

**Leadership ICMA
Project Culture Shock**

*Recommendations & Findings on
Employee Recruitment, Orientation & Retention*

Prepared for the City of Palo Alto

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Project Culture Shock

Employee Recruitment, Orientation & Retention for the City of Palo Alto

Executive Summary

Project Culture Shock has been working with the City of Palo Alto to help redefine and revamp their current employee recruitment, orientation and retention program. This report provides best practices and recommendations based on site visits and interviews with key staff members from Palo Alto and the latest trends, research and findings in the field. The Project Culture Shock Team also researched and identified cities and organizations that have successful recruitment and onboarding programs.

After conducting two site visits to the City of Palo Alto and interviewing and talking with staff about processes and their experiences, it was determined that the City currently has a very standard recruitment and orientation process. As the City begins succession planning for their next wave of retirements and begins to recruit for a number of the positions which are currently being filled with interim directors, having an effective and streamlined process in place will be essential.

One of the weaknesses observed with the current recruitment and orientation process in Palo Alto is that it is segmented and treated as a series of finite events. The best recruitment and orientation programs are coordinated and designed to be an ongoing process, which last throughout the employee's first six to twelve months of employment. It is essential to ensure that onboarding does not stop at the end of the traditional orientation program.

Finding someone to simply fill a job opening within an organization is not hard. Finding an employee who fits within the culture, who understands the vision and who wants to make lasting contributions—can be more difficult. The right employees can help transform any organization. According to Rebecca Ryan, the author of *“Live First, Work Second,”* “the next generation has become very fickle about where they live and work. They want communities that “fit” their values and lifestyle. They want employers that do the same. “Live first, work second” is becoming the defining ethic of the next generation.”

According to the Hiring 2.0 Guide published for Cal-ICMA (Hiring 2.0, 2009), over the last decade, a great deal of research has been conducted about what people are looking for in their ideal job. Research indicates that employees, especially young employees, are looking for jobs and organizations that have these characteristics:

- Challenging and interesting work
- Continuous learning
- Excellent management
- Alignment with personal values
- Flexible work environment
- Technologically savvy workplace
- Ability to use own initiative and judgment
- Diverse workforce
- Ability to be part of a team

The full report includes detailed recommendations related to recruitment for the City of Palo Alto, highlights are listed below:

- Redesign the human resources webpage
- Redesign job ads
- City of Palo Alto ad campaign
- Placement of job postings/Social Media

- Palo Alto branding
- Collateral materials that promote the culture of the organization/career in public service
- Streamline and/or shorten the hiring process
- Develop cross-sectional interview teams
- Refresh or revamp interview questions

The phrase “New Employee Orientation” can bring to mind enjoyable memories of being warmly integrated into a team, or may bring unpleasant memories of confusion, boredom and uncertainty. An effective employee orientation program provides new employees with a positive first impression of their new organization.

By effectively orientating new hires, organizations can start their employees off on the right track by building an understanding of culture, attitudes, knowledge and needed skill sets right from the beginning. Most orientation programs too often address the paperwork issues but fail to include vital information about the organization’s products, services, culture, policies, customers, safety issues, etc. In every other aspect of life we know that preparation increases the likelihood of success. This must hold true when orienting new employees.

Based on the research of orientation practices in sixteen public and private organizations considered having best practices, Palo Alto’s new employee orientation program would benefit by incorporating these core elements:

1. Engage the Employee
2. Involve Senior Leaders
3. Emphasize Culture
4. Welcome with Enthusiasm
5. Design a Process, not an Event

Best practices in recruitment and orientation now combine clear marketing with personalization of benefits and work schedules. Rather than inundate the new hire with information that they will be hard pressed to remember through the haze of the first days on the job, it has proven beneficial to follow up continually over the course of the first six to twelve months to ensure that the new hire feels welcome, understands the culture and is secure in the knowledge of their role in the mission of the organization.

Many of the best orientation programs include a formal follow-up system to complement the original orientation program. This system can take many forms including hiring manager checklists, mandatory follow-up classes and mentor programs. Many cities and private organizations provide a formal mentor/sponsor/buddy program to help reinforce cultural infusion and ease the transition for the new employee. In the full report, best practices are explored further with reference to the organization responsible for its implementation as well as recommendations for integrating these practices in Palo Alto.

Recruiting, hiring, onboarding, performance management and retention are not independent activities. Each step needs to integrate with the other, in order to maximize the end result: hiring highly motivated top people who become highly motivated long-term performers within the City of Palo Alto. During recruitment and orientation, the City possesses a unique opportunity to share the vision of the organization with new employees and convey a sense of the organizational culture.

❖ PALO ALTO ❖

Introduction

We will never bring disgrace on this our City by an act of dishonesty or cowardice...Athenian Oath

The Project

Most organizations begin with exciting ideals and concepts, but as they grow, they tend to lose the culture which made them unique. There are others who are able to foster and develop their culture while growing stronger as an organization and community. One of the key differences is that the successful organization clearly defines, identifies and communicates the organizational culture, and integrates it into their recruitment, orientation and retention process. Ideally, an organization seeks to recruit employees who share similar core values and those who would be a good fit within the organization. Likewise, job seekers are searching for an organization that's the ideal fit for them.

As an organization grows, it is critical to continually communicate the culture with long-term employees, so they can effectively share those values with new employees. It's not enough to just talk with new employees; the organizational culture must be shared with existing employees as well.

As part of the Leadership ICMA Capstone Project, Project Culture Shock has been working with the City of Palo Alto over the past twelve weeks to identify best practices and recommendations relating to employee recruitment, orientation and retention. As a component of the project our team also looked at the existing organizational culture, and tried to establish the best methods for integrating and exposing new employees to the City's culture. This report provides recommendations as well as ideas and concepts the City of Palo Alto may consider implementing related to recruitment, orientation and retention. Our findings and recommendations are based on site visits and interviews with the City of Palo Alto and research of the latest trends and best practices in the field of recruitment, onboarding and retention.

The Project Culture Shock Team

The Project Culture Shock Team is made up of four individuals from across the country – South Carolina, Michigan, Texas and Montana. Each team member brought their individual insight, background, experience and area of expertise to the group, to help develop the concepts and recommendations for the report relating to the areas of recruitment, orientation and retention. Two team members underwent career changes and changed organizations during their Leadership ICMA experience. This provided them first-hand knowledge of their new organization's recruitment and orientation process and what current job seekers may be experiencing during the recruitment process and as they enter a new organization. For complete biographies on Project Culture Shock see Attachment A.

