

10 STEPS TO INTEGRATE NEW EMPLOYEES

Strategies to welcome new members of your team.

BY DANIELLE COBO

What happens after you've completed the grueling and time-consuming task of recruiting, interviewing, and officially hiring a new employee? Hiring a qualified candidate is only half the battle; the next challenge is ensuring they feel welcomed and are integrated easily into your team. Think of this step as the "courting and dating" timeframe of a relationship. Your new employee is wondering if unfamiliar peers will like them or if they will enjoy working together. Meanwhile, you are looking for reassurance that you hired the right person and that they will integrate smoothly and, ultimately, become long-term, effective members of your team.

SUCCESS TIPS

Bringing a new hire into a practice is not rocket science. Your goal is to organize a thoughtful onboarding process that makes the new employee feel at home and establishes a foundation for the development of an enduring, mutually beneficial employment relationship. Here are 10 proven tips you can use to welcome your new employee to the team.

1. *Provide a welcome package.* A small gesture can go a long way to help your new employee feel welcomed on their first day. Have you ever signed up for a membership program and received a pleasant welcome package? The gesture of a small gift creates a sense of joy, excitement, and eagerness for your new partnership. Your gift need not be expensive. Simply get something personal to demonstrate you are excited for them to join the team. Your welcome package could include skincare products sold in the practice, branded logo items, clippings of quotes, a coffee mug, pens, and/or a card signed by the entire team.

2. *Share the value your new employee brings to the practice.* It is important for your team to know why you chose this particular person out of all the applicants. Take time to introduce and credential your new employee at your next team meeting or in a group email. Provide some relevant background, including how many years of experience they have, degree and professional certifications, special talents, personal hobbies, and, of course, what their role will be in the practice. Make it extra special by including a brief, per-

“ Share the value your new employee brings to the practice. It is important for your team to know why you chose this particular person out of all the applicants. Take time to introduce and credential your new employee at your next team meeting or in a group email. ”

sonal statement of why you are confident they are the right person for the job and for the team.

3. *Build relationships and encourage communication.* Have you ever been the new person in a group and felt like an outsider? The quickest way to bridge the gap between your new hire feeling like the "odd man out" to feeling part of the team is by helping build relationships with their peers and by encouraging communication. Two Truths and a Lie— a game in which a participant attempts to identify which of three statements is bogus—is a classic and fun icebreaker game to use in a situation like this. Instructions: Have everyone sit in a circle. Each person prepares three statements, two of which are true and one of which is a lie. In any order, the person shares the three statements to the entire group. The object of the game is to figure out which statement is a lie. The rest of the group votes on each statement and the person reveals which one is the lie. It is a fun way to get a newcomer involved.

4. *Learn their unique workplace language: People express and receive appreciation in different ways.* If you try to express appreciation in ways that are not meaningful to your employees or co-workers, they may not feel fully valued. This can result in a lack of loyalty and motivation. It is important to learn what

“appreciation language” each of your employees speak. This tip applies to everyone on your team, not just a new employee. Using the “5 Languages of Appreciation in the Workplace” assessment tool can help you better identify the language of appreciation preferred by your new employee (and all employees). The assessment covers topics such as words of affirmation, quality time, receiving gifts, and acts of service.

5. *Make their individual development plan (IDP) a partnership.* Developing employees to be effective contributors in a timely manner is important and likely includes an integration plan that is fairly well established. Obviously, the new staff member was hired to fill a needed role and must be trained to fill that role. However, the long-range IDP can—and should—be a collaborative effort. It is your responsibility as their leader to understand their aspirations and align opportunities within the practice. Ask your employee what motivates them. Some employees have a passion for organizing and would be more motivated to help close up at the end of the day, while others prefer patient interactions and would enjoy making follow-up calls to patients. Make an effort to find out if your employee has career aspirations and would be interested in taking on more responsibilities or leadership in the practice. Many employees flourish when given more responsibility and opportunity.

6. *Determine how they want to be managed.* While everyone tries to get along with their managers and peers, we all have emotional or behavioral “triggers” that can result in uncomfortable situations or interactions. When individual trigger buttons get pushed, people tend to push back. Ask your employee what his or her top three triggers are so you can make an effort to avoid them. A trigger can be as simple as a phrase “you should have” (as opposed to “what you may want to consider”), chewing gum while conversing, or looking at a phone or emails while in a conversation. It is important to know what the two of you can—and should—realistically expect from each other.

7. *Assign them a “center of excellence” partner.* Never let your new employee flounder without a known path to answers and/or help. Similar to the phone-a-friend option from the television show “Who Wants to Be a Millionaire,” a center-of-excellence partner is a staff member who is readily available to share best practices, research, support, and training on specific practice areas. The new employee should know where to turn when he or she has a question or needs help. Focus areas might include a particular treatment, policy, billing, insurance, and product.

8. *Outline the first 90 days.* It’s important to be clear and concise about your expectations for the first 90 days. Nothing is worse—for you or the new employee—than feeling like a fish out of water because of a lack of direction and organization. You need a thoughtful and realistic plan. Prior to the new employee coming onboard, review your practice policies and guidelines. Write down a schedule of what your new hire should be learning, observing, and doing each day. Early in the onboarding process, meet with them at the end of each day

to track their progress, answer questions, and provide further guidance. As the onboarding process progresses, these meetings can be spaced out as needed (every other day, weekly, etc.).

9. *Make learning fun.* Being inundated with instructions and directions on new tasks, duties, and responsibilities can be overwhelming. Do your best to make learning a fun activity. For example, play a business version of the game Bingo. Take a plain sheet of paper and draw a BINGO card with five squares across and five squares down. In each square write down a task your new hire needs to complete. Subjects could include: Complete your new hire form, observe a treatment, shadow a coworker, etc. When your new hire marks all the squares as complete, provide a simple prize or reward. Voilà, learning is fun.

10. *Give them the treatment.* Once a new hire grasps the basic job responsibilities, schedule a day for them to experience the treatments your practice offers. Your staff members will be able to connect to your patients on a deeper level when they can share their own personal transformation with before-and-after photos. A vast majority of consumer purchases are made by women. Women find sharing an intimate secret as a bonding opportunity. Employee testimonials and personal experiences are two of the most powerful techniques a practice can use to creating an emotional connection with the #1 consumer—women.

OUTCOME

Using these tips will ensure your new hire has a successful integration into your practice. You will have an enriched understanding of their language of appreciation and motivators as well as a thoughtful plan to cultivate an encouraging atmosphere while retaining long-term employees. Furthermore, your onboarding process will be exciting and enjoyable for your new employee. ■



Danielle Cobo is the Senior Southeast Region Manager for Allergan, Inc. She has more than 15 years of experience in retail, dental, and aesthetic markets. Ms. Cobo joined Allergan in 2013 as the Southern California region manager in Topical Aesthetics, representing SkinMedica® and Latisse®. In 2015, she moved to the Southeast region where she was honored as the No. 1 region manager of the year while also earning Leadership distinction. In her current role, Ms. Cobo leads a team of eight strategic account managers in North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida. Prior to joining Allergan, Ms. Cobo specialized in sales, training, and practice marketing of aesthetic lasers, including skin resurfacing, skin tightening, and non-invasive body contouring. In addition, she spent more than five years supporting dental practices with digital imaging, Cone Beam CT scanning, and the use of practice management software to increase patient case acceptance and to recruit, convert, and retain patients.