

Executive Summary

Beginning in 1992, Employee Services at the Washington Department of General Administration offered a four-day orientation for new employees. A typical session involved 11 people and 1,408 staff hours of preparation. High costs limited General Administration to offering the training to just twice annually. Attendance at these sessions was poor-only 7 percent of new employees showed up. As a result, most new employees did not receive orientation and missed the opportunity to learn important information about the department and state employment.

To solve this, Employee Services automated the New Employee Orientation by placing it on the department's employee Intranet site. This provides easy access for new employees. This change has saved staff many hours annually and provides more timely information to new employees. It also provides current employees a quick reference for information on department employment policies and practices.

By developing an on-line orientation, Employee Services offered web-based training to department employees for the first time. The on-line training package allows employees to work at their own pace. This innovation also enables staff in Employee Services to spend more time serving their customers in other ways rather than preparing for the former twice-a-year orientations.

The new online orientation did not require reinvention of the wheel, either. Employee Services used information from the curriculum of previous orientation training and quickly adapted it to a new medium. Employee Services also ensured the online training met customer needs. The group sought suggestions from the department's Financial Office, information Systems and answers provided by participants in previous orientation classes. Additional information was gathered from laws pertaining to state employment, agency policies and procedures, and federal guidelines. Department supervisors also provided input. Employees are continually encouraged to review the online training and provide feedback for improvements.

Today, 85 percent of new employees complete their orientation to the department within 30 days of their hire date.

A. Description of the program/significance to efficiency of state government

The online New Employee Orientation training proves the old adage that time is money. Prior to its creation, the traditional method of relaying important information to new

employees required over 1,400 hours of preparation by 11 employees. The results were poor – just 7 percent of the new employees attended the training.

Today, 85 percent receive the training within their first month of hire, and they can do so at their own pace. But perhaps two employees who must arrange training for new employees best describe this innovation:

- “We save six hours just by avoiding the commute to Olympia for a traditional orientation class” – Teri Tokarski.
- “The employee is not taken away from the reason they were hired to spend time at a scheduled class at a later date when the need for the information often has passed” – Karen Purtee.

The online orientation is an efficient blend of technology and general information that is easily adaptable to other organizations.

B. Calculation of actual savings

In 1992, only 7 percent of new employees received an orientation, and this often occurred months after the hire date. The online New Employee Orientation began in November 1998. In March 1999, 38 percent of new department employees had taken the training within two days of their hire date. By February 2000, 64 percent of new employees had taken the training within two days of their hire date.

Other highlights include:

- The time to complete the traditional New Employee Orientation was reduced from four days in 1992, to between 30 to 60 minutes in 1999.
- The number of people involved in conducting the training was reduced from 11 in 1992 to two in 1999 – the employee plus the employee’s supervisor.
- 64 percent of new employees have been oriented within two days of their hire date.
- 76 percent of new employees have been oriented within seven days of their hire date.
- 85 percent of new employees have been oriented within 30 days of their hire date.

C. Quantitative benefits

A total of 2,368 staff hours were saved (2 hours preparation x 11 trainers x 32 hours of training x 4 sessions per year = 1,408 hours saved annually) and (32 hours of training x 15 employees attending x 2 sessions per year = 960 hours saved annually).

Other benefits include:

- Provides an information resource for agency as well as state employee benefits that can be accessed and printed by all agency employees at any time.
- Formal orientation training packets are no longer made saving approximately \$1 per new employee. Since the change was made in November 1998, General Administration has had 112 new employees, resulting in savings on packets of \$112.

D. Relevancy of use

After demonstrating the automated version of New Employee Orientation to other agencies, copies were provided to 12 including: Employment Security; Social and Health Services; Office of Financial Management; Secretary of State; Department of Financial Institutions; State Printer; Department of Information Systems; Department of Revenue; Department of Corrections; Department of Labor Industries; Housing Finance Commission; and the Department of Retirement Systems.

The Department of Revenue used our program as a foundation for developing its own automated versions of orientation. Several other agencies are in various stages of adapting the program to meet their needs.