Methodology & Process

Project Culture Shock conducted two site visits to the City of Palo Alto in March and April 2011. During these visits the team met with representatives from City departments. Over the course of the two visits, fifteen meetings were held, including focus groups with employees who had been with the City ranging from one year to over 20 years. Staff was asked a wide-range of questions, ranging from organizational culture (Attachment B - Palo Alto Site Visit #1: Culture Assessment Questions), the hiring process, to their personal experience with the orientation process. We also asked them to share what they felt the City's greatest asset and challenges were. During these visits our team also met extensively with the human resources staff and gained a thorough understanding of the City's current recruitment and orientation processes. During our visits we also attended two Executive Leadership Team meetings and had an opportunity to see how senior leadership interacted with City management.

During our April site visit in Palo Alto we had the opportunity to tour the IDEO campus and work with their staff and the City's assigned Design Team through the ideation process for Project Culture Shock. This was an amazing process. The opportunity to see Tim Brown's "Design Thinking" concept come to life was incredible and provided a number of worthwhile results and ideas for our team. It was also a beneficial exercise, which provided skills that can be taken back and applied to many of our real world job experiences as well. The following questions were asked to our team and brainstormed during the ideation process:

- How can we help new employees feel welcome?
- How do we help new hires feel part of Palo Alto as a whole?
- How do we help make new hires part of shaping the organizational culture?
- How can we encourage risk taking and trying new things?

The results of the ideation exercise can be viewed in Attachment C.

After the site visits were completed our project team had a better understanding of the direction and type of research that needed to be completed. Benchmark cities were determined based on size, demographics and geographic location. Other key cities were identified. Tasks were assigned and each team member conducted research. Interviews were conducted with a number of cities and online and academic research was completed. Throughout the process our team scheduled regular conference calls to discuss status reports, findings and develop recommendations for Palo Alto.

Organizations are constantly looking for new ways to improve their performance and gain a competitive advantage. As organizations seek to improve their own processes and practices, they look to those organizations with best practices to learn from and benchmark. Benchmarking is defined as a standard against which something can be measured or assessed. When selecting and identifying the cities and/or organizations to include in this report, we looked specifically at their recruitment and onboarding programs and looked for the following:

- Integrated Process – Beginning to End (recruitment, orientation and retention)
- Utilizes "Best-in-Class" Communication (with applicant, new employee, hiring manager)
- Successful/Proven Track Record
- Knowledge of the field
- Program that Engages the Employee
- Program Emphasizes Organizational Culture
- Organization Designed as a Process (not just a one-time event)

In some cases the cities and organizations were identified based on their demographics and similarities to Palo Alto or the team's past knowledge of their innovative programs, however due to the current state of the economy many organizations have changed their programs or methods. In some cases recruitment has slowed down or is almost non-existent, which has changed the structure or focus of their entire orientation program. In those cases, while research and interviews were conducted, the findings were not relevant to this particular report and were not included in the recommendations for Palo Alto.

The cities profiled in this report and/or researched include the following: Allen, Texas; Bellevue, Washington; Boulder, Colorado; Charlottesville, Virginia; Concord, California; Duluth, Minnesota; Glendale, Arizona; Olathe, Kansas; Keller, Texas; Plano, Texas; Pleasanton, California; Southlake, Texas; Rock Hill, South Carolina and Tucson, Arizona. Organizations featured include Keane Consulting Group, Motorola Inc., Qwest Communications, Ritz-Carlton, University of Minnesota, Impact Consulting Partners, Silk Road Technologies, Inc

City of Palo Alto – the Community

...We will fight for the ideals and Sacred Things of the City both alone and with many...Athenian Oath

The City of Palo Alto, California is located in the northwest corner of Santa Clara County, outside the San Francisco Bay Area. According to the 2010 Census, the City has a population just under 65,000 residents, with an average household size of 2.4. The median age in Palo Alto is 41.9, compared to 35.2 for the State of California and 37.1 for the rest of the United States. Based on 2007 data from the American Community Survey, U.S. Census Bureau the median household income was estimated at \$119,046.

Palo Alto 2010 Census Data

19 and under	25%
20-29	9%
30-39	13%
40-49	16%
50-59	14%
60-69	10%
70 and older	13%

See Attachment D for a full listing of 2010 Census Data for the City of Palo Alto.

While claiming home to Stanford, the university itself is actually located in an unincorporated area, just outside of the Palo Alto community. The university has been a major partner and catalyst in the development of the Palo Alto community and the bay area. Over the past thirty years Palo Alto transformed from a charming, small bay area town into an innovative, high-tech hub of activity which appeals to entrepreneurs, engineers, designers and scientists.

In the late 1970s, as Stanford University emerged as the leading academic high-tech research institution, the area began to attract hundreds of new start-up businesses that were connected to the university. This brought a wealth of new ideas and an entrepreneurial spirit to the area, which is still evident today. Because of this, the area became known as the birthplace of “Silicon Valley.” The City is currently home to a number of Silicon Valley high-technology companies, including Hewlett-Packard, IDEO, Facebook, Google, Logitech, Intuit, Sun Microsystems and PayPal.

The City of Palo Alto currently employs just over 1,000 employees. The City has seen a significant increase in turnover in employees over the past three to five years due a number of factors, including the change in their pension and retirement program which has resulted in a number of early retirements.

Due to the fact the City is currently not filling non-essential positions; the City is currently down 200 full time employees. The rate at which they are not filling positions directly impacts their recruitment and orientation program and today there are fewer employees going through orientation than ever before (seven to twelve employees every other month). During our site visits we had the opportunity to attend Executive Leadership Team meetings where it was noted that more than half of their Department Head and executive level positions were currently being filled by interim staff.

The inherent entrepreneurial spirit and innovative nature of the area creates a lucrative and natural recruiting ground for the City of Palo Alto. The bay area attracts young, energetic design-thinkers, who are ready to hit the ground running and change the world around them. What an amazing breeding ground for new ideas and

untapped potential. Unfortunately, many of these young entrepreneurs often overlook or have not been exposed to local government as a career choice.

Even if the non-profit world has entered into the job horizon for these young professionals, often local government has not, simply because as practitioners we have not done an effective job of marketing the world of local government as a viable career opportunity. This is when proactive and strategic recruitment plans play a crucial role for local government organizations.

The Culture

...We will revere and obey the City's laws...Athenian Oath

The culture of Palo Alto as both a community and an organization is unique. Being home to a major research university and a number of well-known high-tech companies creates challenges as well as unique opportunities and partnerships for the City of Palo Alto. These assets have developed a highly engaged community, which expects outstanding customer service and a high level of professionalism and perfection from staff. Every employee we had the opportunity to talk to was proud to work for the City and took great pride in their work. When asked what they felt was the City's greatest asset, overwhelmingly most answered that it was the employees.

During our visits we experienced and witnessed a deep rooted sense of loyalty and commitment to the organization. Throughout the entire organization there was an expectation to provide an extremely high level of customer service and to be responsive to the needs and requests of citizens. One of the common themes that continued to be apparent during our visits was the high level of citizen engagement and involvement, which was common throughout the community, regardless of the issue or neighborhood.

