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YOU GOT THE JOB, NOW WHAT?:
AN EVALUATION OF THE NEW EMPLOYEE ORIENTATION PROGRAM AT
THE UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA

By

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You Got the Job, Now What?: An Evaluation of the New Employee Orientation Program
at the University of Montana

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Abstract:

When new members begin their employment with an organization, they make a transition
from being an outsider to an insider. A significant moment arranged by the organization
to facilitate socialization is the New Employee Orientation (NEO). This evaluation
examines NEO in relation to the encounter stage of the socialization process. Focusing
on what and how information is provided during the NEO program at the University of
Montana (UM), this evaluation is based on research of the informational components of
Klein and Weaver (2000) and the socialization tactics from Van Maanen and Schein
(1979). General conclusions regarding NEO and socialization as well as
recommendations for improvement are presented for the benefit of the Human Resource
Services office at UM.

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YOU GOT THE JOB, NOW WHAT?: AN EVALUATION OF THE NEW

EMPLOYEE ORIENTATION PROGRAM AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA

INTRODUCTION

The University of Montana (UM) requires all new faculty and staff to attend a

New Employee Orientation (NEO) that is organized and hosted by the Human Resource

Services (HRS) office. While interning in HRS, I expressed interest in attending a

session of NEO. Upon completion of the session, I was asked to provide feedback on

what was done well and what needed improvement. Human Resource Services needs and

wants to improve their NEO and requested suggestions for enhancement. This project

was developed to fulfill that request.

Despite the differences between NEO programs and the overall socialization

process, examining NEOs as part of the socialization process is extremely valuable.

Socialization is a communicative process organizational newcomer's experience. New

Employee Orientation is just one part of the socialization process where newcomers

begin to integrate themselves into the organization. The more integrated and welcomed

newcomers feel, the more comfortable they are in the environment. When employees

enjoy their job and the environment in which they work, they are much more productive

which benefits the organization. Successful socialization processes, including NEO, are a

win-win situation for both the newcomer and the organization. Due to the importance of

socialization, organizations need to focus on what information is communicated and how

that information is communicated to newcomers in NEO.

This project focuses on evaluating *what* information is provided to newcomers

and *how* that information is presented. Specifically, organizational socialization is

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explored in order to establish the context and importance of NEO. Next, NEO is examined to understand the content of socialization needed for an effective NEO. To explore w*hat* information is included in NEO, Klein and Weaver (2000) suggest five categories for the content of information that should be covered for successful socialization. For understanding *how* that information is provided, Van Maanen and Schein's (1979) socialization tactics will be considered. This evaluation is just the first step in determining the true effectiveness of UM's orientation program but the information provided to HRS from this evaluation is essential in determining the next step to take in evaluation, reconstruction, and development.

THE SOCIALIZATION PROCESS

Defining the Socialization Process

According to Van Maanen and Schein (1979), socialization is "the process by which an individual acquires the social knowledge and skills necessary to assume an organizational role" (p. 3). Socialization needs to be understood as a process (Feldman, 1976a; Van Maanen & Schein) where newcomers move from being outsiders to insiders (Feldman, 1976b) while learning role expectations, job roles and rules of conduct as well as norms of organizational behavior (Ashforth & Saks, 1996; Scott & Myers, 2005). Extant research explores how the socialization process is carried out, how to make this transition easier on newcomers, and how newcomers can benefit from a successful socialization process (Chao, O'Leary-Kelly, Wolf, Klein, & Gardner, 1994; Eisenberg, Monge, & Miller, 1983; Van Mannen & Schein). The following section describes how the socialization process occurs in stages.

Stages of Socialization

Socialization is a process that occurs in at least three stages (Feldman, 1976a; Kramer & Miller, 1999). While this study focuses on the second stage (encounter), it is valuable to discuss the beginning and ending stages to better understand how NEO fits into the process. The first stage, the *anticipatory stage,* occurs before the newcomer actually enters the organization. Newcomers begin to develop impressions of the organization, department, co-workers, etc. when they are in the interview and hiring phase. During this stage, newcomers also "form expectations about jobs – transmitting, receiving, and evaluating information… - and mak[e] decisions about employment" (Feldman, 1976a, p. 434) These interactions allow the newcomer to anticipate the transition and more easily reduce the anxiety for the second stage they will experience.

The second stage is the *encounter stage* (or *accommodation* according to Feldman, 1976a) where the newcomer enters the organization (Kramer, 2010). The encounter stage is particularly significant because this is the time when newcomers begin to acclimate themselves to their position and begin to define their role in the organization. Newcomers need to feel that they are contributing to the organization and that they are embracing their new role so they will be enticed to stay long-term. Since the encounter stage is typically when newcomers attend NEOs, this stage is the focus of this project and is further delineated below.

The final stage of socialization is the *role management* (or *metamorphosis*) *stage*. Newcomers adapt and settle into their new role as well as adjust to organizational values and expectations. During this time, newcomers must learn to deal with the inevitable conflicts that occur in both their professional and personal lives. The challenge is

learning how to handle these situations in ways that reduce conflicts for everyone involved (Feldman, 1976a).

Throughout the process, newcomers play an active role in their own socialization (Kramer, 1993) by proactively seeking information (Kramer, Callister, & Turban, 1995). Since new employees want to quickly learn their new role they will usually take it upon themselves to ask questions, seek out information, and take charge in their new position. By seeking out information, newcomers more easily master tasks and clarify their roles in addition to learning about the culture of the organization and integrating themselves socially (Scott & Myers, 2005). By doing so, they reduce their anxiety as well as gain knowledge that will allow them to be successful in their new position. This is imperative to consider as organizations need to develop a program that allows newcomers the maximum ability to seek information to enhance their own socialization experience.

The stages in socialization allow us to understand the process and begin to see what constitutes socialization. While all three of these stages are important to consider, for purposes of this project, the focus will remain on the encounter stage.

Benefits of a Successful Socialization Process

For organizations and organizational members alike, establishing a successful socialization experience for newcomers generates many benefits including effectiveness and satisfaction for both the member and the organization (Eisenberg et al., 1983). The more satisfied organizational members are, the more effective they will be for the organization partially because members identify with their role in the organization. This identification benefits the organization as the member will be more productive, more effective, and have a positive attitude towards their employment. When employees have

a positive attitude and feel successful in their role, the more likely they will become embedded in the organization. When members are highly embedded in an organization, they are committed and plan to stay long-term.

Anyone who has been a newcomer in an organization remembers the anxiety and uncertainty they felt, especially in the beginning. The socialization process is the time when newcomers should be able to reduce their anxiety and uncertainty (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979) by learning what is expected of them in their new role. When new employees feel comfortable in their new surroundings, they can more easily learn the details about their position as well as develop their role in the organization.

NEW EMPLOYEE ORIENTATION

One of the most important and influential times in a newcomer's socialization process is when they first enter the organization (the encounter stage of socialization). In most organizations, this is the time when newcomers might attend a NEO because NEO programs are intended to assist newcomers in adjusting to their new roles by introducing them to coworkers as well as other employees in the organization and learn more about the organization itself (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979). Most research either examines pieces of socialization (Allen, 2006) or examines the whole process (Kramer, 2010; Van Maanen & Schein, 1979). However, socialization research in general, and especially within communication, does not focus on the encounter stage of socialization in relation to NEO programs (Kramer; Van Maanen & Schein). "Orientation programs have rarely been the subject of scholarly thinking and research, in contrast to other areas of human resource management…" (Wanous & Reichers, 2000, p. 235). Given the lack of research focusing on NEO, as well as the importance of NEO as the beginning of the encounter

phase of socialization, NEO needs examination in relation to the larger socialization process.

