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How to Get Your New Employees Off to a Great Start

I'm old enough to remember the very strict routine that used to be a part of breaking in a new engine: keep the RPM down, change the oil after the first few hundred miles, and generally baby it for the first few thousand miles. After that, while you could put the pedal to the metal if you wanted, regular tune-ups every few thousand miles were a necessity. Lately it seems that the vehicle manufacturers have all but dropped their engine break-in plans. And of course the new longer maintenance intervals are enough to boggle the mind of an old 3,000-mile points and condenser changer.

But even though manufacturers have greatly loosened their requirements for how you treat their newly made vehicle, the same is not the case with brand new employees. The fact is, research points to a need for an even more rigorous "break-in schedule" for new employees these days. Across the board, nearly half of all turnover happens within a new employee's first 60 days on the job. And since people no longer expect to stay with the same company for most of their working life anymore, employees are just that much more willing to jump ship if they find they don't like the way things are being run.

It's absolutely essential to start your new employees off the best way possible. But what does that mean? To orient your new employees well, you must do three things. First, welcome them into the exclusive club of your business, making them feel they belong. Second, be sure to provide enough information so each new employee knows how to be a successful employee. Finally, be sure that all new employees are well informed about all policies, procedures, and privileges that apply to the job. Let's look at each of these three objectives of a successful orientation a little more closely.

Welcome Them Into the Club

If you're doing everything you can to make your business a great place to work, then your employees are likely to feel they work at the best place in town. So you'll want to welcome your new employees in style. Let them know they made a smart choice to take the job. You might want to consider treating them to lunch that day, and make sure they get a chance to meet the whole team. Try to free yourself up so you can give your new employee as much of your undivided time as you can muster. This will speak volumes in telling him how much you value his future contributions to the success of the business.



**Make Sure They Know
How to Do the Job**

This is the meat of most new employee orientations, but it is often done poorly. What I see most often is a new hire following an experienced hand around for a day or so "to learn the ropes." Unfortunately, with no system or standards in place, this never works as well as it should. Instead, make sure that every new hire gets a copy of your written work standards. Then, make sure your chosen mentor knows how to do on the job training.



**Make Sure They Know
What's Expected of Them**

It no longer surprises me when a manager who tells me that he has trouble with employees not living up to expectations admits that he has never put his expectations in writing. People are generally happiest when they know what is expected of them because then they can evaluate how they're doing. We all like to know if

we're doing a good job. The best way of making certain your employees know what you expect of them on a daily basis is to put it in writing. Tell them what you expect with regards to showing up for work on time, how they are to dress, and how they are to behave around customers. Do this and I think you'll find that most will want to play by the rules.

There you have it: the three keys to starting your new employees off on a great career with you. All it takes is the discipline to establish your standards and expectations, the creation of a checklist so that every orientation happens in the same way, and taking the time to enjoy welcoming each new employee to the exclusive club of your business.

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JEM Performance Consulting is dedicated to helping automotive aftermarket retailers and shop owners improve their business results by increasing employee performance. John Labbe began his career in the automotive aftermarket over 25 years ago. A member of the Specialty Equipment Marketing Association (SEMA), John has created successful training, development, and performance-improvement programs for numerous automotive companies.