As new employees enter the organization, there appears to be an expectation that they will be entering a highly innovative and cutting-edge organization. This appears to be due to the fact that the City is located in "Silicon Valley", an area that is known throughout the world as home to many well known and well publicized hi-tech companies. The City has implemented a number of innovative practices over the years, such as fostering partnerships and relationships with Facebook and IDEO as well as the creation and implementation of design-teams within the organization and developing an ethics policy. It is important and it may be necessary to balance this initial expectation against the traditional processes that are part of doing businesses in government (council meetings, policies, the City Charter, citizen participation requirements, etc.), which unfortunately take time.

During our interviews we also heard a concern about the City's currently outdated technology (computers, software) and phone systems and how the use of outdated technology frustrates new and existing employees. The use of antiquated technology appears to be one of the largest contradictions in innovation, especially since they are located in the heart of the country's hi-tech culture and revolutionary advances in technology are being made here on a daily basis. As the City begins to attract a younger working demographic, this outdated technology may serve as a deterrent to recruiting and may need to be addressed.

Palo Alto City Manager, Jim Keene, uses the Athenian Oath when he welcomes employees to the City, and has it on display in the City Manager's Office. In order to gain citizenship status, the Greeks made every citizen take the Athenian Oath. While Keene may not ask each employee to take the oath to gain employment with the City, he uses it to remind employees that what they do matters and what the City as an organization values or holds to be true. He has been using it as a community building tool with new employees; it may be worthwhile to continue the discussion with existing employees and his Executive Leadership Team. If as an entire organization, employees understand what matters, what role they play and what value they bring to the table - together they can help build a legacy, to build a better tomorrow for the community.

The Athenian Oath

We will never bring disgrace on this our City
by an act of dishonesty or cowardice.
We will fight for the ideals and Sacred Things
of the City both alone and with many.
We will revere and obey the City's laws,
and will do our best to incite a like reverence
and respect in those above us who are prone
to annul them or set them at naught.
We will strive increasingly to quicken
the public's sense of civic duty.
Thus in all these ways we will transmit this City,
not only not less, but greater and more beautiful
than it was transmitted to us!

The Current Recruitment & Orientation Process

...and will do our best to incite a like reverence and respect in those above us...Athenian Oath.

Based on our conversations with the City of Palo Alto Human Resources Department the City currently has a very standard recruitment and orientation process. The City is currently not filling non-essential positions, so recruitment needs and the actual need for employee orientation appears to be slightly slower than normal. However, as the City begins succession planning for the next wave of retirements and begins to recruit for a number of the positions which are currently being filled with interim directors, having an effective and streamlined process in place will be essential.

Currently, when a department has approval to hire for a position, the hiring manager will meet with the appropriate Human Resources staff member to develop a job posting, based on the approved job description. The City has moved to a new online employment website system, Neogov, which appears to be working well for both staff and applicants.

According to Human Resources, they work with supervisors to help find the ideal candidate by creating effective and accurate job postings and supplemental questions. Current recruitment tools include the City's website and other online professional sites as well as social media sites such as facebook and twitter. During our first site visit staff indicated they were researching the use of LinkedIn. Human Resources has also participated in past job fairs as a way to find job candidates.

Once applications are received, the Human Resources staff screens them for those who meet the minimum requirements. Those applications are provided to the hiring manager who then selects candidates to be interviewed. The hiring manager then develops an interview panel and the interview questions. Once a successful candidate is selected, the pre-employment process begins; including reference checks, background checks, finger printing and a medical check.

New Employee Orientation is currently offered every other month due to the low number of employees being hired, with seven to twelve employees usually attending each orientation session. New employees meet with Human Resources staff on their first day of employment to complete standard new hire and benefit paperwork.

Orientation traditionally lasts five to six hours and includes a City Manager welcome and standard required City information including NIMs, safety and risk management information, a disaster scenario, workers compensation and zero waste information. Once completed the employee returns to their department, who then completes the rest of their department training and is responsible for helping them get acclimated to the City – including showing them around, introducing them to staff, signing them up for a computer login and getting their employee ID card.

One of the weaknesses observed with the current recruitment and orientation process in Palo Alto is that it is segmented and treated as a series of finite events. The best recruitment and orientation programs are coordinated and designed to be an ongoing process, which last throughout the employee's first six to twelve months. It is essential to ensure that onboarding does not stop at the end of the traditional orientation program. It is beneficial to both the employee and the organization to follow up through mentor programs and other specific and intentional means. Ideally, orientation is just one step in an ongoing process of cultural integration that lasts throughout the employee's tenure.

❖ Recommendations & Best Practices ❖

Recruitment

...who are prone to annul them or set them at naught...Athenian Oath.

Finding someone to simply fill a job opening within an organization is not hard. Finding an employee who fits within the culture, who understands the vision and who wants to make lasting contributions—that may be more difficult. The right employees can transform any organization.

Over the past few years, hiring has slowed down within the City, however hiring is still important and ensuring that the right employee is hired is vital to the success of the organization. Today young professionals, “generation next” are taking into account where they want to live first and work second. This important employee value proposition needs to be considered. An organization must take into account what it can provide or offer potential employees, as well as what the community and its surrounding environment and the amenities it has to offer them. Recruitment has become about attraction, retention and engagement.

According to the Society of Human Resource Management (SHRM, 2009), “recruitment has clearly fallen to the bottom of many companies priority lists as the recession maintains its stranglehold on the U.S. economy. With the labor market flooded by job seekers of all talent levels, employers that are, in fact hiring right now have a distinct advantage and can take their time hiring vacancies while selecting from a deep pool of candidates.” This statistic is positive for local governments, especially when hiring in specialized or professional fields. Having a larger candidate pool, that is waiting and wanting to be recruited, means there may be more candidates to choose from. However, organizations still need to be proactive and strategic in targeting potential future employees. The goal isn’t to get as many applications as possible for a job opening; the goal is to get qualified applicants who will also be a good fit for the organization. Organizations should still want quality over quantity.

According to Rebecca Ryan, the author of *“Live First, Work Second,”* “The next generation has become very fickle about where they live and work. They want communities that “fit” their values and lifestyle. They want employers that do the same. “Live first, work second” is becoming the defining ethic of the next generation.” (Ryan, 2007).