<div align="center">Evaluating NEO</div>

In order to define NEO, it is important to look at the components of NEO. Wanous and Reichers (2000) suggest that when defining NEOs we look at the *who, when, what,* and *how* of these programs. The *who* not only involves newcomers to the organization but also those people involved in training and socializing the newcomers. Additional people to consider are coworkers, supervisors, and subordinates. The *when* of NEOs is generally during the encounter phase. The most effective time for NEO is when the newcomer is first entering in the organization as this time lays the foundation for the remainder of the socialization process. Unlike the socialization process in general, NEO is a short, set period of time that has a structured beginning and ending. The *what* refers to the content the organization chooses to cover during NEO. Organizations decide what will and will not be covered during NEO. Most choose to focus on benefits, history, culture, and expectations and all newcomers receive the same information. This is different from socialization as NEOs are designed for everyone entering the organization whereas socialization is more focused on a particular job or department. The socialization process will occur whether or not the organization institutes a NEO program; however, the organization has an opportunity to be more directly involved in the socialization process by providing clear content as well as an opportunity for new employees to be more consistently socialized into the organization. Finally, the *how* refers to the methods the organization employs to educate the newcomers on the previously mentioned aspects of the organization. NEOs can be presented either formally

or informally and may depend on the number of newcomers who will attend and the information that will be presented.

For the purposes of this evaluation of UM's NEO, the focus will be placed on *what* information is covered and *how* it is presented. Focusing on *what* information is presented during NEO, Klein and Weaver (2000) suggest that the organization's history, values, goals, traditions and language (acronyms, slang, and jargon) should be discussed during NEO. Klein and Weaver examined a large educational institution where they evaluated the impact of a formal, organizational-level orientation training program. During this program, the institution focused on these informational components (goals, values, history, traditions, and language) that were applicable to newcomers. Employees who attended this voluntary orientation learned more about the organization's history, goals, etc. than their counterparts who chose not to participate. As a result, "an organizational-level orientation that covers company traditions and principles can help to assimilate newcomers and perhaps improve their retention due to increased company commitment" (Griffeth & Hom, 2001, p. 70).

Based on their research results, Klein and Weaver (2000) offer a template for analyzing the content of NEOs (see Table 1). This evaluation focuses on the informational components of UM's NEO program. This evaluation attempts to determine how UM's history, traditions, goals, values, and organizational language are demonstrated to newcomers.

Table 1

Informational Components - Definitions

Klein and Weaver (2000)

History	Significant moments in the history of the organization that has helped to define and construct what the organization is today
Goals	Future plans that the organization is committed to achieving
Values	The qualities, characteristics, and/or aspects of the organization that are revered and upheld as they help define and construct what the organization is today and how it will be defined and constructed in the future
Traditions	Events that occur on a regular basis that help to define and construct what the organization is today
Language	The body of words and phrases that are specific to an organization where members of the organization must maintain working knowledge of these words and phrases to succeed

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Overall, the informational components provide the history, goals, values, traditions, and language of the organization. Each of these components is needed for newcomers to be socialized into the organization. NEOs provide an opportunity for the organization to present a uniform, consistent presentation of each component to every newcomer.

<center>Socialization Tactics</center>

Though Klein and Weaver (2000) elaborate on the content of socialization (*what*), the process (*how*) of presenting socialization information to newcomers is also important for a successful NEO program. Van Maanen & Schein (1979) provide a framework for analyzing socialization programs in any type of organization through six socialization tactics (see Table 2) organizations should use to better assist newcomers during the socialization process: 1) collective vs. individual, 2) formal vs. informal, 3) sequential vs. random, 4) fixed vs. variable, 5) serial vs. disjunctive, and 6) investiture vs. divestiture. Each of these dimensions can be thought of as tensions on opposite ends of a continuum where components of socialization can fall anywhere from one end to the other.

While these tactics could be utilized independently to evaluate organizational socialization, the dimensions of the tactics can be assembled into two larger descriptive categories of institutionalized socialization (collective, formal, sequential, fixed, serial, and investiture) and individualized socialization (individual, informal, random, variable, disjunctive, and divestiture). Institutionalized socialization versus individualized socialization places each pair of characteristics on opposite ends of the continuum. Newcomers being socialized in institutional methods are encouraged to conform to work roles that are already prescribed for them (Jones, 1986). Individualized socialization, on

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the other hand, encourages newcomers to develop their own work roles and attempts to

inspire innovation (Jones).

Table 2

Socialization Tactics - Definitions
Van Maanen and Schein (1979)
_____

Collective vs. Individual
  The degree to which newcomers experience socialization in groups or
  individually

Formal vs. Informal
  The degree to which newcomers experience socialization with
  experienced organizational members

Sequential vs. Random
  The degree to which the process of socialization is planned out ahead
  of time or simply learned day-by-day

Fixed vs. Variable
  The degree to which the previously scheduled steps of the process are
  adhered to by the organization and communicated to the newcomer

Serial vs. Disjunctive
  The degree to which newcomers are given the opportunity to see
  what their role in the organization will be like in the future by
  learning from seasoned organizational members

Investiture vs. Divestiture
  The degree to which the identity of the newcomer fits or does not fit
  the role of the position or the culture of the organization

Griffeth and Hom (2001) argue that "institutionalized tactics most enhance job loyalty and commitment by helping newcomers cope with the anxiety and uncertainty of the new job. By contrast, individualized tactics encourage newcomers to challenge the status quo, which increases creativity but not necessarily firm loyalty" (p. 67). Assuming that organizations want to increase retention and enhance newcomer loyalty, Griffeth and Hom (2001) suggest that socialization programs should be collective, formal, sequential, fixed, serial, and investiture to reach these goals. Additionally, Allen (2006) found that the socialization tactics (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979) that are collective, fixed, and investiture increase the chances that members will become more embedded in the organization which then also increases the chances that members will stay long-term. In addition, Allen notes that socialization tactics that are investing and serial decrease the chances of member turnover. Given the high cost of repeatedly recruiting, hiring, and training new employees, this is an important benefit to note as high turnover rates are very costly for organizations. Since the socialization tactics are generalized for all organizations as well as a broad range of socialization activities, each dimension requires a more detailed description and application to NEOs.

Collective vs. Individual socialization describes the degree to which newcomers experience socialization in groups or individually. Collective socialization processes are used when groups experience socialization processes together whereas individual socialization processes allow new members to experience socialization on their own in a more unique way. A collective NEO program involves all newcomers experiencing NEO together. They attend sessions, tours, etc. as a group and no one would be singled out. Collective NEO programs also allow newcomers to meet one another and interact. An

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example of a newcomer experiencing NEO through an individual process would be an on-line NEO program. He/she completes the program on his/her own without the support of other newcomers.

Formal vs. Informal socialization describes the degree to which newcomers experience socialization with experienced organizational members. Formal socialization processes keep the newcomers separate from current members whereas informal socialization processes integrate the newcomers with the experienced members. Formal processes provide a clear line between current and new organizational members. Informal processes blur the line as new and current members work together to ensure the success of the socialization process. In addition, formal tactics "provide a consistent message and signal the importance of adapting to the new environment" (Allen, 2006). During a formal NEO, newcomers do not have contact with seasoned members of the organization except possibly the NEO coordinator. An informal program allows newcomers to socialize with veteran organizational members and gives them the opportunity to ask questions and address concerns.

Sequential vs. Random steps in the socialization process describe the degree to which the process of socialization is planned out ahead of time or simply learned day-by-day. Sequential socialization allows members to socialize according to a predetermined process where the new member knows what is expected at each step of the process as they look for ways to establish their own routines and create a sense of personal control (Allen, 2006; Feldman & Brett, 1983). Random socialization leaves the newcomer more in the dark about the process. Here, steps are highly ambiguous and/or constantly changing.

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A useful example for both processes is the NEO for a bank teller. In a sequential process, a bank teller first learns how to do a deposit then a withdrawal and so on. Each new teller learns the same steps in a sequential order. In a random process, the bank teller learns the steps as they occur. If the first customer they assist needs to withdraw money then that is the first step they learn. If the next customer needs to deposit money then that is the next step learned. In a random process, no set order exists to learn tasks. Rather, tasks are learned on an as-needed basis.

Sequential orientation programs are fully planned out in advance. Newcomers are given a copy of the schedule and they know what, where, and when each session occurs which allows for a more structured NEO program. Random orientation programs have a loosely planned schedule where topics that simply come up in conversation or based on available speakers but newcomers (and possibly even planners) do not know the schedule. During these types of programs, the conversations may lead from one topic to the next but there is not necessarily a schedule of events that is followed.

Fixed vs. variable socialization describes the degree to which "the steps involved in a socialization process have a timetable associated with them that is both adhered to by the organization and communicated to the recruit" (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979, p. 55). Newcomers are provided with a schedule to complete a given task in a fixed process whereas newcomers do not receive that information in a variable process. In a fixed process, newcomers need to complete all steps of the NEO program in a set amount of time before beginning their employment. In a variable process, newcomers are able to start work at any time and can complete the NEO program at their convenience without the stress of a deadline.

