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Induction of Executives

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When a company employs an executive it's all too common for them to be left to their own devices as their new employers assume they know the ropes. Often, it seems that people do not want to insult a senior figure, or are too nervous to suggest that an induction may be necessary.

If this sounds familiar then alarm bells should be ringing. As a company, you have invested a huge amount of money finding and employing this individual. Recruiting an executive is likely to have cost you upwards of twenty five per cent of their annual salary - no laughing matter. It is imperative that any induction is thorough, and the level of induction should reflect the job position – the more senior the role the more important the induction needs to be. This isn't hand-holding, it's just common sense.

So what do we recommend? Here are some key suggestions that should be considered if you want to ensure that, once you have found the right person, they feel comfortable and are successful.

Any induction at senior level needs to be focused around three key points. Employers firstly need to make sure that the new executive understands the whole business, from parking bays to business plan. Secondly they need to understand their departmental objectives, and lastly they need to be totally comfortable with their management responsibilities – who they are managing and the objectives they have for their team. This may sound simple but expectations can vary radically from organisation to organisation.

'On-boarding' is an Americanism that many people use to encapsulate this process. This is really all about proactive, supportive induction. There needs to be quite a robust meeting schedule put together during the first twelve weeks of the start date. Meetings need to be between the new employee and carefully selected team members within the company and spread out over a twelve week period.

At the end of the induction schedule the new executives will be in a position where they understand precisely what their job requirements are, how they contribute to the business and their targets: short, medium and long term.

However, it doesn't end there. Someone needs to be making sure that any new executive is on the right track for at least the first six months. Many companies adopt a mentoring scheme to help new management find their feet. This process depends on the size of the business and the induction culture that exists within it. But, human resources should encourage this and make it as simple as possible for all concerned to buy into the idea.

Coaching is also a useful tool in the induction process. During the first three months it is becoming increasingly fashionable for an individual to have a personal development plan created for them with the help of a designated coach. This can help them to measure their own progress and speak freely about any issues. The person responsible for delivering the coaching should not be their new boss, but someone who can impartially support and guide them. It has to be an independent relationship.

Don't forget, your company has invested in this individual. Human resources need to act as an enabler in their induction programme. They can create and support the process, but it is up to senior management to make sure it happens, and happens consistently.

By Alyson Pellowe, founder and managing director of People Vision Ltd, a leading provider of cross-industry human resources management and development expertise.

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