

Orientation Redesign

Mayo Clinic revamps orientation program to include the clinic's history, values, and culture.

It's Monday morning and all is quiet in the Charter House at Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota. The quiet is soon interrupted as staff from the HR education and development department welcome new employees with music, balloons, and a continental breakfast.

The clinic transformed its new employee orientation curriculum into a program that emphasizes the values of the medical center. It also offers practical and unique components that can be applied to any formal orientation program in both large and small organizations.

Mayo Clinic was founded by a family with strong values and beliefs about the importance of making contributions to society and their fellow citizens. These values, perpetuated throughout the history of Mayo Clinic, remain part of the organization today and set the future direction. As the organization has expanded, its leaders have expressed concern about maintaining the strong values and culture of Mayo Clinic. The new employee orientation program has addressed this concern by providing new employees with a strong foundation in Mayo's heritage and culture.

The process began with the establishment of an interdisciplinary team charged with researching best practices and providing recommendations for redesigning the orientation program. The team reviewed literature, evaluated orientation within other organizations, convened focus groups, and conducted a survey. To provide a variety of perspectives, the team reviewed programs within healthcare and outside the field, in addition to studying large and small organizations.

By Sheila Hicks, Mary Peters, and Marilyn Smith

High-level support

Gaining support from institutional leaders and stakeholders continues to be critical to the success of this program. During the redesign, Mayo leaders were given periodic updates to increase their awareness and build support. Stakeholders were involved early in the process, and an advisory committee was established to provide direction in development, implementation, and evaluation of the redesigned program.

A communication plan was developed to inform Mayo employees of the upcoming changes. Supervisors were one of the key audiences targeted in this communication plan because of their critical role in assuring that employees have a meaningful orientation and are successful on the job.

A thorough data-gathering process and the involvement of staff at various levels proved valuable in identifying program goals, developing strategies, and identifying components of the current program that should be maintained.

The redesigned orientation was developed with four goals in mind:

- Provide employees with a positive, memorable first impression of Mayo.
- Introduce employees to the history, vision, mission, and culture of Mayo.
- Create awareness of Mayo's expectations, employee expectations of Mayo, and employee contributions to Mayo's core principles.
- Acquaint employees with the clinic's professional and personal development resources.

Hello...my name is

In the new orientation program, staff greets new employees with smiles, kind words, lively music, a balloon bouquet, and morning refreshments. Each person is given a pre-printed name tag to help with introductions.

The day begins with informal greetings from a facilitator, a Mayo physician leader, and a senior administrator.

Facilitators are recruited from all departments to create a program that has

wide-ranging support and high visibility. The facilitators come from a variety of backgrounds and share their personal stories and experiences. Facilitators are selected based upon a set of criteria, including interpersonal skills, a welcoming spirit, expert facilitation skills, and knowledge of and commitment to Mayo Clinic.

In the November 2000 issue of *Workforce* magazine, Howard Klein, professor of management and human resources at Ohio State University, writes, "While rules and policies are important, it is understanding things like company values that helps people feel like part of the organization they work for. This increases their sense of belonging and their commitment."

Role playing

Respect for diversity, one of Mayo's principal values, is emphasized during a diversity exercise. Participants are divided into two groups and are asked to display a set of behaviors. Individuals with differing personality types are

grouped together, which creates a dynamic, but sometimes uncomfortable situation.

One group is quiet and reserved, doesn't initiate conversation, prefers communicating one-on-one, and pauses to think before responding. The second group is outgoing and friendly, energized through interactions with others, and enthusiastic. After the exercise, the large group discusses what occurred, how they felt about it, and how it applies to real-life situations. The goal is to generate discussion about diversity and to identify ways to create a respectful work environment.

On the second day of orientation, 12 groups from Mayo set up displays at a resource fair during lunch to ac-

The interactive orientation program was designed to accommodate a variety of learning styles and to allow participants to share experiences with other new employees.