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Serial vs. disjunctive socialization describes the degree to which newcomers are given the opportunity to see what their role in the organization will be like in the future by learning from seasoned organizational members. In a serial socialization process, veteran members work closely with new members to show them the meaning of their work in the organization. Disjunctive socialization is when there are no seasoned members around who can work with newcomers. An example of a serial program is a NEO designed for newcomers who are all going to be working in the same field (nursing, e.g.). The NEO program utilizes veteran employees who work in the same field as the newcomers. They are able to answer questions and dispel concerns that directly relate to the common field of work. These types of programs allow newcomers to discover what their role in the organization may be five or ten years down the road.

A disjunctive NEO provides no opportunity to work with and learn from a seasoned member in the same job role. One reason for a disjunctive program may be due to the makeup of the group of newcomers. Participants may come from a wide variety of job roles and they come to NEO to learn about the organization and socialize with other newcomers. In these situations newcomers may or may not have the opportunity to work with veteran employees from their own departments after the completion of NEO. Another reason for the lack of interaction with seasoned employees may be due to the absence of coworkers in that same role or field. This would be the case when an organization creates a new position and there is no employee who has held that same role before.

Finally, investiture vs. divestiture socialization describes the degree to which the identity of the newcomer fits or does not fit the role of the position or the culture of the

organization. In investiture socialization processes, the organization appreciates the new member for who they are and does not wish to change them. The organization feels that it can benefit from the qualities the person possesses and will use them to its advantage. In contrast, divestiture socialization processes attempt to reduce the personal identity of the newcomers so they can begin to rebuild their identity according to the organization's standards. An investiture NEO program is one where newcomers learn about the organization, perhaps learn about the history and culture of the organization, services it offers, etc. In these programs, newcomers are simply there to learn and are not expected to change their way of thinking or any beliefs or standards they may hold. A divestiture socialization program is one where newcomers are still expected to attend NEO and learn about the organization and its history and culture but here, newcomers are expected to change their way of thinking. Newcomers are expected to give up their own way of thinking and begin to work, feel, and think as the organization does. An example of a divestiture NEO is military basic training. Here, individuals must downplay their individual identity and foreground their identity as a member of the military (Akerlof & Kranton, 2005).

Overall, the six tactics provide a clear mechanism for evaluating the approaches used by an organization in its NEO. Using these definitions, this evaluation will assess *how* the information provided during NEO meets the requirements for an institutionalized program. A description of how this is accomplished is offered in the methods section. With this information, this evaluation will begin to assess how UM's NEO program utilizes the collective, formal, sequential, fixed, serial, and investiture tactics. Further explanation of how this is done is offered in the methods section.

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As previously stated, this evaluation focuses on the *what* and *how* of NEO. For the *what*, or the content of socialization, the informational components based on Klein and Weaver (2000) provide a framework for analyzing the content of an NEO. When looking at *how* the information is presented, Van Maanen and Schein's (1979) tactics will be considered. A description of how this is accomplished is offered in the methods section.

METHODS

This project utilizes a qualitative, content analysis evaluation, and participant observation (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). Content analysis provides insight into the materials and information communicated to newcomers. However, content analysis does not provide insight into how the information is presented. Thus, participant observation of NEO was also included. During each NEO, scratch notes were taken and expanded later as field notes (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002).

The field notes were combined with the other materials collected for analysis. As a result, the content analyzed in this evaluation includes the documents in the New Employee packet, two PowerPoint presentations (one used by the HRS representative providing benefit information and one used by the Director of Affirmative Action/Equal Employment Opportunity (AA/EEO) Compliance), and field notes. The information in these documents is coded using 11 categories: Klein and Weaver's (2000) five informational components (Table 3) and Van Maanen and Schein's (1979) six socialization tactics (Table 4).

Coding the informational components consists of three questions for each component: 1) how is each component communicated, 2) what parts of each component

are communicated, and 3) how is the significance of each component communicated. Coding the socialization tactics consists of varying questions for each tactic. Collective vs. individual considers the extent to when and how newcomers experience NEO in groups or individually. Formal vs. informal considers the extent to which newcomers are given the opportunity to interact with current organizational members, when the opportunity is presented, and how newcomers and current members interact. Sequential vs. random considers the extent to which NEO is previously planned as well as what sections are sequential and what parts are random. Fixed vs. variable considers whether or not newcomers are expected to finish NEO in a set period of time or if they can complete the session at their convenience. Serial vs. disjunctive considers the extent to which interactions between veteran organizational members and newcomers provide meaning to the newcomer's new role in the organization. Investiture vs. divestiture considers to what extent newcomers are expected to adopt the organization's culture and beliefs or if newcomers are expected to retain their own beliefs and ways of thinking.

The field notes, Power Point Presentations and the documents in the New Employee Packet were coded according to which category each piece of information covered. Documents were coded by the overall topic as well as individual pieces of information contained in the document. To begin, the coding categories were the five informational components and the six socialization tactics. Once the content and field notes were coded for their NEO content, themes were generated from the data using a constant comparative method (Lincoln & Guba, 1985;Lindloff & Taylor, 2002). This method, however, was only necessary for the *values* category as throughout the coding process, many additional themes (or *values)* became apparent.

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To begin, data explaining the overall NEO program is offered. Next, all 11 categories are discussed in turn. Each of these sections is combined with the results of the coding as well as suggestions for improvement. Recommendations will be presented to the members of Human Resource Services office who requested this information. They will be consulted to determine if additional members of HRS should be invited. A copy of this report, adapted to a non-academic audience, will be available for them in addition to a presentation.

Table 3

Informational Components - Questions for Analysis

History	How is the organization's history communicated?
	What parts of the organization's history are communicated?
	How is the significance of organizational history communicated?
Goals	How are the organization's goals communicated?
	What organizational goals are communicated?
	How is the significance of these goals communicated?
Values	How are organizational values communicated?
	What organizational values are communicated?
	How is the significance of these values communicated?
Traditions	How are the organization's traditions communicated?
	What traditions are communicated?
	How is the significance of organizational traditions communicated?
Language	How is the organizational language communicated?
	What organizational language is communicated?
	How is the significance of this language communicated?

Table 4

Socialization Tactics - Questions for Analysis

Collective vs. Individual

    At what points during NEO do groups experience socialization processes together/separate?

    How do groups experience socialization processes together/separate (large group, small groups, individually)?

Formal vs. Informal

    Are newcomers given the opportunity to interact with current organizational members?

    When is the opportunity presented?

    How are newcomers and current members able to interact?

Sequential vs. Random

    Is the NEO program previously planned out or are topics covered in random order?

    What parts are sequential? What parts are random?

Fixed vs. Variable

    Are newcomers expected to finish NEO in a set period of time or are newcomers allowed to complete sections when convenient?

Serial vs. Disjunctive

    If newcomers are given the opportunity to interact with veteran organizational members, when and how to veteran members show newcomers the meaning of their work in the organization?

Investiture vs. Divestiture

    When and how does NEO communicate to newcomers that as organizational members they are expected to take on the organization's culture, beliefs, and ways of thinking or retain their own beliefs and ways of thinking to change, grow, and benefit the organization in new and innovative ways?

RESULTS/DISCUSSION

The NEO program at UM is mandatory for all new faculty and staff. The 4-hour orientation is held once each month on a previously selected Wednesday morning. Upon hiring, before NEO, each new employee receives a New Employee Packet (Hewitt, 2006; Rice, 2006). In the packet are three letters from President Dennison: a welcome letter, a letter discussing campus diversity and harmony, and a letter discussing provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act/Rehabilitation Act of 1973. The following forms and handouts are also included:

- UM Employee Transportation Options

- Curry Student Assault Resource Center (SARC)

- The MT University System Wellness Program

- Information Technology (accounts, passwords, online tools, technology services, tech support, etc.)

- Business card order forms

- Health insurance, long term care plan, and life insurance

- Campus Safety and Alcohol and Drug Guidelines

- Welcome card and lapel pin from Staff Senate

In addition to those forms and handouts is a schedule of NEOs. Each newcomer is assigned to attend a previously scheduled orientation with the understanding that his/her supervisor is expected to release him/her from his/her duties to attend. Newcomers to the University are employed anywhere from a few days up to a month before they attend NEO.

