



WELCOME FOYER OR DEPARTURE LOUNGE?

Some organizations do not realize the problems they set for themselves by not following simple rules around induction procedures for new employees. All too often it seems, new starts are shown to a desk and computer and left to get on with it.

In order to appreciate the impact of this, just imagine yourself landing in an alien setting on another planet. Oh sure, you may have the appropriate laser guns and sensors – but so what? The rest of the equipment may be unfamiliar and written in a totally different language. People are behaving differently and you don't know the rules.

You don't know what to expect and undoubtedly anxiety will be running high. Humans are not machines and we do not operate from a logical base all of the time. This is particularly so when we are in new and unfamiliar territory.

Sadly for the employer these negative first impressions can escalate out of control. We tend to generalize from an initial bad experience – and see the remaining experiences from that point on, in a similar light.

We also 'personalise' these experiences – so "they haven't done this or that" very quickly is interpreted as "they don't care about me", "I'm just another number", "they don't want me here" - through to "I'm out of here!"

All this - from acts of thoughtlessness or lack of foresight and expressions of appreciation. Thus – if you as the new employer do not present a sound 'Welcoming foyer' – it can very quickly become an intermediary 'Departure Lounge'.

Please consider what message you are trying to convey. Employees these days are much more selective. They are clear about what they expect in their work experience, how much they will enjoy working there, how they expect to be treated – not simply remunerated, and what the employer is prepared to commit to them in terms of their career development. They are assessing you, as much as you are assessing them! If you want to attract and, more importantly retain, Top Talent then you must review how you are perceived, what practices you put in place and how your espoused values are demonstrated in practice in the workplace.

You must also ensure that you provide a 'safe' environment in which they can ask questions and provide feedback without fear of feeling vulnerable. Back to our alien example above – that new recruit may fear humiliation, retribution – even annihilation – if he spoke up!

Recently we have been aware of instances where this – and more – are occurring. Circumstances were exacerbated when a new employee quickly discovered that the role he believed he was there to perform had significantly changed (prior to his arrival). The position description certainly did not match the needs and expectations of the employer, let alone the role itself. Whether this was due to a change in business needs and direction, an outdated job description or lack of attention by the hiring body is unclear at this time. What is clear however is that the new employee made a significant decision within a relatively short space of time to leave as soon as possible. Thus he is simply waiting out his time in the Departure Lounge. And no amount of retrospective work by the employer could redeem this situation.

Make sure that you are not creating a Departure Lounge! Contact Ann Ryder at Helium at ann@heliumnz.co.nz

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