New Employee Orientation Topics

Heritage and Culture (presented by facilitator)

Primary value
Core principles
History (DVD)
Work atmosphere
Teamwork
Personal responsibility
Innovation
Integrity
Diversity
Customer service
Mutual respect
Harassment prevention

Department-Specific (presented by subject matter expert)

Parking and transportation
Intranet
Dress and decorum
Policy manual
Total compensation
Safety
Employee assistance program
Security
Infection control
Employee occupational health service
Benefits

quaint new employees with the myriad resources available. For example, employees are given the opportunity to sign up for Children's R & R, a service which provides free day care for employees' children when they are ill. Another resource provides information on parking and transportation options.

The interactive orientation program was designed to accommodate a variety of learning styles, to allow participants to share experiences with other new employees, and to create networking opportunities. To enhance this interaction, the room is set up with round tables for groups of five or six people.

One of the networking activities encourages employees to find and meet others in the group who fit certain criteria, including staff that moved to the area to work at Mayo, staff who love Minnesota winters, or employees who will be working a night shift.

Finding one's way

To help staff navigate Mayo's 75 campus buildings, new employees are sent out in small teams to find specific locations. They are given maps to help them find their way and are asked to observe sights, sounds, and smells along the way. One group travels to the on-site fitness center to pick up a schedule of exercise classes while another group explores the employee cafeteria. When the teams return, they report their observations to the entire group. This exercise gives employees a chance to build familiarity with the Mayo campus and experience how patients may feel when trying to find their way around the large complex.

The most popular component of orientation is the bus tour of Rochester and the various Mayo Clinic buildings. Mayo is scattered throughout a city with more than 90,000 people. The bus tour provides new employees with the opportunity to see the historic buildings at Mayo and the newer buildings that are part of the clinic, as well as other city landmarks. Volunteers, most of whom

Engaging Activities/ Interactive Exercises

Mingling activity

Scavenger hunt throughout Mayo campus

Stretch break

Diversity exercise

Mayoisms

Safety learning station (fire extinguisher training)

Tower building exercises

Resource fair

Orientation Jeopardy!

are retired Mayo employees, serve as tour guides. Their rich stories, words of wisdom, and humor make this an enjoyable outing.

The clinic's needs assessment survey showed that employees want to connect with their managers as soon as possible. To help facilitate this, managers arrive at orientation on the afternoon of the second day to guide new employees to their work units.

Another unique component of the orientation program is a stretch break led by a Mayo fitness specialist. With upbeat background music, the specialist leads new employees in basic stretches that can reduce fatigue, help with ergonomic issues, and promote good health. Since concentrating in the afternoons can be a challenge, this activity encourages movement to stimulate thinking and enhance learning.

Status check

Mayo Clinic stresses the importance of continuous improvement, and the orientation program is no exception. Feedback from participants is carefully reviewed to enhance the program.

Evaluations are distributed during orientation at regular intervals. New employees are asked to rate the orientation program, what they liked and disliked, and how each of the presenters performed. In 2003 and 2004, feedback about the redesigned program was collected from orientation participants and their managers through the use of focus

groups and a survey. The response was very positive. During a 2005 research study, more than 900 employees rated the program's overall effectiveness between 88 and 95 percent.

An advisory board, put in place to provide guidance during redesign and implementation, continues to serve in this role. Board members receive evaluation data and attend orientation sessions to provide suggestions and recommend program changes.

"An orientation occurs whether an organization plans for it or not," Jean Barbazette writes in her book *Successful New Employee Orientation*. "The result of an 'unplanned orientation' is often a confused employee who is not very productive, will probably make mistakes, and is likely to leave the organization within a year."

Organizations that make a genuine effort to welcome new employees, teach them about the company mission, and encourage them to be part of a team will reap the benefits of a staff that is highly motivated to make a long-term commitment to their employer. **TD**

Sheila Hicks is a learning and development consultant in Mayo Clinic's HR education and development department; hicks.sheila@mayo.edu. **Mary Peters** is coordinator of new employee orientation with Mayo Clinic's HR education and development department; peters.mary@mayo.edu. **Marilyn Smith** is a learning and development consultant with Mayo Clinic's HR education and development department; smith.marilyn@mayo.edu.