In total, four NEO programs are evaluated (one per month from January to April, 2010). During each NEO field notes were compiled that included information regarding the speakers who attended, the information presented, as well as data on the number of people in attendance, dynamics of the room, etc. The January NEO had 19 newcomers scheduled to attend with 14 who attended (10 female/4 male). The February NEO had 54 newcomers scheduled to attend with 19 who attended (12 female/7 male). The March NEO had 10 newcomers scheduled to attend with five who attended (2 female/3 male). The April NEO had 18 newcomers scheduled to attend with 16 who attended (12 females/4 males). These participants were a mix of faculty, staff, and contract employees from a wide variety of departments across campus.

This section separates each information component and socialization tactic but combines the results and discussion in each section. Each of the components and tactics are discussed in turn by answering each of the analysis questions and offers suggestions for improvement.

<u>Description of NEO at the University of Montana</u>

Each year, departments across campus receive the schedule of orientation sessions scheduled for the year. A representative from each of these departments is asked to attend so they can provide valuable information to newcomers regarding the services their department offers. Some of the regularly attending departments include Dining Services, Griz Card, University Center, Health and Wellness, Campus Recreation, Printing and Graphics, Environmental Health and Risk Management, Office of Public Safety, and Staff Senate. Generally, there are between ten-fifteen departments present to provide information. Attendance for departments is dependent on their schedules. While

every department has an open invitation, not every department can send a representative each time.

Orientations begin with a brief introduction by a HRS representative. Then, each department representative is given an opportunity to briefly speak about how their department serves the University. While each representative is speaking, their department website is shown as a visual representation for the participants. After all of the representatives have had an opportunity to speak, the group is given a break to meet with departments individually to ask any further questions. Most departments bring incentives to offer newcomers such as parking passes, gym passes, candy, water bottles, and more.

After the short break, a HRS representative presents information regarding benefits including pay periods, work hours, reasonable accommodations, holidays, annual and sick leave, tuition waivers, and mediation services (Hewitt, 1992; Rice, 2006). A copious amount of valuable information is provided and participants are free to ask any questions they might still have. After this presentation, the Director of AA/EEO Compliance presents information on discrimination and workplace harassment. Specifically, how to identify discrimination, tools for stopping discrimination, and how to foster an atmosphere of mutual respect for everyone in the organization.

The final presentation is offered by the HRS representative for health insurance, life insurance, and long term care coverage. While this presentation occurs every time and always by the same HRS representative, this information is not included in data collection due to the fact that this information is specific to each employee whereas the rest of the data is standard for all new employees. By providing these presentations and

documents during NEO, UM is putting forth a significant effort to inform and socialize new employees.

<div align="center">Informational Components</div>

Looking at the data showing how the University of Montana's NEO addresses the history, goals, values, traditions, and language of the University, there are numerous topics repeatedly communicated while others are severely lacking. Based on the data collected, UM portrays numerous values to newcomers with UM specific language and frequent communication. What is missing from this NEO is UM's rich history, annual traditions, and goals for the future. Each of the following sections discusses what topics are often repeated, what is missing, and suggestions for improvement.

Values

The values portrayed throughout the NEO are numerous and serve as a tool to newcomers showing them what ideas and beliefs UM finds most significant. Recurring values are organized into the following categories: education, accessibility of information, employees, environment, sense of pride, health and wellness, safety, and the rights and responsibilities of UM employees.

Education One of the first ways newcomers begin to get a sense of the value of education (Rice, 2006) is in their New Employee Packet. Contained in this packet is a letter from UM's President where he points out how he and the University strive for excellence in academics. In his letter, he writes:

> You have joined an outstanding community of individuals who support the goals
> of higher education…The University strives to attract, retain, and support the
> highest quality faculty and staff and, in that tradition, we aspire to enhance

individual development and potential. The Montana University System (MUS) Staff Compensation Plan supports these efforts through the campus Performance Development Program. This program seeks to develop the unique potential of every employee and to refine and hone the skills and behaviors necessary for personal and organizational success.

It is clear from these sentiments that continued higher education is a goal not only of the Presidents but the University and MUS as well.

According to the letter, students at UM are driven to succeed in their academic endeavors and pursue a high level of expertise in their chosen field of study. This same drive is communicated to employees. One of the basic ways that UM, like most colleges and universities, encourages continuing education for employees is through tuition waivers. Employees are welcome to register for up to six credits per semester, free of charge except fees. Supervisors are also encouraged to arrange an alternate work schedule that allows employees to attend classes. While overall, little time is spent discussing this benefit, employees are encouraged to seek further information if they wish to pursue this opportunity. Presenters stress that employees are welcome to make use of this benefit if they choose to continue their education or simply take classes that pique their interest.

Another helpful form of education that UM encourages is through the Information Technology (IT) department. With ever-changing technology, some employees have a difficult time keeping up with new trends. Other employees may be hired based on their experience and education in a certain area but unfortunately do not have computer skills that are imperative for today's workplace. To alleviate these issues, the IT department

offers a wide array of classes. Some of these classes focus on different Microsoft Suite programs while others focus on the Banner database system. Class topics are rotated and any employee is encouraged to participate as even refresher classes are helpful.

Accessibility of Information Another value the University communicates throughout NEO is the idea that information should be made available to faculty, staff, and students. In this day and age, organizations would simply not survive if it were not for computers, internet, and email. During NEO, newcomers are shown web pages for the department representatives who are able to attend. Almost every department across campus has a department website where they feature their services, contact information, upcoming events, office locations, meal menus, and general helpful information. In addition to department websites, any employee presenting at NEO is always ready and willing to share any information they have regarding their own department or any other departments participants may have questions about. While not all the information on every web page applies to everyone, this information is displayed as a way for employees, students, and the general public to search out information on their own.

Since the NEO is hosted by HRS, the HRS representative leading the sessions also describes what can be found on the HRS website. Here, employees can find information regarding their annual and sick leave balances, policies and procedures, resource guides, health/insurance benefits, payroll, and frequently asked questions. This website is described in NEO as extremely helpful, especially for new employees, as this is the location of a wide variety of valuable information.

Employees Even though UM is operating for the students, great value is placed on the employees there to serve those students. There are a wide variety of services

offered specifically for employees. One way employees feel valued is through the many accommodations made for employees. Some of the reasons for these accommodations include physical, religious and cultural reasons. The University also encourages alternative work schedules if possible. Granted, some of these accommodations are in place due to state and federal laws but UM goes out of its way to follow through with these requests. For example, if an employee requests an accommodation for a physical reason, like a wheelchair ramp, the costs can be high. In cases like this, the department itself is not expected to pay for the work that needs to be done to fulfill the request, rather, UM has funds set aside for these situations. The University will assure departments the funds to pay for the work in an effort to retain quality employees.

Another way UM shows appreciation to employees is through Staff Senate. While this group is specifically for staff members, their work can be felt campus-wide. In a card that is included in the New Employee Packet, Staff Senate describes what they do by noting that "we facilitate communication and cooperation between administration and staff." Staff Senate continually encourages staff members to give their input on issues. Staff members are always invited to attend the monthly meetings and raise any questions or concerns they might have. Another way Staff Senate shows appreciation is during the yearly staff appreciation luncheon. Here, staff members are recognized for their efforts and this is a time for employees to socialize outside of the work setting. In addition, there is a section of the Staff Senate web page that features recipients of Kudos. Employees can nominate their colleagues for Kudos to acknowledge and signify their hard work and good deeds. Recipients of this award are recognized on the Staff Senate web page and receive a bag of "Grizzly goodies" (as stated on their web page).

During one of the HRS presentations, the presenter notes that UM offers vacation time for employees to use, not just stockpile. It is explained that employees need to occasionally take time off from their work to refresh and rejuvenate themselves. Since this is the philosophy of the University, there is a cap placed on the amount of annual leave that can be accrued. Due to this, annual leave must be used or that time is lost and no more can be added until the balance is reduced. This is done to prevent employees from underutilizing vacation time. Employees are also encouraged to use their vacation time in conjunction with one of the eleven paid holidays they receive each year. It is explained that employees can extend a trip by planning it around a holiday to receive extra paid time off. By doing this, UM recognizes the value of a job well done and also the value of taking time off to reward oneself for their hard work. Additionally, UM clearly communicates and encourages the use of vacation to extend holidays.

