



FOCUS ON FRESH FACES

Companies
Highlight New
Employee
Experience

By Charlee Beasor

Kermit the Frog knew one thing was for sure: it wasn't easy "bein' green." While the famous Muppet was singing about his literal color, we can translate that to how new employees feel – it's not easy being the new, inexperienced person in the organization.

If employees don't get off to a great start, it doesn't mean they won't become long-term, valuable contributors. But the chance of a bad first impression is a risk that some companies refuse to risk as they focus on integrating new employees into the workplace and the company culture from the outset.

BizVoice® spoke with four companies on the Best Places to Work in Indiana list that reflected on how their orientation programs help new employees become familiar and comfortable with new surroundings.

Katz, Sapper & Miller (KSM), a CPA firm based in Indianapolis, is one of only two companies named to the Best Places list for each of the last nine years. Director of Human Resources Jim Nestor explains that the company focuses on highlighting the fact associates made the right decision to join the KSM team.

A two-day orientation and assistance from an ambassador for the first 90 days has made the company's past orientation program a success. Nestor is excited to announce a new 12-week onboarding initiative, called Career Compass, that began in May.

"The intent is to really deepen a new employee's understanding of our culture, values, business and benefits," he affirms. "We created a great first impression in the hiring process; now we want to create a lasting positive impression after 90 days, that they absolutely made the right decision and can't imagine being anywhere else."

Much to learn

For Swagelok Indiana | Cincinnati, the need for an intense orientation process is due to the sheer amount of products with which employees must become familiar.



Orientation takes on many forms at Hoosier companies. At Swagelok Indiana | Cincinnati (left), employees go through Swagelok University and new sales representatives can take up to 18 months to be fully engaged. MOBI Wireless in Indianapolis greets new employees with Coffee 101 on their first day. Union Hospital employees participate in a health care simulation center as part of their training.

Darin Brown is CFO of the company, located on the west side of Indianapolis. The sales and service center is one of 101 Swagelok distributors throughout the world, which sells tube fittings, valves and components.

“There’s a tremendous amount of product knowledge required, so it takes a long time for people to get up to speed. For a salesman to be fully functional, it takes 18 months. For someone in the warehouse, about six months,” he notes.

Swagelok University is an online program that assists new associates by providing education courses to learn about the products and the company.

“We will set up a training plan for a new hire; you might have 25 to 50 Swagelok University courses that take about a half hour to an hour (each) and there is a test taken that they have to pass with 80%,” Brown says. “We also have a general onboarding process. They need to be able to do this in the business system, or go find this on the intranet.”

A 90-day review process helps ensure that employees are on the right track.

“All our new hires have really done well. We’ve never had anybody leave in the 90-day period since I’ve been here, and it seems to be working very well. We have engaged, well-trained associates,” he adds.

Smart hiring decisions

Another field that requires all-encompassing job knowledge is health care. Union Hospital in Terre Haute gives all new hires a day-and-a-half human resources orientation program before extensive training on the floor of the hospital, depending on each associate’s department.

Joanne Davignon, director of HR and staff development, asserts that the orientation is important, but that’s not where the real introduction to the hospital begins.

“Before they even come here, we set the tone with what’s expected, our values and standards, and by the time they get to HR orientation, it should be imbedded in them what’s expected of them,” she asserts.

The hiring process is critical to ensuring a proper fit in the company, says Cecilia Hiland, recruiting specialist for MOBI Wireless Management in Indianapolis.

“We hire really smart people who have the attitude and the aptitude, but maybe not necessarily the skill set. It’s so important to let people know this is what’s important to us and what’s expected and this is how we’re going to support you,” she outlines.

Hiland runs the first day of orientation for new employees at the wireless mobility management company.

“When I talk to people, it’s usually because we’re filling positions and we’ve grown. Part of the reason why I handle the first day (of orientation) is because I’m the first person they talk to ... they have one face all the way through the first day,” she maintains.

“We don’t want turnover. We want people who are going to be happy here and fit. It is our onus to hire and train well.”

