

Welcome Newcomers to Your Organization

By John B. McHugh

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Helping New Employees

It's difficult being a newcomer to a job and a company, even more so if you are starting off in a remote work environment. New employees must navigate:

- A new culture
- New job responsibilities
- A new boss
- New names to remember
- A different work environment

Finding your place in a new situation is difficult. I have made it a practice to help newcomers to get oriented and, if needed, provide them with the "inside story."

I have been thanked a number of times years later by former colleagues for reaching out to them when they were new to a job. I have been told, "Thanks for showing me what were the important things to pay attention to in my job." Another former colleague, who turned out to be a lifetime friend, told me, "You were the only one to tell me what the hell was going on around there."

Showing a newcomer the ropes is the right thing to do and it will make you feel good about yourself. Make this a practice when you are introduced to a new colleague. Take your new colleague to lunch and help them become comfortable with the culture of your organization. But keep it professional. Review my article "Avoid the Gossip Trap" for a quick refresher on what to discuss and what to leave unsaid.

My Personal Experiences as a Newcomer

Let me relate two of my own experiences as a newcomer. In the first situation, I had relocated from the East Coast to a Midwestern city for a new job that held great promise. The second day on the job, in an elevator at the start of the workday, someone said, "Are you the new guy?" "Yes, I am Jack McHugh, Manager of XX" I replied. A woman in the back of the elevator spoke up, "I don't know why anyone would want to work here!" That comment certainly brightened my day and caused me to rethink the wisdom of uprooting my family and moving thousands of miles.

Fortunately, my administrative assistant Wendy, who had been on the job for six months, provided me with some useful insights. Wendy, a recently divorced stay-at-home mom, had an excellent ability to read people and her guidance helped me a lot in my early days at that job.

The second experience was my first job in the publishing business as a sales representative for a college textbook publishing company. After my first year in the field, I attended my first sales training that summer, which was two weeks long. I was nervous not knowing what to expect. I was pleasantly surprised to find that new colleagues were welcoming and made me feel comfortable.

A couple of senior representatives spent extra time finding out about me and coaching me on how I could be successful. I was with that company for six years but I never forget how impactful that first sales meeting was on my morale. One of those senior sales reps became my mentor and lifetime friend.

Make It a Practice to Help Newcomers

I suggest you make it a practice to always help newcomers to your team or to your company. At a company event, reach out to the newcomer and make them feel welcome. Lending a personal touch to new colleagues can help them successfully launch their careers in your company.

This type of personal outreach is especially important during times when the labor market is tight. Companies that have a well-planned and executed onboarding program might take care of the more mechanical needs of a new hire (e.g., setting up their email, getting them a computer, getting all their payroll forms completed, etc.), but once that business is done, who do they go to for help? Ideally, they will have a “buddy” who can help them navigate their new job, but even if they do, consider reaching out and offering your help. New hires can always use it.

Thanks to Liz Novak for her review and edits and Bev Kolz for her editing of this essay.

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