

Orient Managers for Career Success

Sharlyn Lauby



ORIENT MANAGERS FOR CAREER SUCCESS

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Managers play an important role in any organization. According to Gallup, they account for 70 percent of the variance in employee engagement—meaning good managers can have a positive effect on engagement, and poor managers ... well, you get the point. Employee engagement has a direct impact on the organization's bottom line. In the *Harvard Business Review* report *The Impact of Employee Engagement on Performance*, respondents connected high levels of employee engagement to high levels of customer service, productivity, continuous quality improvement, innovation, and strong sales and marketing capabilities.

So, how do companies develop good managers?

Organizations may already have management development programs in place. Yet, such programs typically happen during two distinct timeframes. The first is when employees who have been identified as high potential or high performing participate in programs and then are promoted at a later date. The second is when employees are promoted to management, fail miserably, and then are sent to a management development program.

There's another way to bridge the gap in providing development to a key organizational segment between when employees join management and when they receive development: through new manager orientation.

In this issue of *TD at Work*, I discuss:

- management orientation and how it differs from other management development programs
- why a manager-specific program is needed
- ways to gain buy-in and support for a manager orientation program
- how to design a successful program using the ADDIE or a similar model
- methods for evaluating your program.

Orientation's Place in Onboarding

Most employees, even if they aren't managers, have been through some type of employee orientation in their careers. This event is a part of the overall onboarding process. Orientation is usually a one-day (or less) event that introduces new hires to the company, its products and services, and the company culture. During orientation, new employees complete any new-hire paperwork and learn the organization's basic code of conduct and important company policies such as anti-harassment and ethics.

In addition to orientation, onboarding commonly includes preboarding, which welcomes candidates after they accept a position and covers first-day logistics. The full onboarding process can take up to a year for new hires to complete because it's about new employees learning their role and becoming productive. It picks up where orientation leaves off and traditionally involves employees' managers, co-workers, and other key stakeholders. It also typically includes on-the-job training, workplace socialization activities, and relationship building.

Organizations consider onboarding essential to employee success. Nearly 98 percent of executives polled in a Korn Ferry FutureStep survey said that onboarding programs are a critical factor in employee retention. After all, companies can't engage employees who don't stay.

Manager-Specific Orientation

How, then, does manager orientation differ from new-hire orientation and other manager development programs? It isn't simply new-hire orientation for a management audience. For example, while both new individual contributors and new-hire managers may get a briefing on the company's history, mission, and vision, new managers will need to understand their critical role in that mission—the bigger picture, the role they have in retaining talent, and so forth. Further, manager orientation is the opportunity to set expectations about what being a manager means. It can serve as a reminder of what it feels like to be in a new role, a feeling that will be helpful for managers as they become responsible for hiring, engaging, and retaining talent.

The real benefit that manager orientation programs provide—beyond setting the stage for a manager's new role—is consistency. A company-wide, consistent definition of management enables organizations to set performance expectations for managers. And managers likewise need to perform consistently. Doing so reduces favoritism and bias when interacting with candidates, employees, and customers and strengthens the company culture. Organizations accomplish their business strategies when employees do the work and perform at a high level—and that happens with good managers.

Manager orientation programs, like manager onboarding, are not replacements for the company's existing management development program. Most of the knowledge and skills that employees learn during a management development program—such as decision making, leadership, and critical thinking—are skills that they can immediately apply on the job. Even if they never become managers, they can use the information they learned from the program.

During the overall manager onboarding process, new managers learn how to interview and conduct performance reviews. They don't need to know those aspects on their first day. However, manager orientation equips new managers with the knowledge and skills they need on day one. The event is designed to complement—not replace—onboarding and management development.

Like any training program, orientation, or onboarding, design is critical for success, as is laying the foundation for the program. Here are steps to take to develop manager orientation.

Step 1: Lay the Groundwork for Manager Orientation

Search for the definition of *management* on the Internet, you'll find that the discipline of management

includes five functions: planning, organizing, staffing, leading, and controlling. Management is not leadership. Yet, leading is a part of management.

That is exactly why before you, as the HR or talent development professional, even start developing a manager orientation program, you need to reach consensus within the organization on its definition of and goals for management. That's also why manager orientation programs aren't and shouldn't be considered a duplication of the company's existing leadership development programs. They aren't the same things.

Define Management

Gathering stakeholders in a room and starting a brainstorming session about what management means to the company may be difficult, if not impossible. The most vocal participants will likely dominate the conversation before it dissolves into a fruitless effort. Instead, you may

need to think outside the box to reach consensus on a definition for management.

Choose a group of stakeholders ranging from senior leaders to current managers to individual contributors to weigh in on what management means in your organization. Ask each stakeholder to anonymously submit a personal definition of management. You could facilitate this via a platform like SurveyMonkey where the names of individuals are not associated with their responses.

After collecting the responses, do something fun or visual with them, such as running all the text through a word cloud generator. The generator will make the most-often-used words stand out. Bring that word cloud or visual element with you to a meeting with those stakeholders and use it as the starting point of the discussion. Let participants talk about whether all the prominent words should be included or what order the words should be in. Draft several definitions and suggest the group spend some time thinking about them.

Five Functions of Management



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