- The next generation first picks a place to live and then looks for work
- The next generation first picks a place to live and then finds a job

Ryan also found, “that three out of four Americans under the age of 28 say that a cool community is more important than a good job.” Her research indicates that a “cool” community has the following attributes:

- Diversity
- Third spaces (locally owned, busy places - funky restaurants, bars, coffee shops)
- Stroll districts (pedestrian/people friendly areas)
- Density (allows people to connect with each other)

It is important to understand who your future employment base is and what they value. These are the employees you will be hiring. They are today’s young professionals, who will be drawn to your community simply because it is a “cool” or inviting place to live – even if they don’t have a job before moving there. As a hiring entity, your job is to attract them to your organization and sell them on why they want to work for the City of Palo Alto. Future employees clearly want to understand and know what the benefits are to work for your organization, so it’s important that your organization clearly knows and communicates what those are before recruiting future employees. This is more than health benefits, but intrinsic benefits and values, *“How do I, as an individual or employee benefit by working for this organization?”*

The question to ask as an organization is, “Why would an employee want to work for us?” And for those employees that you choose to actively pursue (because of the specialized nature of the field), your job will be to sell them on the entire package, not just the organization but the community as well. All the amenities the surrounding community has to offer. Information from the Knight Foundation, www.soulofthecommunity.org is another excellent source supporting this concept.

According to the Hiring 2.0 Guide published for Cal-ICMA (Hiring 2.0, 2009), over the last decade, a great deal of research has been conducted about what people are looking for in their ideal job. Research indicates that employees, especially young employees, are looking for jobs and organizations that have these characteristics:

- Challenging and interesting work
- Continuous learning
- Excellent management
- Alignment with personal values
- Flexible work environment
- Technologically savvy workplace
- Ability to use own initiative and judgment
- Diverse workforce
- Ability to be part of a team

Recommendation – Redesign the Human Resources webpage. Many Human Resources webpage’s integrate more interactive and useful information for job seekers. This helps job seekers learn more about the organization and get a better feel for the culture and community. Ideas include testimonials from current employees, staff bios, community videos or narratives on the City of Palo Alto, or information on choosing a career in local government. The idea here is help relay information that would help share the organizational values and/or culture with potential job seekers. Website examples can be seen in Attachment E.

Recommendation – Today’s job seekers are looking for flexible work schedules, continuous learning opportunities, team work environments, values that are in alignment with theirs and updated technology. The City of Palo Alto has already made great strides in these areas – as most of these concepts are hallmarks of innovative organizations. Continuing to think outside the box and provide opportunities for these opportunities will be important in order to attract and retain a younger work demographic.

The world of recruiting has become tied to technology, for both the potential candidate and the employer. From online job postings, to submitting electronic applications to virtual interviews - almost everything can be done electronically today. In a 2008 SHRM poll, 53% of the companies surveyed had increased their use of social networking sites as a complement to recruiting activities because online avenues like Facebook and LinkedIn are less expensive when compared to other methods of screening/recruiting applicants. SHRM also found that 54% of employees say they network professionally by using some form of online job search or social networking site.

Technology is here to stay and should be integrated into an effective recruitment plan. It is important to note, that technological advancement and social networking are powerful additions to the recruiting process, but they should never be considered the only solutions to finding the right employee.

Recommendation – Develop a social media marketing plan for recruitment, which should include LinkedIn. Create a separate Twitter and Facebook pages/accounts specifically for human resources. Updates can include job postings and announcements. These accounts could also be used to share valuable information with current employees.

How we advertise or market open positions is essential. Oftentimes City governments simply place a standard ad in the local paper or on the City's webpage with government job description language included. Surprisingly, it's not very appealing or exciting and it's no wonder we don't have applicants beating down the door to work for us. It's time to rethink how we are selling and marketing ourselves, our jobs and our organizations. In order to compete in today's marketplace; we can't wait or expect the right employees to come to us. We have to develop innovative ways to catch their attention, share what our organization has to offer and demonstrate why our organization is the right fit for them.

It is also important to think about where we are advertising in an opening. Posting in the paper, professional publication and our website may not be enough anymore. Posting for jobs should be done in as many places as possible. By relying on just a few sites, may be severely limiting the number of candidates who are seeing the job posting. By posting in multiple places, it's more likely that the job will surface on a job search engine, significantly increasing its visibility.

Recommendation – When feasible try to place the job opening in as many places as possible. Even if it's a short ad listing that refers the job seeker back to the City's job board. Advertising job postings in a diversity of locations will increase the likelihood the open position will be viewed by prospective candidates.

Recommendation – Use exciting, positive and short copy in the job advertisement. Be creative when possible. Don't use technical or government jargon people outside the organization won't understand. Include and highlight the benefits of working for the organization. Focus on the value the position brings to the organization, versus job duties. Ideally, ads could be created that are nontraditional, that may not even include a job description and convey a feeling of service or community, examples are included in Attachment D. Remember the target market could very well be the "live first, work second generation."

Recommendation – Develop a "City of Palo Alto" recruitment marketing campaign. This would be separate from actual job openings. This would be ads that promoted working for the City that included taglines like – "Palo Alto is a Great Place to Work," "Service First in Palo Alto," "I love Working in Palo Alto," or "Start Your Career in Palo Alto." While the ads would not promote specific job openings, the ads would convey a sense of community and cultural values and should include photos of actual employees. The campaign would refer job seekers to the job board (i.e. for a list of current job openings go to <http://agency.governmentjobs.com/paloaltoca>).

Recommendation – The task of recruiting is substantially easier if potential candidates perceive your organization is well run and a great place to work, branding helps convey this message. Consistent messaging and branding throughout the organization, including Human Resources is important. The same messaging/branding should be on all collateral material that is handed out or provided to applicants (applications, forms, pens, etc.). Information on the City's culture, ethics, etc. should also be included in the City's messaging and branding as this helps convey the City's culture to potential employees.

Recommendation – Develop a collateral tri-fold brochure for the Human Resources Department to provide to job seekers, handout during job fairs, have in the office, as well as electronically. Right now the department does not appear to have any specific collateral that discusses the benefits of working for Palo Alto, the organizational culture or the community. A brochure that highlights the benefits and values of the organization and why a potential applicant would choose a career in local government may prove a useful recruiting tool.

Recommendation - Job fairs are a good way to reach potential applicants, especially in a community with a number of higher-ed institutions including, community colleges, technical schools and a major university. Booths should be colorful and visual. An effective booth should include visual and graphic displays (photos of City landmarks, City facilities and employees working) and should have some sort of media presentation (video presentation on a laptop or flat screen). High-quality collateral should be handed out as well, which feature City, community, cultural amenities, etc.

According to a 2009 study conducted by the Society of Human Resources, the median time to fill an open position was 23 days in 2009, down from 30 days in 2008. On average the process to fill an open position in local government takes much longer. The initial job posting is usually open for at least two to three weeks. With application screenings and the interview process (sometimes more than one round) and background checks the total process can take up to six to eight weeks. Unfortunately government isn't known for having the fastest hiring practices.

Today's young professionals expect to apply for a job and navigate through the process quickly. Waiting around for government to turn its wheels and make up its mind doesn't bode well for the organization they are considering for future employment.