My generation

Many of the new associates at KSM are starting their first jobs out of college. The company also has an extensive internship program, which produces 80% to 85% of the first-year hires, Nestor shares. Interns go through a three-week orientation program to get them up to speed.

For associates that are new to the working world, the company has a series of courses called “From College to Katz,” which is aimed at a successful transition from school to the workplace.

Nestor explains how the influx of the Millennial generation (those born in the early 1980s to the early 2000s) has changed the KSM orientation process.

“With Millennials, it does have a tendency to have a little more planning, to have it laid out and kind of created somewhat customized to them. You have to adapt to that different generational need,” he says.

Davignon mentioned a similar undertaking at Union Hospital for the Millennial workers.

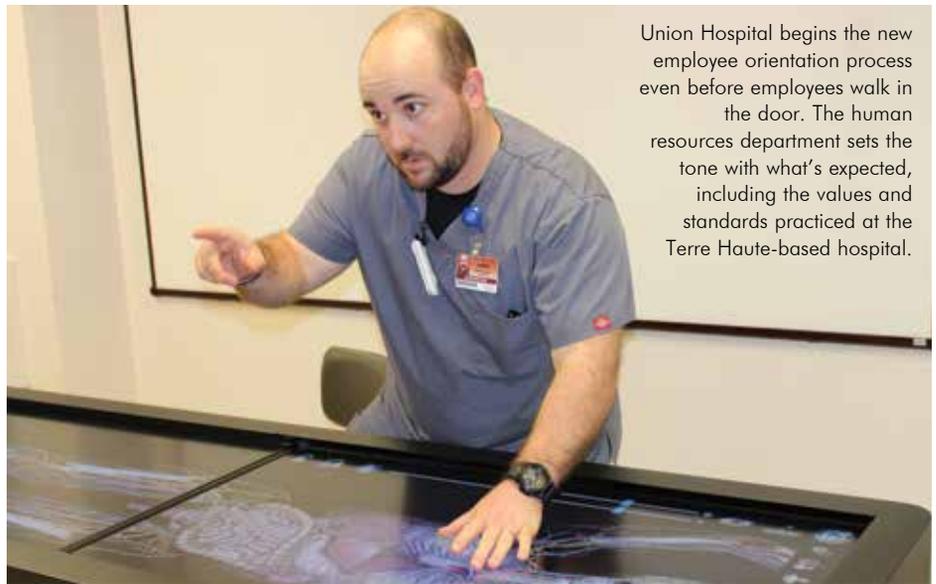
“We’ve looked at the learning methods of the generational differences – added more feedback, changed our learning for them, versus a seasoned nurse who may have years more experience. We try to blend some of that learning,” she offers.

Cultural fit

New employees must navigate a new workplace with various rules and business practices, as well as the overall culture of a company.

At MOBI Wireless, the first day of a new employees’ experience is called “Welcome to MOBI Day.” Hiland notes that the company’s set of values and expectations are explained to new employees that day, which kicks off with Coffee 101 in the company’s lodge – a fireplace, couches and a cappuccino machine make the space comforting for new hires.

“You can ask anyone in the company about anything. There are not a lot of closed doors here. We are cognizant of the fact that every person we bring on board affects each other,” she mentions.



Union Hospital begins the new employee orientation process even before employees walk in the door. The human resources department sets the tone with what’s expected, including the values and standards practiced at the Terre Haute-based hospital.

Brown says the Swagelok Indiana | Cincinnati hiring process includes several rounds of interviews, a personality test and a cultural test, called the Waterson Test, to determine how new employees would “mesh

with our culture.”

“You can’t teach values. We hire for values and add on the training later,” he concludes.

RESOURCE: Darin Brown, Swagelok Indiana | Cincinnati, at www.swagelok.com/indiana | Joanne Davignon, Union Hospital, at www.myunionhospital.org Cecilia Hiland, MOBI Wireless Management, at mobiwm.com | Jim Nestor, Katz Sapper & Miller, at www.ksmcpa.com



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