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FOR SMALL BUSINESS

Susan-Says®:

## First Day Blunders Can Be Costly Mistakes.

By Susan Wilson Solovic, CEO SBTV

Remember, your first day of school. Butterflies flickered in your stomach. What would your teacher be like? Who would you play with? Because you didn't know what to expect, it was pretty scary.

The first day on a new job is much like the first day of school. A new employee is both excited and apprehensive. With that in mind an employer, should make the new employee feel comfortable and accepted. Unfortunately, many small business owners spend a great deal of time and resources carefully recruiting and selecting the right employee, but they drop the ball once they've made the hiring decision.

You only have one chance to make a good impression. That first day on the job sets the tone for your employee's perception of your company and first impressions are often lasting impressions. As a result, employees who have negative experiences typically don't stay around for long. That means you're back at square one. So why not take the time to do it right?

Every business person understands the necessity of getting all the employee paperwork taken care of on the first day. But a good first experience involves much more than filling out forms.

Prior to the first day, mark off sufficient time on your calendar to personally greet the new hire and introduce him/her to the team. If you aren't going to be available, assign someone within your organization to make sure the he/she isn't left to fend for themselves.

"We ask the new person to introduce themselves to the staff by doing a creative intro about themselves. We've had some amazing feats of creativity from dancing to poetry to lessons in geography and some quizzes," explains David Hahn, senior vice president, Planned TV Arts.

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Make it a priority at some point during the day to spend time getting to know the new addition to your staff. Ask them about their hobbies and interests and look for common areas of interest. This gives you the opportunity to get to know them on a more personal level.

Consider putting up a welcome banner in the new employee's workspace or giving him a special parking space for the day. "When we have a new employee, they are met with a basket of goodies on their desk and walked around the company by their manager," explains Eric Groves, SVP, Sales & Business Development for Constant Contact.

Don't stick the employee in a make-shift work area. Plan ahead and be sure their work space is prepared. They should have the work tools and supplies they need to get started. In addition, provide them with their e-mail address, initial password and telephone number so they feel as though they are connected. You might also want to give them a specific assignment – something they can get started on to feel as though they are contributing. Don't forget to provide them with copies of your companies' mission/vision statement and departmental goals.

"We ask the new employee to sit in on meetings, and we provide them with a company orientation," adds Delia Passi, President, Medelia Communications.

By all means, invite the new employee to lunch. "Not only do we take them to lunch, but we also make sure we tell them about the best places to get lunch," explains Hahn.

Touch base with the new employee throughout the day to see how things are going. You want them to feel comfortable asking questions and learning the ropes.

"Consider scheduling 'no cancel' meetings with managers and team members during the first month," says Bonny Filandrinos, president of Staffing Solutions, Inc.

"Every new employee has a 'buddy' assigned to them the first few weeks to help them get acclimated," Hahn adds.

When your company loses an employee it also loses money and productivity. Once you've found a good person to add to your team, why not take the necessary steps to help ensure they stay? Make the first day a memorable and positive experience.

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