Recommendation – Look for ways to streamline and shorten the recruitment and hiring process. Can a job be posted for two weeks instead of three? Is there a way to utilize technology to screen applications for minimum qualifications in order speed up the process? Can phone interviews be utilized to cut down on the need for two rounds of in person interviews?

The interview is a critical part of the recruitment process. It is oftentimes the first interaction a candidate has with current employees. This is when a candidate gets a real feel for the organization, and when the hiring panel gets a sense for the type of employee the candidate would make whether or not they would be a "good fit" for the organization. It all comes down to the questions asked and how they are answered.

Recommendation – Develop cross sectional interview teams for the interview process. Ensure that the interview team is not just made up of the hiring department. This serves two purposes – the candidate gets a better feel for the organization and the panel is better balanced and well rounded. Having a better represented panel will provide a better view point and perspective for the hiring manager.

Recommendation – It may be time to start looking at the questions that are currently being asked during the interviews. Many organizations have started revising and changing the questions they are asking for Generation X and Y, simply due to their approach. When was the last time the questions were updated or refreshed? Determine if the hiring panels or departments are happy with the questions, are they meeting their needs. Do the questions allow them to truly find out if a candidate is qualified or would meet the needs of their department? Are the questions working for current young professionals? Is it time to update them or rephrase them? Is it time to start asking something different?

New Employee Orientation

...We will strive increasingly to quicken the public's sense of civic duty...Athenian Oath

First impressions can have a lasting impact. The phrase “New Employee Orientation” can bring to mind enjoyable memories of being warmly integrated into a team, or may bring unpleasant memories of confusion, boredom and uncertainty. An effective employee orientation program provides new employees with a positive first impression that is the first step in establishing greater motivation and productivity throughout their tenure. This benefits the employer by (Doris M. Sims, SPHR, *Creative Onboarding Programs: Tools for Energizing Your Orientation Programs*)

- Increasing the initial productivity level of new employees and the talent they bring to the organization
- Improving the likelihood new employees will stay with the organization within and beyond the first year of employment
- Improving the engagement level of new employees, which is critical to increasing results
- Giving adequate opportunity for employees to learn about employee benefits and organization policies
- Enhancing employee brand as new employees tell their friends and network about their positive experience.

By effectively orientating new hires, organizations will start their employees off on the right track by building an understanding of culture, attitudes, knowledge and all needed skill sets right from the beginning. Most orientation programs too often address the paperwork issues but fail to include vital information about the organization’s products, services, culture, policies, customers, safety issues, etc. In every other aspect of life we know that preparation increases success. This must hold true when orienting new employees.

The best new employee orientation programs are not remembered for the information that is conveyed (although that information is usually retained); rather they are remembered for the sense of camaraderie, inclusion and belonging that they express. The key to a successful new employee orientation program is the ability to establish a connection with the new employee while at the same time effectively communicating some of the mandatory information that is less than engaging.

“Most organizations actually celebrate more when employees leave the company than when they arrive” says Doris M. Simms, SPHR, in her book, *“Creative Onboarding Programs: Tools for Energizing Your Orientation Programs”*. She goes on to explain that this is a nice way to show appreciation for what the employee did but why not celebrate the value of employees from the start. Everyone has experienced buyer’s remorse – many employees experience the same type of emotion when they leave their former company. At the foundation of any effective employee orientation program is the reality that customers are not the only population an employer should focus on selling their benefits to. All employees should also be sold on the benefits of growing with the company, or they will disengage while employed with the organization or move on to a new organization.

Nowhere is the adage, “employees are our most important asset” more true than in municipal government where service delivery is paramount. Therefore it is truly essential that municipal employees receive a welcome to the organization that leaves a positive first impression and establishes the foundation for a career of service to their community.

Four Essential Components

Being a great place to work is fundamental to successful employee recruitment and retention. An employee’s decision to move to a new organization or stay in their existing position is rooted in the need to have trust, hope, sense of worth and feeling competent. In John Paul Kotter’s article, *“The Psychological Contract: Managing the*

Joining-Up Process,” he identifies the existence of a psychological contract as an implicit contract between an individual and the organization that specifies what each expects to give and receive from each other in their working relationship. It is when an employee realizes their employer cannot meet key expectations in the contract that feelings of betrayal occur as if a real contract has been broken. The more clearly the expectations are understood by both parties, the higher probability the relationship is a success. Research shows the four components below are essential to strengthening the relationship between new hires and their employers.

1. Communicate Culture
2. Increase New Employee Productivity
3. Teamwork Connections
4. Develop an Orientation Program

Component One: Communicate Culture

If a company’s orientation program does not include discussions and opportunities for employees to learn about its culture, expectations, norms and strategic plans, then a critical link in the process of creating a planned culture, with employees aligned with strategic goals, is lost, says Doris M. Simms, SPHR, in her book, *“Creative Onboarding Programs: Tools for Energizing Your Orientation Programs”*. New employees in your organization desire knowing the accepted norms of what they should do as well as what they should not. They desire to fit into the culture, be viewed as effective and at all times, avoid embarrassment. It is important that orientations include any unwritten rules necessary to be successful in the organization, including:

- Decision-making and chain of command communication practices
- Organization or department’s accepted or “normal” work hours
- Risk taking levels either encouraged or discouraged in the company
- Organization or department’s value on relationship and friendship building internally
- If energy and play exist and is encouraged (or discouraged) in the organization and to what level

Creating and committing to a psychological contract with new hires is not only essential in the orientation phase but during interviewing as well. Taking this step is paramount to establishing trust. According to John Paul Kotter (*The Psychological Contract: Managing the Joining-Up Process*), “Without trust, there can be no viable working relationship. Without taking the time and making an effort to establish trust from the start, managers are risking the waste of their most precious asset.”

Component Two: Increase New Employee Productivity

Orientation programs must be designed accelerate employee productive quickly on the job. This requires much more than a one day orientation. In her book, *“Creative Onboarding Programs: Tools for Energizing Your Orientation Programs,”* Doris M. Sims, SPHR, recommends to accelerate productivity, orientation programs should include:

- Information and materials to “get a head start” before the first day on the job; examples include the initial paperwork, benefits information, and company products, services and brand information.
- All of the basics needed on the first day of employment – whom to meet, where to park, workstation information, etc.
- A peer or buddy assigned to the new employee to provide an additional resource person to assist the employee, to answer questions and to communicate the unwritten rules of the company.
- A full onboarding training session that communicates company culture, values, products and/or services, clients, geographical information, the leadership of the company, etc.
- Job-specific training, which is typically a combination of formal training, such as workshops, e-learning, or procedure guides, and more informal on the job training such as shadowing a current employee, observing others and participating on a new project team.

- Performance expectations and coaching from the employee's immediate supervisor/manager to ensure clear communications regarding performance goals, productivity progress, etc.

