly improve the overall induction process. There are lots of ideas for illustrating concepts and theories relating to induction training on the [acronyms page](http://www.businessballs.com/acronyms.htm)(warning: contains adult content), and also the [stories page](http://www.businessballs.com/stories.htm).

Induction training must include the following elements:

* **General training** relating to the organisation, including values and philosophy as well as structure and history, etc.
* **Mandatory training** relating to health and safety and other essential or legal areas.
* **Job training** relating to the role that the new starter will be performing.
* **Training evaluation**, entailing confirmation of understanding, and feedback about the quality and response to the training.

And while not strictly part of the induction training stage, it's also helpful to **refer to and discuss personal strengths and personal development wishes and aspirations, so that people see they are valued as individuals with their own unique potential**, rather than just being a name and a function. This is part of making the job more meaningful for people - making people feel special and valued - and the sooner this can be done the better.

For example the following question/positioning statement is a way to introduce this concept of 'whole-person' development and value:

"You've obviously been recruited as a (job title), but we recognise right from the start that you'll probably have lots of other talents, skills, experiences (life and work), strengths, personal aims and wishes, that your job role might not necessarily enable you to use and pursue. So please give some thought to your own special skills and unique potential that you'd like to develop (outside of your job function), and if there's a way for us to help with this, especially if we see that there'll be benefits for the organisation too (which there often are), then we'll try to do so..."

Obviously the organisation needs to have a process and capacity for encouraging and assisting 'whole person development' before such a statement can be made during induction, but if and when such support exists then it makes good sense to promote it and get the ball rolling as early as possible. Demonstrating an true investment in people - **as people, not just employees** - greatly increases feelings of comfort and satisfaction among new-starters. It's human nature - each of us feels happier when someone takes a genuine interest in us as an individual.

Including a [learning styles self-assessment questionnaire](http://www.businessballs.com/vaklearningstylestest.htm) or a [multiple intelligences self-assessment questionnaire](http://www.businessballs.com/howardgardnermultipleintelligences.htm) within the induction process also helps to 'draw out' strengths and preferences among new starters, and will additionally help build a platform for meaningful work and positive relations between staff and employer. Ensure that new starters are given control of these self-tests - it is more important that they see the results than the employer, although it's fine and helpful for the employer to keep a copy provided permission is sought and given by the staff members to do so. Line-managers will find it easier to manage new starters if they know their strengths and styles and preferences. **Conducting a learning styles assessment also helps the induction trainer to deliver induction training according to people's preferred learning styles.**

So much of conventional induction training necessarily involves 'putting in' to people (knowledge, policies, standards, skills, etc); so if the employer can spend a little time 'drawing out' of people (aims, wishes, unique personal potential, etc) - even if it's just to set the scene for 'whole person development' in the future - this will be a big breath of fresh air for most new starters.

Use a feedback form of some sort to check the effectiveness and response to induction training - induction training should be a continuously evolving and improving process. Free examples of training feedback forms and induction training feedback forms are available on the [free resources](http://www.businessballs.com/freeonlineresources.htm) section.

Take the opportunity to involve your existing staff in the induction process. Have them create and deliver sessions, do demonstrations, accompany, and mentor the new starters wherever possible. This can be helpful and enjoyable for the existing staff members too, and many will find it rewarding and developmental for themselves. When involving others ensure delivery and coverage is managed and monitored properly.

Good induction training plans should feature a large element of contact with other staff for the new person. Relationships and contacts are the means by which organisations function, get things done, solve problems, provide excellent service, handle change and continually develop. Meeting and getting to know other people are essential aspects of the induction process. This is especially important for very senior people - don't assume they'll take care of this for themselves - help them to plan how to meet and get to know all the relevant people inside and outside the organisation as soon as possible. Certain job roles are likely to be filled by passive introverted people (Quality, Technical, Production, Finance - not always, but often). These people often need help in getting out and about making contacts and introductions. Don't assume that a director will automatically find their way to meet everyone - they may not - so design an induction plan that will help them to do it.