

Avoiding Mistakes and Losses with New Staff - By Ken Burgin

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These days, we're all in the business of 'selling' jobs to applicants: we need to get it right from the first day.

For new hires, the first impressions should be very positive: 'I like this place and they know what they're doing'.

It's time to review your induction system: does it work for you, or against?

Ease the Anxieties. Whether they're young or experienced, there will be nerves and uncertainty on the first day. How are they welcomed and introduced to the team? Organise a tour of the business so they can locate lockers, staff facilities, toilets etc. Give them the Induction Checklist (and a coffee) -- it shows everything that will be covered in the next few minutes, hours or days. Create the space for questions.

Explain what you're about. 'We aim to serve the best beer in Redcliff and offer the friendliest service' --- 'Café Troppo is about good times, good food and great staff'. Explain what the Mission Statement means and talk about the company's culture.

Listening, Watching and Doing. Most people would rather watch the movie than read the book, so how can you make the induction more physical and visual? Have a big folder of menus and promotion material they can flip through.

At his last restaurant, Matt Kesby of smart recruitment group Ployme loaded up the welcome information onto an iPod so staff could watch, listen and learn. Not only was it faster, it seriously impressed good applicants.

Explain the Rules AND the Flexibility. How breaks are organised, where smoking is allowed, rules about acceptable language, what food and drinks are available to staff, how the tips are organised and how to swap shifts. Nose studs are OK but nose rings are not. A list of 'Frequently Asked Questions' (FAQ) can be useful, and is easy to write eg What day am I paid? How do I check my roster? Can I use my mobile phone at work? This can be a friendly way to bring up important rules eg Can staff have a free drink after their shift?

Remember, staff will make up their own explanation for why things happen if you don't provide one, especially if they're new and don't want to make a fuss.

The 'new dream' for most staff is about time, not just money - they want a life and a job. Flexible work is the 'new black' for a good workplace - however that's organised in your business, it needs to be outlined up front and in detail.

Add in the Pleasure principle. With staff shortages and the whole idea of 'loyalty' in decline, people need to look forward to work or they're off to a better place. Mention the annual staff party, social activities and the company's Facebook page. Play down the alcohol. Environmental issues are top of mind for everyone, so explain the recycling and clean energy programs.

Add in the Education factor. Whether it's the monthly wine tasting, POS training, learning bar tricks or first aid. It may be fitting shift around a formal traineeship or apprentice course - modern staff are expecting life-long learning. At Café Troppo we created Troppo University, a catch-all term for every piece of short or long training . When you say it's important, it is!

Make sure Safety Training is not boring. Most health and safety courses are dull, bureaucratic and quickly forgotten. Your challenge is integrate it with daily operations and presented in a way that will be remembered and used.

No Shocks! Here's the thing - everyone discovers something in a new job that's not what they expected. Hopefully it's better, not worse. Unpleasant surprises could be that the finishing time is later than expected, the take-home pay is not as good as promised, the kitchen is scary or other staff aren't friendly or supportive. Are promises being made or conditions described that aren't quite true? Be careful...

Checking, checking, checking. How was your first day? Have we got the bank details organised for your pay? How are you finding this new menu/wine list compared to the last place? Tell me about how you're learning the new system etc etc etc...

Whoever is responsible for the new hire, their job is ensure there are NO casualties or people 'missing in action'. We can't afford to lose anybody because the system was out of date or badly organised.

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