Component Three: Create Connections and Teamwork

Working adults spend a major portion of their time at work. With that said, it is essential work environments exist that support and provide opportunities for employees to form strong and positive relationships with coworkers. Beyond job satisfaction, retention, and effective teamwork, this is also critical for their personal happiness on the job. Long term employees report the friendships they have at work as one of the main reasons they choose to stay. Employers must understand this and include activities in the orientation program that foster employee relationships.

Component Four: Develop the Orientation Program

A well thought out orientation program, whether it lasts one day or over several months, will help not only in the retention of employees, but also in productivity. Organizations that have good orientation programs get new people acclimated faster, have higher retention rates and have increased alignment between what the employees do and what the organization needs them to do.

Five Steps to Success

The information below identifies five steps to consider when creating an employee orientation program specific to the City of Palo Alto (*Doris M. Sims, SPHR, "Creative Onboarding Programs: Tools for Energizing Your Orientation Programs*).

Step One: Create a Project Team

In order to develop a successful orientation program that embodies the culture and norms of Palo Alto, it is essential to organize a multi-dimensional project team or steering committee. The existing Design Teams provide an excellent starting place for members and the recruitment of new participants. It is important to consider the following ideas when creating this team.

- Involve high potential employees from various departments. This not only is an opportunity to receive different perspectives but can also serve as tool to further develop these employees.
- Incorporate the perspectives of employees who have been with Palo Alto for one year. This will give them an opportunity to reflect back on their experience as to what worked for them and what should be improved. They are also valuable in assessing whether identified changes will succeed in the orientation's goals.
- Involve mid- to senior-level leaders to serve as the strategic and financial sponsors of the new employee orientation project team or steering committee.

Step Two: Define Goals of New Program

This process requires the new employee orientation project team to define the City of Palo Alto's current practices, the current strengths and weaknesses of the existing orientation efforts, goals for the revised program and actions needed to achieve those goals. Answering questions similar to the ones below will help accomplish these things.

- What is the current state of your new employee orientation program?
- Approximately how many employees do you plan to hire annually?
- Where will new employees be located? Is there any place for virtual applications in orientation activities?

- What does a “best practice” new employee orientation program look like for Palo Alto?
- How will the results be measured?

Step Three: Develop the Orientation Checklist

Creating and using a new hire checklist ensures that nothing is forgotten during the pre and post hiring process. Effective employee orientation program checklists start before the new hire begins working at the organization to several months after the start date. Attachment E. identifies example check lists appropriate for use over a several month orientation process.

Step Four: Design Orientation Program

Facilitator led employee orientation activities are essential to ensuring new employees feel engaged and provide an opportunity to build organization loyalty and relationships between new employees, a major component of retention. In her book *“Creative Onboarding Programs: Tools for Energizing Your Orientation Programs,”* Doris M. Sims, SPHR states “Best practice onboarding programs also serve to continue the “employment branding” that begins with the recruiting process.” Things to consider when designing or revising an employee orientation program include:

- Use the organization’s brand and logo on all materials provided to new employee
- Provide promotional materials (cups, pens, etc) with the organization’s name, logo and mission/values
- Show any marketing materials or videos showing the organizations services and success
- If possible, give new employees an opportunity to experience different services or products offered by the organization
- Name the orientation in a way that defines its purpose
- Make sure the room where workshop is held reflects the brand, vision and key values of the organization.

Step Five: Collect Feedback and Evaluate Results

The only way to know if the orientation program is working is to establish an evaluation plan. In recent years, many employers have started the practice of having recent hires complete evaluations of their experiences during the company’s recruiting and hiring process. From this, the organization learns what the new hires were surprised to learn during their first 30 days to up to a year on the job, what they expected but did not receive, and things that were not discussed during the orientation that should have been.

Five Best Practices

Many of the traditional ways of hiring staff are not working as they did before. Traditional orientation programs typically involve a “fire hose approach” – a virtual data dump of policies and procedures that normally occurs within the first weeks of employment. Traditional approaches to employee orientation fail to relay feelings of value from the employer and fail to give the new employee an understanding of the organizational culture and norms necessary for success (*Doris M. Sims, SPHR, “Creative Onboarding Programs: Tools for Energizing Your Orientation Programs”*).

Best practices in recruitment and orientation now combine clear marketing with personalization of benefits and work schedules to address the specific needs of different demographics, and make a concerted effort to extend and build upon the feelings of excitement and anticipation that all new hires experience at one time or another. Rather than inundate the new hire with information that they will be hard pressed to remember through the haze of the first days on the job, it has proven beneficial to follow up continually over the course of the first six to twelve

months to ensure that the new hire feels welcome, understands the culture and is secure in the knowledge of their role in the mission of the organization.

Additionally, it is essential to use a phased approach with multiple resources such as company websites, video materials, sponsors or mentors, employee handbooks and benefit guides, and e-learning, to prevent information overload of traditional programs and enable employees to build relationships with other employees. By doing this, organizations can capture a greater cross-section of the available job market of skilled and qualified employees while avoiding the common pitfall of their orientation program feeling like a “cattle drive” to new hires.

In an effort to determine and evaluate the best practices in new employee orientation, the team employed a variety of methodologies. Initially, through interviews with Palo Alto staff, a list of comparison cities was collected and these cities were investigated. For the most part, these cities that may have shared traits such as size, demographics and political culture with Palo Alto ultimately did not prove to be leading innovators in the area of orientation. Exceptions such as Boulder, CO have been included in the report. Further research produced a variety of public as well as private organizations that consistently topped lists of innovative organizations or exceptional places to work. Finally, the team relied upon their personal knowledge of well run organizations with a history of innovation and success in the area of new employee orientation. Ultimately, organizations that value and emphasize culture and innovation were identified as benchmarks and often small pieces of orientation programs have been recognized because in the team’s opinion, they would fit well within the culture of Palo Alto. Several programs stood out as exceptional examples of new employee orientations that leave a positive first impression. Companies and communities profiled are:

City of Allen, Texas
City of Boulder, Colorado
City of Concord, California
City of Olathe, Kansas
City of Keller, Texas
City of Plano, Texas
City of Southlake, Texas
Impact Consulting Partners

City of Rock Hill, South Carolina
Google
Keane Consulting Group
Motorola Inc.
Qwest Communications
Ritz-Carlton
University of Minnesota
Silk Road Technologies, Inc.

Based on the research of these organizations, the best New Employee Orientation Programs include these common core elements:

1. Engage the Employee
2. Involve Senior Leaders
3. Emphasize Culture
4. Welcome with Enthusiasm
5. Design a Process, not an Event

Each of these best practices is explored further with reference to the organization responsible for its implementation as well as recommendations for integrating these practices in Palo Alto.

