

New Hire Orientation and Recruitment ... In a Virtual World

Unions create community. Intentional social connection and support is even more important in the new virtual world we're living in due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

It might take more connections—and creativity—to get new hires to join the union. But it can be done. And even though we are starting to go back to face-to-face interactions, incorporating some of these virtual tools can strengthen and enhance your new hire orientation.

Best practices for new hire orientation

The best practices from in-person orientations still stand in a virtual world. Here are some additional pieces to consider (please see New Hire Orientation booklet, p. 2-3):


- Set concrete goals.
 - *Messaging: Locals need to be even more intentional and concrete in who they are and what they believe in if not in a face-to-face environment.*
 - *Leadership team: Diversifying your team is key, especially with members familiar with digital organizing tools like social media, virtual meetings, texting platforms, etc.*
- Create informal and virtual opportunities.
 - *All meetings should include catchy titles and relevant content.*
 - *Consider purchasing a video conferencing platform license like Zoom.*
 - *Utilize Hustle (a peer-to-peer texting platform) and social media, along with traditional methods of communication (such as email), to notify new hires of opportunities.*
- Track participation.
 - *Prepare and recruit members to track participation on virtual platforms (copy participant lists in Zoom, Facebook Live events, conference calls, etc.).*
- Follow up on issues and concerns.
 - *Provide virtual opportunities for members to take action, such as participating in online professional development, attending virtual school board meetings or engaging in advocacy via letter-writing campaigns.*

Welcome meeting

- Set agenda.
 - *Leaders should continue to share their union story, define comprehensive unionism and answer any questions new hires have about what it means to be in a union.*
 - *Make the meeting fun and interactive: Think of door prizes, poll questions and consider breakout rooms. Use the chat box to have new members answer a question.*
- Create a registration form attendees fill out in the waiting room before being admitted to the meeting to capture contact information and create the attendee list.
- Consider roles for meeting.
 - *Online meeting platform tech: This person knows their way around online meeting platforms. They can screen share, create breakout rooms and send people to them, troubleshoot problems, monitor chat for questions and comments, freeing up the meeting runner to focus on the new hires.*

Updated: July 27, 2021

www.educationminnesota.org

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- *Dialogue facilitator: Ensures the welcome meeting is interactive and a discussion, not just a presentation.*
- *Breakout room leaders: These people should have discussion questions ready and be comfortable facilitating conversation if participants are reluctant. They should also be comfortable with the membership application and know how to complete it.*
- *Member speakers: Diverse group of members who can share their union stories.*
- Have an ask (signing up) and create peer motivation.
 - *Utilize "Join Now," our new digital application process or discuss how membership applications will be shared with new hires.*
 - *Celebrate membership with online meeting platform selfies that are shared over social media.*

Follow up with new and potential members

It may take multiple conversations with a potential member to connect the new hire's values and interests with the value of belonging to the union. Here are a few ways to share and gather information, foster community and build meaningful relationships between new employees and union colleagues.

- **Surveys:** Invite new employees to complete a survey about what supports they need as they start their school year (resources, professional development, orientation, etc.). This can provide valuable information about how to provide meaningful support for long-term success.
- **Hustle:** Use this peer-to-peer texting system to share information, invite input and participation and build relationships. Hustle interactions are often more effective than emails or phone calls.
- **Virtual meetings:** Create a series of sessions to help new employees become familiar with professional issues, union activism, political engagement and other topics.
- **Phone calls:** Check in periodically with new employees to see how things are going and if they have any questions.
- **Union buddies:** Connect experienced union members with new employees to serve as mentors or guides to connect new colleagues with supports, resources and relationships.

EVERY MONTH CHECKLIST: Ongoing process for all new hires

- Create fun virtual messages instead of handwritten notes to check in and invite new hires to meetings (texts, emails, digital cards, etc.)
- Consider socially distant home visits to connect one on one.

New hire engagement ideas

Use some of these virtual ideas to supplement your engagement calendar for the year:

- Host 10-minute meetings on new hire survival topics. Education Minnesota has a list with agendas and materials ready for you at www.educationminnesota.org/members-only/member-engagement/Resources/new-hire-engagement.
- Offer virtual professional development opportunities through LearnUpon and other union-sponsored platforms.
- Hold outdoor socially distanced building meetings.
- Offer pandemic-related union swag (branded face masks, hand sanitizer, etc.).
- Organize a union parade to visit new hires/members.
- Produce union-branded yard signs to welcome new hires/members.
- Plan virtual events like trivia nights or happy hours.
- Host absentee ballot parties and virtual GOTV events.