Lastly, one way in which employees can feel valued is by the conveniences offered to them. Just like students, employees can enjoy the conveniences of all of the services offered across campus. They are encouraged to purchase a Griz Card for use around campus and the community. In the University Center they are able to access the Verizon store, post office and shipping center, bank, copy and printing center, hair salon, conference rooms, food venues, and movie theatre. In an effort to make eating on campus a routine, Dining Services offers discounts to employees on meals purchased in the various dining establishments. Finally, employees are encouraged to visit Career Services for assistance in finding different campus employment, updating resumes, and general services that are also offered to students.

Environment The University clearly communicates the high value it places on sustainability and environmental friendliness. One way this is accomplished is through the use of the internet. Rather than copying fliers and pamphlets with information regarding the services and contact information of campus-wide departments, that information is displayed on web pages specifically designed for departments and campus groups. Additionally, Dining Services promotes and practices sustainability throughout their department. During NEO, they describe how they purchase a number of items (none were specifically mentioned) from local producers. They feel this is one way they can support the community while maintaining their high standards of quality.

One significant way UM promotes environmental friendliness is the multiple transportation options available to employees and students. All of these options are described in detail in a pamphlet included in the New Employee Packet. Employees are encouraged to use the Park n' Ride, Mountain Line (the municipal bus system) and Carpool/Vanpool programs. Lesser known options include; Guaranteed Ride Home, Cruiser Co-op, The Way to Go! Club, and GoLoco. Employees interested in using these services can find more information in the pamphlet in the New Employee Packet or look for their individual web pages on UM's website. All of these programs promote sustainability by encouraging students and employees to use alternate forms of transportation (walking and bike-riding) and lessening the amount of driving by using the bus system and carpooling.

Pride As a newcomer attending NEO, it quickly becomes clear how proud veteran employees are to be working at UM. This pride is evident from the smiles on their faces, the warm welcome, and personal statements about how much they enjoy

working for the University. Even before NEO, new employees are presented with examples of this pride when sifting through the information in their New Employee Packet. One of the first items in the packet is a card from Staff Senate which includes a pin. This card notes, "This pin represents UM classified staff and their importance to the University system. Proudly wear it at work and in the community…UM Staff – We are the heart of the Grizzly!" The President further augments this sense of pride in a letter he addresses to new employees where he states, "Welcome to The University of Montana! You have joined an outstanding community of individuals who support the goals of higher education. Congratulations on your successful job search. I believe you have made an excellent decision by joining us." Reading these words should instill a sense of pride in any new employee. NEO and new employee materials clearly communicate that employees enjoy their work and they take pride in their role in the UM community.

Health and Wellness During NEO, a great deal of information is provided on the wide variety of services offered to employees to assist them in maintaining their health and wellness. Employees and their families are welcome to pay for a membership to the campus health club. The outdoor recreation center also has outdoor equipment available to rent. In addition to these offerings, the Environmental Health and Risk Management department assists employees with safety on campus, worker's compensation, ergonomic work stations, and assessment and treatment of workplace injuries. This department was created to ensure that employees enjoy a safe and healthy work environment.

The Montana University System also offers a wide array of health incentives through their wellness program. This program is open to any employee of the University system. Their mission "is to help our plan members stay healthy by providing and

incentivizing preventative health screenings, healthy lifestyle education and support, and disease prevention and management programs." This program offers education and support to employees through classes, a newsletter, fitness products, the Employee Assistance Program, DesktopSpa, and Ask an Expert. All of these programs and incentives are defined in detail in a pamphlet in the New Employee Packet. In addition to these offerings, employees can participate in preventative health screenings which include blood pressure screening, bone density scans, colon cancer screening, and flu shots. Couples who are expecting a baby can participate in the Well Baby program. All employees are encouraged to participate in the Well Awards program. This program is described as "an incentive program offering $100 cash incentives for engaging in healthy behaviors." The pamphlet includes information on how to sign up and the requirements of participating in the program. Together, the programs, incentives, and information communicate that UM values the health and wellness of its employees.

Safety Safety is another recurring theme throughout NEO (Rice, 2006). One of the veteran campus police officers (the same officer was present at each NEO) is the first person to make this point clear. He always begins his presentation by asking, "Who is the most important person you have to take care of?" The answer, of course, is "yourself." By starting with this simple question, newcomers are shown that their safety is important and if they do not feel safe, they cannot do their job. This police officer offers numerous suggestions about how to remain safe and information about the programs the University has implemented to maintain a high level of safety.

The employees in the Public Safety department are on campus and available 24/7, 365 days a year to keep everyone safe – not just students. The police officers are actual,

trained police officers, not just security guards. The University even has its own 911 dispatch center. Safety and security are not taken lightly as is evident by the measures the University has taken. One of the programs implemented is Grizzly Personal Safety (GPS). Anyone on campus who does not feel safe walking alone can call GPS and meet up with an escort who will accompany them to their car. This service is offered anytime but is mostly used after dark. There is also an emergency text system that employees and students can register for. Anyone can go to the Public Safety web page and sign up for this free service that allows participants to receive a text message notifying them of any emergency occurring on campus. Phone numbers are not sold or given out but are kept confidential and used only in the case of an emergency. There are also electronic signs placed at the entrances of each building on campus. On a normal day, these signs display the current date and time. In the event of an emergency, these signs would sound an alarm and show a brief description of the emergency and any directions to be followed.

The officer also explains the In Case of Emergency (ICE) program available on most cell phones. ICE began in an effort to assist police officers and EMTs in finding emergency contact information for someone who was unconscious or could not speak. Cell phone owners can add phone numbers of contact people in the ICE program in their phone. That way, if anything were ever to happen to them and emergency personnel needed to contact a spouse, relative, or friend, those numbers are easy to locate. This police officer explains this program and its value to newcomers and encourages participants to find this program in their phone and enter phone numbers for emergency contacts. In addition to entering ICE numbers, the Public Safety representatives should encourage NEO participants to enter important contact numbers for the Public Safety

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office into their phones as well. If employees had those numbers, they would be able to contact the office at any time in the event of an emergency or if they felt unsafe in any situation.

Another helpful program Public Safety manages is a lost and found program. Employees and students can visit the Public Safety website and register valuable items through this office. To register items, a serial number and brief description of the item is needed. This program allows participants to register laptops, bicycles, cell phones, or any other high value items. If the item is ever lost or stolen and later recovered, this information is available so that the Public Safety office can return the lost item to the rightful owner.

In the New Employee Packet, newcomers receive the Campus Safety and Alcohol and Drug Guidelines handbook. This packet includes information regarding public safety, sexual misconduct, sexual and relationship violence, stalking, and policies regarding alcohol, tobacco, and illicit drug use. Included in this handbook are definitions of the above behaviors, contact information for both campus and community support and resources, procedures for reporting crimes, health risks and consequences/penalties associated with these behaviors, emergency procedures and evacuation plans, and a map of campus. All of this is important information as it pertains to everyone living, working, and learning on campus.

Overall, safety is communicated as an important part of socialization. NEO presentations as well as materials cover many facets of safety from personal safety, lost and found, and safe lifestyle choices. The personal safety of newcomers, current

employees, and students demonstrates that UM is concerned about the people who work, live, and attend classes on campus.

Rights and Responsibilities of Employees Along with the many benefits employees gain from working at UM, there comes a set of expectations and responsibilities that are not taken lightly. These expectations are outlined numerous times throughout NEO and are communicated not only as responsibilities each member holds but also rights each member should expect. The University of Montana does not tolerate any form of harassment and that is clearly communicated throughout NEO. To begin with, copies of personnel policies, included in the New Employee Packet, discuss the non-discrimination/Equal Opportunity policy, the drug-free workplace policy, and the sexual harassment policy (Rice, 2006). Along with that, the President includes a letter discussing campus diversity and harmony. His letter describes various forms of harassment, the consequences of harassing behavior, and the procedures to take if an employee is being harassed. He ends his letter by saying,

> …we faculty, staff, students, and administrators all share the responsibility to keep the campus free of discrimination or harassment…Rules and regulations alone will not eliminate discrimination and harassment from a society plagued by such behavior. I urge each of you to join with me in maintaining a fair, humane, respectful, and appropriately diverse campus environment so that learning, creativity, and accomplishment will flourish and continue to characterize the University of Montana.