Best Practice One: Engage the Employee

According to Angela Heyroth, many new employee orientation programs are rushed, confused or simply boring (Heyroth, 2003). In an effort to impart as much critical information as possible in a short amount of time, many organizations end up failing in the primary mission of engaging the new employee. Orientation should be an opportunity for Palo Alto to shine. This is an opportunity to highlight all that is unique and special about the community of Palo Alto.

Companies have started using employee portals that serve as customized web sites created to welcome new employees as well as provide an online learning and tracking tool. Many of these sites contain benefits and other important information the employee can access prior to their first day of employment. By utilizing new employee portals to provide information about the employee's new job, the organizational culture, and policies/procedures, the employee stays connected from the interview process to their first day of employment and onward. Karen Perron, Director of Onboarding Strategies with SilkRoad Technologies, Inc., explains that new employee portals should be used as one of the more important tools to provide access to:

- Immediate connection to company culture and talent brand
- Information that will help them acclimate to their new position and team
- Electronic orientation materials that will reduce organizational dependence on paper-based materials
- Welcome information from the City Manager or CEO

Recommendation - Create a system for new employees on the City of Palo Alto's website where they can access benefit forms, City policies, and general information about the organization (organizational chart, City Council and Department Head list with pictures, etc.). Additionally, consider a virtual welcome message from the City Manager.

Many cities, including Southlake and Plano, TX as well as Concord, CA incorporate some type of facility tour during their orientation process. These tours range in complexity from a simple walking tour of City Hall to a coordinated bus tour with Parks and Recreation personnel acting as unofficial "tour guides." The concept of a facility tour is important if for no other reason than to get the new employees out of their seats and moving. A full day of PowerPoint presentations in a lecture hall does little to engage the new employee. Action can facilitate the learning process and a well designed tour of City facilities and community highlights can help create the engagement that the best orientation programs offer. The simple act of walking from point A to point B can go a long way toward making all participants feel as if they are part of something.

Recommendation – Create a ½ day tour of City facilities and community highlights. Since many Palo Alto employees do not live in the City, it is especially important to include portions of the tour that emphasize unique aspects of the community such as the Chamber of Commerce, Stanford University and neighborhood leaders, even if on the surface they might not seem to have a lot to do with day-to-day municipal governance. The philosophy behind the tour is to engage the new employee and make them feel part of the larger community.

While multiple organizations agree that tours are an important part of any new employee orientation program, it is also the consensus that tours can be logistically complicated. Another path to compelling and engaging orientations that should be easier to implement involves the utilization of group activities. Cities such as Keller and Southlake, TX as well as private companies like Qwest Communications facilitate group quiz activities to increase both the engagement of the participants as well as the retention of the facts. According to research conducted by Angela Heyroth, Keane Consulting Group adds levity to their customer service training by incorporating a trainer with a squirt gun to simulate an angry client (Heyroth, 2003). The point is that some amount of lecture or PowerPoint presentation is unavoidable, but it can be supplemented with group activities, team building exercises or memorable role playing opportunities in order to engage the employee and facilitate greater retention of information.

Recommendation - For the classroom portion of the orientation create interesting and compelling programs that revolve around group activities. Team building activities and simple personality tests provide the opportunity to create interaction and engagement as opposed to multiple lectures which invite isolation and disconnection.

The University of Minnesota has a yearlong orientation program where various sessions are offered that cover different facets of an employee's understanding of the University, how business is done there and relevant

policies and procedures. Throughout the year the University plans fun social activities for the both the new employee and their families that connect them to their culture.

Recommendation - Provide social opportunities during business hours for new employees to re-connect within their first year of employment. Options could be a coffee drop-in once a quarter or lunch with a new employee and their buddy or supervisor. Also consider involving their family by providing a discount price at a recreation or arts amenity the City of Palo Alto offers.

Best Practice Two: Involve Senior Leaders

While Human Resources is obviously going to be intimately involved with the orientation process and may be responsible for a large part of its delivery, the central message of the orientation should be delivered by the City Manager. By involving the City Manager and other Palo Alto City leaders from the beginning, the orientation process is elevated from a simple exchange of information to its rightful place as a very personal invitation to be part of the community.

The City of Allen, TX utilizes its City Manager to drive home the importance of the City's values of People first, Respect, Integrity, Deliver and Excel (PRIDE). The City of Southlake, TX also uses its City Manager to deliver the message to new employees on the importance of the City's Strategic Management System. The City Manager of Rock Hill schedules morning meetings with every new employee to give them one on one interaction as part of their orientation. In all cases, the City Manager makes every effort to open the orientation with a brief address to emphasize the importance of their particular message.

Various private organizations utilize senior leaders to varying degrees in their orientation programs. The President and COO of Ritz-Carlton greets new employees on day one of their orientation with a motivational address. At Motorola, new employees are treated to lunch with a Vice President. Google invites new hires to sit in the front row and receive special recognition at weekly all-hands meetings with the Google founders.

Whatever the format, the presence of organizational leaders in the orientation process is an essential element in making the new employee orientation program the best it can be.

Recommendation - Utilize the City Manager to deliver his message during the orientation program with an emphasis on the Athenian Oath and what it means to the City of Palo Alto. Depending on logistics, this recommendation could be implemented at the beginning of the program, or as a closing. This an ideal opportunity for the City Manager to continue sharing his message on the importance of community and the Athenian Oath or another thought provoking concept selected by employees. Other City leaders can be utilized in a formal setting to discuss the relationship their department has with the community, or in a more informal setting at lunch or as tour participants.

Best Practice Three: Emphasize Culture

The goal of any good orientation program should be to introduce the values and indoctrinate the new employee into the culture of the organization. It is important to ensure that your orientation reflects the unique culture of Palo Alto. If innovation is a key component to the culture of Palo Alto, then the orientation process itself must be innovative. As mentioned earlier, PowerPoint presentations may be necessary at times, but they cannot be the sole focus of the orientation. The group activities, role playing and other attempts to engage the new employee should serve a dual purpose by also being used as a tool to communicate the values and culture of Palo Alto both explicitly and implicitly.

One aspect of the orientation programs found in the best practice research that was consistent across all organizations was the fact that they all made a very explicit effort to expose new employees to their culture. In

fact, in every organization from Google to small municipalities, the word culture is used repeatedly during their orientation. There is no attempt to be secretive about communicating culture and there shouldn't be. Employees should be fully aware that the purpose of the orientation program is primarily to expose them to the culture of the organization and to obtain their assurance that they will be pulling in the same direction.

While it is clearly important to cover such necessities as time reporting, parking procedures and benefits; it is ultimately more important to introduce the City's core values and indoctrinate the new hires into the culture of Palo Alto.

