

Induction Programme

Purpose of Online Orientation Programs

Before beginning to devise an appropriate Instructional Design approach for the training, it is useful to take a moment out to consider the GOALS of a typical orientation program. According to Sify's understanding, an orientation program serves many purposes:



If done right, an orientation program also provides a warm welcome and begins to build staff member loyalty from the first day of their joining.

Agreeably, that's a lot to accomplish. No employee can take it all in, and moreover, no employee **needs** all of that information on the same day. The best orientation programs aim at providing a variety of experiences staged to meet the different needs that new hires will have encounter in their first few months on the job.

Why Online Orientation Programs are a Good Idea

Classroom versions of orientation programs can overwhelm new hires. In addition to their nervousness about joining a new organisation, they also need to grapple with hours spent inside a room where they meet a multitude of trainers who come in, present slideshows, and leave.

As a new hire in an organization once confessed, the experience of one such classroom training left her feeling like she was trying to drink from a fire hose—too much to take in, all at once.

The obvious benefit of an online orientation program is that people can learn:

- what they need
- at their own pace
- whenever they need it.

What's more, it's easy for them to revisit things if they want—the online training therefore doubles up as a reference tool as well.

A well-planned orientation can provide a consistent introduction to an organisation and its mission and values. This is even more important if the organisation is global in nature, and all staff members need to be informed of the same messages.

Online learning reaches all employees with a consistent, targeted message at a time and place convenient to them.

Sify's Design Principles for Online Orientation Programs

An online orientation needs to provide a learning experience that is inspiring. Learners need to be confident of their choice of joining the organisation, and that they have embarked on one of the best journeys they will ever take—a journey that will bring them into contact with people and experiences as diverse as they are valuable, and each will play a role in shaping his or her life, both professionally and personally.

An online orientation training needs to be treated as a process, as opposed to an event—one that will continue to provide information and resources to new hires, as they grow more familiar with the organisation.

While creating online orientation programs, Sify keeps the following goals in mind:

Set the goals of the online training orientation program beforehand

It may sound obvious, but having clear objectives is an important determinant for the success of an online orientation program. Clearly outlining the learning goals before designing a course is useful because it helps easily determine how these goals will be met.

It is useful for the Instructional Designer to have answers to the following question: What does the client want their newly hired staff to be able to do after they complete their online training course?

Usually, the goals of an orientation training are similar—regardless of the nature of the organization.

- Inform staff members about the organization's policies, culture, and vision,
- Concentrate on their primary duties for the next few months,
- Provide them with the information and resources they will need to effectively do their jobs,
- Connect staff members with their colleagues and supervisors—the training needs to include contact information of key staff members, and, most importantly,
- Make new hires feel welcome, and set them off in the right direction.

Keep the information brief and to the point

Unnecessary information, abstract jargon, complicated graphs, and long sentences tend to confuse new hires. Online orientation courses need to communicate information as pointedly as possible by breaking eLearning content up into smaller modules, so that new employees can stay focused and easily find information when they need it.

Each module needs to begin with a clear objective(s) and provide new hires with tools and resources that will help them successfully complete each section and meet the training objectives. Data not really needed during new employees' first days at their jobs should be avoided. Information that is both necessary and easily digestible should be provided.

Give new staff direct access to online resources

Online orientation programs need to include all useful links that will enable new hires to have direct access to information related to the organisation's processes and practices exactly when they need it.

Keep it updated

To remain credible, orientation programs need to be up-to-date. Keeping a program up-to-date can be challenging.

So, how can you handle online material that requires frequent updating? First, it is necessary to examine the volatile material itself. Is it necessary to include it online at all, or can this material be provided in a different way—over email, for instance?

The next step is to evaluate the amount of material that is likely to change. Often, the case will be that most of the material will be pretty static, with only a few pages that are changeable. In such a situation, it is possible to develop an online module with the static material, and include

a downloadable link to the volatile information—contained in a Word or PDF document. This way, when the material needs to be updated, it is enough if the document is updated.

Increase the flexibility of your online training orientation program

Ensuring that an online training orientation program is accessible from all mobile devices ensures that new employees complete their online training orientation course at the time and place it is more convenient for them.

Offering newly hired staff the option to complete the online training orientation course at their own pace will significantly enhance their overall eLearning experience.

Offer learners variety

An interesting blend of different tools and resources not only adds value to an orientation program, but also will significantly increase engagement levels among learners.

It is possible to reduce the monotony of an online training by integrating different kinds of media into the training, such as videos, audio elements, animations, and eLearning games.

Measure the success of your employee online training orientation program

Measuring the success of an online orientation program allows you to keep it updated, make improvements, and determine whether it was indeed successful.

There are several ways to evaluate an online orientation program, but the most effective way is, of course, soliciting immediate feedback. As soon as employees finish their online training, they can be asked to complete surveys and identify the parts they found the most and least helpful, whether they found the information offered overwhelming or, worse, insufficient, and how they would rate their overall on-boarding experience.

Knowing what worked and what didn't will allow you to determine which topic areas of your employees online training orientation program need additional coverage or modifications—so that in later updates, the course gradually gets more and more updated and effective.

Keep in mind that employee orientation is an ongoing process

Regardless of how effectively the orientation is designed, it is really difficult for new hires to retain all the information the course conveys.

This is why follow-up initiatives work well, by contacting staff members and their supervisors two or three months after the online orientation program is over.

As part of this follow-up, staff can be asked about their experience with the course, as well as the elements they would like to see added, changed, or boosted.

Blend in some face-to-face

Blending in some face-to-face components might still be a possibility in an orientation program that is entirely online. This can be a teaching session, social event, or a knowledge quest activity.

For instance, new hires can be directed from the online training to introduce themselves and collect business cards from any 5 people in their office from other departments. After they've done collecting, they can redeem them (from the resident HR personnel) for a T-shirt or cap with the logo of the organisation.

Be Wise with Media

Orientation programs need not be media extravaganzas—complete with video, audio, and flash animation. Media is costly, both in terms of money and bandwidth. Too costly, and you may overshoot your training budget. Too many megabytes and new hires will be frustrated with a course that takes forever to load.

Before deciding on the amount of media to include in an orientation program it is useful to do a couple of checks. These involve checking with the IT teams of the organisation about the bandwidth and accessibility requirements of the online training.

About Sify eLearning

As innovative leaders in new technology and interactive eLearning, we create highly immersive, and engaging learning experiences. With over a decade of experience in generating customized learning solutions for Fortune 500 and Small and Medium-sized companies, sify eLearning is the choice for industry-relevant training projects. Our solutions align with your organization's business and learning goals, to affect change and improve employee performance. Our extensive experiences across industries have allowed us the benefit of acquiring unique perspectives and interpretations, while thinking outside-the-box to create highly customized projects.

About the Author



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Reshma has fourteen years of experience in the publishing and eLearning industries, encompassing roles as varied as Features Writer, Web journalist, Sub-editor, and Instructional Designer. As a Sify eLearning Instructional Design manager she has She has handled the instructional design, SME coordination, and customer communication for over 200 hours of elearning content. She has overseen custom training and eLearning projects for development agencies of the United Nations, providing her with considerable onsite exposure and experience to UN agency culture and working styles across the globe

Furthermore, she has developed trainings for BFSI customers, including Allianz Insurance, Franklin Templeton Investments, WellPoint Insurance, MassMutual Insurance, Standard Chartered Bank.

She is also a certified online course facilitator from the Arts Institute Online (AIO), conducted by the Socrates Distance Learning Technologies Group, a division of Education Management Corporation (EDMC).

We are here to help. Contact us for a demo or consultation.

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