These same ideas are reiterated by the Director of AA/EEO Compliance in her presentation. She states, from the Montana Creed that, "Choosing to join the UM

community obligates each member to a code of civilized behavior." This line communicates to participants that it is their right and responsibility to remain professional and also to expect the same from their colleagues, supervisors, and administration. This idea is summed up nicely at the end of her presentation when she states, "Participate in fostering an atmosphere of mutual respect for all members of the community."

The University of Montana also prides itself on being AA/EEO compliant. With this claim comes the responsibility of the employer to make reasonable accommodations for employees. One of the first ways newcomers become aware of this right is through another letter from the President included in the New Employee Packet. This letter outlines the Americans with Disabilities Act/Rehabilitation Act of 1973 Provisions and lays out what UM will do to assist employees with disabilities. Not following these policies can be considered discrimination and that is not an issue any employee should have to deal with. To further prevent discrimination from occurring, the NEO schedule in the New Employee Packet states that "University policy requires all new UM staff as well as new supervisors and administrators to attend Sexual Harassment/Equal Employment training, which is offered monthly through NEO." Employees and supervisors who attend this session of NEO learn what discrimination is, how it can be prevented, what to do if it occurs, and the procedure for handling it when it does happen. Rights and responsibilities are an important component of the socialization content of NEO.

Given the breadth of topic covered in NEO and the materials distributed, UM clearly values many aspects about the community, employees, and high standards expected for students and employees. Newcomers are repeatedly shown how important

they are to the organization along with their health, safety, and education. Newcomers also learn about the high value placed on accessible information, the environment, pride, and their rights and responsibilities. While all of these ideas are extremely valuable for newcomers to repeatedly hear about, there are several important topics missing. One of the major values that UM is missing is the value of socialization and networking. Socialization and networking should be a major component of NEO and this idea will be discussed further in the socialization tactics discussion section.

Another major component missing is the value UM places on the area in which it is located. It seems that most people who live and work in this area do so because of the outdoor opportunities in this part of the state. In this area there is hiking, skiing, fishing, hunting, snowshoeing, rafting, camping, horseback riding, and many other outdoor activities that can be enjoyed. None of these activities are mentioned during NEO with the exception of the presentation by the Director of Outdoor Recreation. This department representative does mention some of the outdoor equipment that can be rented through the outdoor recreation office but beyond that, no mention is made of the variety of opportunities in the community. The area around Missoula is a major component of the identity of Montana, Missoula, and the University of Montana and should be recognized during NEO. To accomplish this, the department could easily add information about opportunities in the area, costs, outdoor equipment rental information, maps, hiking trails, etc., to their web page. Once this information is posted on the web page, it should be highlighted during NEO so newcomers can easily gain access to all the outdoor possibilities.

As shown, UM values the health and wellness of its employees. What is not communicated, however, is the value placed on the health and wellness of students. Since most employees of the University work with students in one capacity or another, a representative from the Curry Health Center should be invited to speak about the health services that are offered for students such as the medical, dental, sexual safety, pharmaceutical, SARC (Student Assault Resource Center), and CAPS (Counseling and Psychological Services). Considering most employees work with students on a daily basis, they need to be aware of what to look for when a student is having physical or mental difficulties. They should know about the services offered on campus to assist students in overcoming these difficulties. Employees never know when students will show signs of trouble. When these situations arise, the employee needs to know about the services available to help that student so that the student's physical and mental well being can be preserved.

Traditions

The University of Montana is rich in traditions but this is not communicated to new employees. Two events that could be considered traditions that were mentioned both involve meals meant to honor employees. One is the staff appreciation luncheon hosted by Staff Senate and the other is the student employee recognition dinner that is hosted by Career Services. The only other time that any use of *tradition* occurs is in the welcome letter from the President where he states, "The University strives to attract, retain, and support the highest quality faculty and staff and, in that tradition, we aspire to enhance individual development and potential." Here, tradition is less about the story of UM but how UM strives for quality employees.

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Just as UM is steeped in history, UM's traditions are countless and both are major components of any organization. This is another area, however, that is not fully addressed throughout NEO with the exception of the Staff Appreciation luncheon and the Student Employee dinner hosted by Career Services. There are many annual events that occur on campus that are never mentioned. Some of these events include the Forrester's Ball, International Festival, the Graduate Conference, etc. Similar to the history of an organization, it is imperative that newcomers learn about the traditions of the organization so they can begin to feel integrated and involved as well as understand the meaning of those events. If they know an annual event is upcoming they can feel excited about being able to attend as an organizational member.

While there are several places on UM's website where current schedules of campus events can be found, it would be useful to address some of the traditions that can be found regularly on those schedules. Department representatives should take a moment to explain some of their traditions to participants. Additionally, during a presentation on UM's history (discussed in the history section), the origin of some of UM's most important traditions could be offered. Since orientation is a time that should be spent integrating newcomers into the organization, there is no better time to discuss the traditions that define the organization that new employees have just joined. Knowing the traditions can assist with being socialized into the organization.

Language

Many words and phrases specific to UM are used throughout the orientation process. These words and phrases include: Griz Card, Food Zoo, UC, SARC, Staff Senate, Park n' Ride, and many more. These terms are used through the forms included

in the New Employee Packet as well as throughout the NEO sessions. Newcomers can begin to get a sense of the terms used every day that are used to describe locations on campus, programs, services, departments, and committees. Another distinction that is made during the beginning of the benefits presentation is that at UM, employees accrue annual leave. Most organizations still refer to this benefit as vacation time but the HRS representative is quick to point out that at UM, the term to use is annual leave.

An organization's language is used every day by every member. An organization's specific language includes words and phrases that describe offices, departments, services, buildings, ideas, beliefs, etc. The ability to fluently use an organization's language means you are fully integrated into the community. UM's NEO touches on the language of the organization in several ways. Newcomers become familiar with these words and phrases as they are used by departments to describe their locations and services and throughout the information they receive in their New Employee Packet as well as. More of these often used terms could be further integrated when speakers present information regarding the goals and history of the institution. Another way to assist newcomers in learning the organizational language is to continue with the web page theme. A page could be designed that offers frequently used terms and definitions (Ryan, 2007). This page should be accessible to organization and community members. Overall, including a more overt list of language terms would allow the newcomers to have fewer moments of misunderstanding which can be a reminder of newness. The quicker the acronyms and language are understood, the more socialized a person feels.

<u>History</u>

The University of Montana has a long, rich history and all of this valuable information is missing from NEO. This rich history should be valued by UM as much as employee's wellness, safety, and education. Newcomers should have the opportunity to learn about this history to feel more integrated into the community and establish a sense of pride. The history of any organization is passed down through its members and if this piece is missing, over time there is a possibility that parts of UM's history could be lost.

One way of accomplishing this task is to invite a veteran employee who can share some of the important pieces of UM's history with newcomers. There is by no means enough time to cover all of the history of the institution but major pieces that will give newcomers an understanding of the past and a chance to feel connected to that past. After that, a discussion of where the school is today and were it plans to be in the future could touch on the topic of organizational goals which are discussed in the next section.

Another way of accomplishing this task is through UM's website. Almost every department on campus has a web page featuring interesting and helpful information. A page should be added showing a timeline of UM's history. A web page would be useful not only for current UM students and employees but also for potential students and the general public. When newcomers understand the history of the organization they become more connected to the story of such a well-established association. When people begin to understand an organization's history, they become more and more excited to become a part of that history.

Every organization has problems and issues that are known internally or even publicly. Every organization creates goals for the future in an attempt to either prevent or solve these issues and problems. Every organization desires to grow and increase its bottom line. To do this, organizations must put plans in motion to meet these goals. The issues facing UM and the plans to address those issues are not communicated in any way to newcomers. Granted, no organization wants to advertise their problems but it is important for newcomers to understand the issues the organization faces and how the organization plans to solve them.

A member of administration should be invited to speak with newcomers about some of those issues facing UM and the goals that are in place for the future. Inviting a member of administration to address these topics not only provides an opportunity for newcomers to ask questions and raise additional concerns but it also allows the truth to be heard instead of false rumors. By doing this, newcomers receive the correct information, understand the problems, and could even become part of the solution.

Overall, UM NEO succeeds at communicating their values to newcomers. These values are shown repeatedly in numerous ways. The University of Montana, like any organization, has many words and phrases specific to the organization. While these words and phrases are continually used in documents and conversations, it would be useful to include a webpage with frequently used vocabulary. Additionally, UM's NEO needs to focus more on the traditions, history, and goals of the institution. All of these areas are necessary for a successful socialization program. One step that can be taken to improve UM's NEO is to consider how to more efficiently integrate this information.

<u>Socialization Tactics</u>

<u>Collective vs. Individual</u>

The collective vs. individual tactic considers whether or not newcomers experience socialization as a whole group or individually. During UM's NEO, the group of newcomers assigned to a particular NEO do go through the two hours and 45 minutes together but they do not have any scheduled time devoted to interaction. Most often there are too many chairs and participants sit away from each other which lessens the opportunity for interactions. Some newcomers take the initiative to interact with other newcomers during the few breaks but for the most part, participants experience NEO on an individual, isolated basis.

Since NEO is a portion of socialization, it is natural to say that NEOs should also be collective in nature. The NEO program at UM could benefit from a more collective process. One simple way to allow more socialization among participants is to move the chairs and tables closer to each other. Often times there are almost twice as many chairs as participants so they choose to sit away from each other which does not allow for much interaction. At times the reason for the large amount of extra chairs is due to the fact that many people were scheduled to come and not everyone shows up. This is an understandable reason but, when that happens, it would be beneficial to encourage participants to sit in one area of the room or to move around so they are sitting next to at least one other person.

Another way to promote interaction is through personal introductions. This process does not have to be involved or take a huge amount of time, rather, participants should be given a brief opportunity to introduce themselves and share information about

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their new position, perhaps where they came from, education, experience, etc. These personal introductions allow people to more easily warm up to each other as they begin to find commonalities with others and they can begin to put a name a face together. Once introductions are complete, an icebreaker can further break the awkwardness that occurs in these situations, provide an opportunity for further socialization, and, if done correctly, can communicate to participants that they are all working together for a common cause. The icebreakers chosen should be appropriate for adults and applicable to relevant topics of discussion or themes of learning. If participants view the icebreaker(s) as a time-filler they are less likely to participate and will not learn from it what they are meant to learn. Additionally, if participants do not buy in to the idea of what the icebreaker is meant to show they may also view the remainder of NEO as a waste of time.

Part of a successful, collective socialization process is for participants to know that they are not in this new situation alone. It is helpful for them to know that there are others who are also new and possibly apprehensive about their new position in a large organization. Orientation is a perfect time to allow newcomers to interact since most likely, in their new positions they are dealing almost completely with veteran members. While these interactions are helpful as well, veteran members often forget what it is like to be a newcomer to an organization and they may not fully understand or remember what it is like for their new coworker or employee. Due to this, HRS should use NEO to their advantage to allow participants to ease their nervousness by interacting with each other and learning from the people with whom they are participating in NEO.

Formal vs. Informal

The formal vs. informal tactic considers the extent to which current organizational members interact with newcomers. Newcomers at UM's NEO do have the opportunity to interact with current organizational members when they hear the presentations by the department representatives, HRS representatives, and the Director of AA/EEO Compliance. Following the departmental presentations, participants have the opportunity to walk around the tables set up where each department brings additional information and goodies (candy, water bottles, band-aids, passes, etc.) and can ask questions of each of them. These interactions generally seem to revolve around information instead of relationship building but it is still an opportunity for newcomers to put a name, face, and department together.

Similar to the lack of interaction between newcomers, there is also a lack of interaction between newcomers and veteran organizational members. Much of the interaction newcomers experience with veteran members occurs in their new position in their department. Since UM is a large organization, it is unlikely that multiple newcomers participating in NEO have been hired in the same office or department. Due to this, most of the newcomers have a greater amount of interaction with veteran members outside of NEO; however, more interactions between veteran members and newcomers could occur during NEO.

Currently, newcomers have the option to meet veteran members who are there to present information either about their department or about information applicable to new employees. Although much of this facet of socialization will occur once the new members are in their respective positions, one simple way to begin these interactions is

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by asking a veteran employee to occupy a table at the entrance to the room to welcome participants. A friendly face in the hall lets participants know they are in the right place, remind them to sign-in, and then be offered a seat and the coffee/goodies in the back of the room.

After the department presentations, newcomers have a few minutes to speak with those representatives but the small amount of time does not allow for much conversation. Simple ideas that could be integrated would be to have small group interactions with a veteran employee leading the discussion. There could be a short amount of time set aside where newcomers are able to ask questions, raise concerns, and discuss their feelings of excitement, nervousness, or apprehension that come with starting in a new position. This small group interaction would allow newcomers to not only interact with other newcomers but also have an opportunity to speak with veteran employees who can attest to the true nature of work at UM (Geromel, 1989; Mochari, 1999; Pratt, 2009; Ryan, 2007). Another simple way to increase this type of interaction is through campus tours. Most new employees probably do not receive a tour of campus and NEO would be a perfect time for small groups to have a tour with a veteran employee. Campus tours would be an easy way to increase interactions, learn the lay-out of campus, and even learn more about the language of UM as they are shown offices, buildings, landmarks, and people along the way.

Sequential vs. Random

The sequential vs. random tactic considers what parts of socialization are planned out ahead of time and what parts occur spontaneously. The NEOs at UM are scheduled out for an entire year at the beginning of each academic year. This calendar is included

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in the New Employee Packet. The NEO session each particular newcomer is scheduled to attend is circled on the form before it is mailed out. The schedule for each NEO is noted on the year-long schedule and has the names and topics of each presentation. Each NEO is scheduled from 9:00-11:45 a.m. Generally, NEO follows this schedule except on the rare occasions that presenters have a conflict and need to switch times.

The UM HRS office is well organized in scheduling NEOs and getting that information to newcomers and participating departments. Each participant knows what the schedule is going to be before they arrive. All the presenters have the same schedule and they know when to arrive for their presentations. This kind of scheduling is more convenient for everyone involved as there is no guessing as to when and where they need to be. This is a positive step for UM as this provides a more sequential, rather than random, NEO.

Considering the lack of socialization during the NEO program UM needs to consider extending the length of time of NEO. There are many options as to how to extend the time frame and there would need to be a lot of discussion about the best option before putting any plans into action. One option would be to consider having a full-day NEO where newcomers still participate in all the current presentations but would also have the opportunity to have increased socialization through activities like introductions, icebreakers, lunch, campus tour, etc. This extended length of time would also allow for additional presentations that address the history, goals, and traditions of UM.

Fixed vs. Variable

The fixed vs. variable tactic considers whether or not newcomers are expected to finish NEO in a set period of time. At UM, NEOs are schedule for a two hour and 45

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minute time block and participants are expected to stay the full time. On the rare occasion that someone had to leave early, they were asked to contact HRS for the information that was missed.

As discussed, newcomers are expected to attend the NEO they are scheduled for and stay for the duration. Even though the employee handbook states that attendance is mandatory, there are no consequences for newcomers who do not attend. The reasons for not attending are numerous as the newcomer may be sick that day, they may have a previously scheduled meeting or other obligation, or it could be that their supervisor simply does not find NEO worthwhile and does not enforce the policy that they attend. Since a successful socialization process is imperative for full integration for newcomers, it is imperative that newcomers attend NEO and find their time there to be valuable. The importance of NEO needs to be expressed to newcomers and supervisors alike so that more new employees are encouraged to attend and supervisors begin to see how valuable this time is for the new employee and UM overall.

Serial vs. Disjunctive

The serial vs. disjunctive tactic considers whether or not newcomers are given the opportunity to interact with veteran members in a way that allows them to learn the meaning of their work in the organization. As previously noted, newcomers are not given much opportunity to interact with veteran organizational members but, when those veteran members present their information, most often they start out by speaking very highly of UM. They often mention how much they enjoy working there, how much newcomers will enjoy their involvement, and how great a place UM is to work. Veteran members are always very welcoming and always willing to lend a hand to newcomers by

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answering questions, providing additional information, and showing them the benefits of working at UM.

This tactic is another one that is lacking during UM's NEO but could be easily integrated throughout many of the ideas already discussed. Newcomers could have the opportunity to learn from veteran employees if they could interact with them on a small group basis (Geromel, 1989; Mochari, 1999; Pratt, 2009; Ryan, 2007). One way to structure these small group sessions is to allow newcomers who are in the same field to be placed in groups together. For instance, groups could be composed of faculty members or administrative assistants. These types of groupings may not always be possible but when it is, homogeneous groups are most beneficial.

Also, newcomers could also benefit learning what UM is like from a student's perspective. Members of the Associated Students of the University of Montana (ASUM) or other student groups could be invited in to discuss their own experiences at UM and how their feelings on how UM employees could better those experiences for the student body. Another way to integrate the meaning of employee's work is through the videos that are shown before NEO begins. These short videos feature students, faculty and staff in midst of their work. The video participants discuss what their role at UM is, how they are fulfilling their dreams, achieving successes, and what working and learning at UM means to them. These personal testimonies are an excellent way for newcomers to see the impact they can have on the UM community but also what kind of impact the UM community can have on them. These short videos really set the mood for the day and it is a great way to start. These videos, however, would be more beneficial if several were

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shown throughout the day while all NEO participants are paying attention to and focused on the message.

<u>Investiture vs. Divestiture</u>

The investiture vs. divestiture tactic considers whether or not newcomers are expected to change their beliefs and ways of thinking and adopt the organizations thinking and beliefs. Over the course of NEO, newcomers are never explicitly asked to change the way they think about particular issues or ideas. Rather, UM shows newcomers what thoughts and beliefs are valued. The values continually communicated to newcomers demonstrate to them how UM views these ideas and says that these ideas should be important to everyone in the organization. While some ideas are more rigid than others (safety, rights and responsibilities) as they apply to everyone, other areas are up for more interpretation and level of involvement (health and wellness, pride). Newcomers are, in a silent way, encouraged to readily adopt some of the more standard ideas that everyone across campus benefits from. Others, like health and wellness, are strongly encouraged but not everyone actively participates in these beliefs at the same level.

It does not seem as though newcomers are expected to change their thoughts or beliefs when entering their work at UM. Throughout NEO, they are continually shown what ideas and beliefs the UM community finds most important (safety, wellness, the environment, etc.) but they do not attempt to change people's personal beliefs about these ideas. Depending on the position and the department where the newcomer is now employed, they may need to take on a certain set of ideals but overall, throughout the NEO process, they are simply given information about all the services, conveniences, and

benefits provided by UM and it is up to the individual to decide what works best for them.

Overall, UM's NEO is lacking in many aspects of these six socialization tactics. First, NEO needs to be more collective and less individual. Newcomers need to have more opportunities to speak with and learn from other newcomers. Second, NEOs need to be more formal and less informal. Newcomers need to have more opportunities to interact with veteran organizational members. This allows them to learn about UM through the eyes of colleagues who have fully experienced what UM has to offer. Third, UM does well with providing a sequential NEO but needs to lengthen the time. By increasing the length of NEO, more of the important aspects of NEO can be included. When these topics are more fully covered, newcomers have a more successful socialization process. Fourth, all NEOs are the same length and are scheduled at the same time each month which allows for a more fixed NEO. There are issues, however, with many newcomers who do not attend NEO for various reasons. While it is an employee policy that all newcomers must attend an NEO session, there is no consequence for missing. This policy needs to be reevaluated so that newcomers are more encouraged to attend. Fifth, there is a mix of serial and disjunctive components to the socialization process at UM. While newcomers may have more opportunities to interact with veteran members in their department, there is not much interaction provided during NEO. There are simple ways to increase the chances for interaction and by doing so newcomers are provided with a more rounded view of UM. Last, there is a balance between investiture and divestiture components. This balance works well for UM as newcomers learn what

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the organization values but they are not forced to change their own minds or opinions to reflect those of UM.

Additional Recommendations

In addition to the recommendations offered specifically for HRS based on the content and tactics of socialization, further suggestions are offered to HRS regarding the presenters. These are not directly related to the research analysis portion of the paper, but are important notes for a more successful NEO. First, when the department representatives speak, invite them to the front of the room instead of standing at their tables to present. While this may seem more formal, it is more comfortable for the NEO participants to focus on one area of the room instead of continually turning in their chairs to watch presenters who are behind them. Also, on numerous occasions, presenters would ask if any of the participants had questions or comments to make on the information that has been presented but then would not allow enough time for anyone to actually ask a question. It is natural for a presenter to feel uncomfortable in the front of the room when they ask a question and no one responds but participants may not always feel comfortable immediately asking a question or they may need a few extra seconds to gather their thoughts in their mind. By allowing a few extra seconds for participants to respond to a request for questions, participants feel more comfortable asking questions and are more assured that their thoughts and concerns matter to the presenter.

Another common occurrence is that presenters would begin speaking before the room was quiet and they had gained the attention of the audience. While this is common after a break, this also occurred between presentations when participants were asking questions of others or when the department presenters were still working on gathering

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their belongings to leave. This is distracting as a participant as the first few words or sentences of a presentation cannot be heard due to the extra noise in the room. By waiting until everyone is focused on the speaker, no one misses out on valuable information.

Additionally, on some PowerPoint slides, there is an overload of information. A slide that is full of information is difficult to process. If possible, the information on a slide should be limited and the more detailed information can be filled in by the presenter. When information on each slide is limited, this helps to prevent the speaker from reading off the screen. The PowerPoint slides could be thought of as a guide to the presentation and should not be relied upon to relay large amounts of information.

The NEO program at UM offers a valuable opportunity to new employees. There is a wealth of information that is offered that assists newcomers in integrating themselves into their new role and into the University as a whole. While there are many aspects of the informational components and socialization tactics that are covered, many others are missing. As HRS continues to define and reconfigure their NEO program, these missing components should be added to further enhance an already valuable experience. Overall, these recommendations are given to enhance the process of NEO and also facilitate the socialization role that NEO plays.

<div align="center">Limitations</div>

When redesigning any organizational program, two primary concerns are cost and time. Time and money are spent not only in redesigning the program but also the additional time that could potentially be spent each month actually executing the program. To address the issues of time and money, it is imperative that UM understand

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the benefits of having a beneficial NEO program as part of the socialization process for newcomers before making the decision to invest further time and money into redesigning the program.

Further limitations include those directly related to the study. As previously discussed, this evaluation is merely the first step in a long process in redesigning UM's NEO program. This evaluation was completed in an attempt to offer HRS the current research on the socialization process and NEOs. Using that information, an evaluative model to use to evaluate their current program is offered along with suggestions and recommendations for improvement. Some recommendations can be implemented without any cost or time commitment from HRS; however, some of the more major suggestions should carefully be considered before implementation.

Lastly, there are limitations in regards to participants. Each newcomer attends NEO with varying education, experience, and perspectives. Some participants inevitably find the two hours and 45 minutes in NEO extremely helpful while others find it to be less valuable. Everyone comes to NEO from different departments and types of work. There are administrative assistants mixed in with faculty members and they all view these required meetings differently. While every employee is valuable to the University, they all come from different backgrounds which make this program in particular difficult to evaluate.

Further Research

Beyond this evaluation, many directions can be taken. Additional studies need to include interviews with HRS personnel to articulate their perceptions and goals of NEO compared to the perspective presented here as well as ideas they have for change.

Interviews should also be completed with NEO participants to test the assumptions of this and other socialization research with specific regard to NEO. Additionally, surveying new members to determine what they found useful about NEO, what they did not find useful, and suggestions for change they may have would be a logical extension of this research project. For this institution, comparison of UM's NEO to other schools of approximate size would be useful to both garner ideas for improving NEO as well as allow an opportunity to see how other institutions implement NEO into their socialization process.

Once interviews have been completed and clear goals have been set, a redesign of the NEO program is the next step. When the changes have been made and the program is refined then the next step would be to once again complete interviews with NEO participants. Those interview results would need to be compared with the results from the previous interviews to determine whether or not progress has been made. With NEO programs, this cycle of change is never-ending but it also provides an avenue in which to offer the best possible orientation for newcomers.

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