Recommendation - Use innovative techniques and processes during the orientation in order to emphasize the City's cultural focus on innovation. Talk explicitly about the culture of the organization and do not shy away from the expectation that new employees will live the values of Palo Alto. Be aware of how the structure of the orientation program is a reflection on the culture of the organization. For example: if you lead off the orientation program with an overview of the benefits package then you are sending the message that the benefits are of primary importance in the culture of Palo Alto. Alternatively, if you open with the importance of public service and a focus on the citizens of Palo Alto (who they are and the importance of providing outstanding customer service), then you are sending the message that the culture of Palo Alto is about service and community.

Best Practice Four: Welcome with Enthusiasm

We all can remember the feeling of walking into a new organization and feeling lost. The best orientation programs may not be able to completely eliminate those feelings, but they can go a long way toward making new employees feel welcomed and important. New employee orientations should be a welcoming and celebratory experience.

Research conducted by Angela Heyroth reveals that the Ritz-Carlton welcomes new employees at the beginning of their seven day orientation program with a "pep rally" style atmosphere (Heyroth, 2003). While every organization may not have the resources to provide a seven day orientation, enthusiasm doesn't cost anything. As you develop the orientation program and assign the hosts and presenters who will be taking part, remember to consider the temperament of the staff involved. A warm and welcoming atmosphere can be derailed with one disgruntled presenter who fails to hide the thought that he or she "has more important things to do."

Recommendation – Ensure that new hires are welcomed with enthusiasm. Make sure that orientation presenters understand the importance of creating a welcoming environment. Reach out to new hires before their first day with a phone call/e-mail/letter welcoming them to the organization and preparing them for what to expect their first day on the job.

One of the easiest ways to make new employees feel welcome is to make them feel productive immediately. To feel productive, employees must have access to the tools and assets they will need to do their job effectively, such as a computer and phone, access to e-mail and voicemail, office supplies and other necessities. Google employees are assigned a "Google Buddy" who acts as a technical resource for the new hire and is available throughout the first few weeks of employment for the sole purpose of ensuring access to technology.

Recommendation – Prepare a welcome basket/gift that includes necessary office supplies. Rather than spend money on a coffee mug that they may never use, design the welcome gift to include the basic tools that they will need to perform their particular job.

Best Practice Five: Design a Process, not an Event

Orientation should not be considered a one-time event; rather it should be designed as a process that encompasses the employee's first several months at the organization. Additionally, the orientation process should start prior to the first day on the job. While this report separates the recruitment and orientation processes for easier knowledge transfer, in reality the process should be considered and implemented as seamlessly as possible. The message used to attract a new hire should be the same message used to orient and retain the employee.

The best orientation programs begin the orientation process during the first interview. In fact, Keane Consulting Group includes an explicit *cultural interview* as one of the steps candidates must go through in their interview process. During the cultural interview, the interviewer is specifically focused on determining if the candidate is a strong fit for the mission, values and culture of the company. The Ritz-Carlton introduces candidates to the service-oriented culture that permeates the organization by providing candidates with a personal box of chocolates at the interview and generally treating the interviewee as a customer.

Recommendation - Spend time creating continuity between the HR staff and the hiring department to ensure that a consistent message is being sent to candidates and new hires throughout the process. Make sure the City of Palo Alto culture is explicitly discussed in the interview process as well as the orientation process.

Many of the best orientation programs include a formal follow-up system to complement the original orientation program. This system can take many forms including hiring manager checklists, mandatory follow-up classes and mentor programs. The City of Plano, TX requires new hires to complete a series of follow-up classes within six months of their start date. These classes include Intro to Local Government, Ethics, Diversity and two Core Values classes to reaffirm the City's commitment to their vision, mission and core values. Many cities and private organizations provide a formal mentor/sponsor/buddy program to help reinforce cultural infusion and ease the transition for the new employee.

The benefit of matching a new employee with a peer sponsor or buddy from the beginning of their time with the City of Palo Alto is two-fold. First the buddy will serve as a resource that will assist with the integration of the new employee into Palo Alto's culture. Second, if the buddy program is developed properly, managers and supervisors will find their work with new hires is less about low-level operational issues and more about how the employee adds value to the organization.

Attachment F is an example buddy program debriefing guideline created by Julie Wilson, Impact Consulting Partners' Organizational Development Consultant and Coach.

Recommendation – Train a group of mentors who are well equipped to shepherd new employees through the first few months of employment. Consider assigning mentors in a cross-departmental fashion to facilitate the breaking down of silos and to encourage communication and networking across department lines. Create a follow-up welcome basket, which should be given to employees after three months on the job. Include area restaurant coupons, invitations to community events, etc. in order to emphasize the importance of community. This provides another opportunity to highlight the Palo Alto culture as well as remind new employees that they are valued members of the team.

None of the cities or companies profiled here has the "perfect" orientation program. In fact, some of them fully admit that they are continual works in progress and may be lacking in some areas. Any good orientation program will naturally evolve and adapt as an organization grows and changes to meet the needs of its employees. The key to the success of Palo Alto's orientation program lies in the ability to mold these best practices into a program that reflects the values and culture of Palo Alto. Ultimately, the goal of any orientation program is to integrate new employees into the culture of the organization, improve productivity and increase retention.

Becoming an Employer of Choice

Thus in all these ways we will transmit this City not only not less...Athenian Oath

Being a great place to work is fundamental to successful employee recruitment and retention. An employee's decision to move to a new organization or stay in their existing position is rooted in the need to have trust, hope, sense of worth and feeling competent. Becoming an "employer of choice" for the most talented people requires:

1. Understanding and fulfilling the expectations of applicants
2. Using communication techniques that effectively engage different groups of employees
3. Placing extra emphasis on successfully acclimating new hires to the organization
4. Providing managers the freedom and any necessary training to allow them to supervise their people, their own way
5. Empowering employees to grow and move forward with new skills and good will

In order to ensure Palo Alto is accomplishing these five things, it is essential to create a system for measuring progress toward becoming an employer of choice. By creating dashboards of talent indicators specific to Palo Alto, the City can track year to year improvement. This can be accomplished through measuring four things that every organization must do with talent: attraction, selection, engagement and sustaining engagement. In his book, *"The 7 Hidden Reasons Employees Leave,"* Leigh Branham, provides measurements for becoming an Employer of Choice. Refer to Attachment I for Branham recommended measurements for becoming an Employer of Choice.

Becoming an employer of choice is a possibility for any organization but it can only be accomplished through a team approach. It is through a collective effort of the flywheel that this success can happen. In Leigh Brahman's book, *"The 7 Hidden Reasons Employees Leave,"* he identifies best practices include involvement of the partners listed below.

Senior Leaders: These team members must make the commitment to implementing the orientation program, gain the support of the board/council, develop and maintain the culture of trust, competence and caring, approve any funds for the program and keep supervisors accountable for engaging and retaining talent.

Managers: These team members have the largest responsibility, for they are normally the reason most employees decide to stay or go. Managers must be given the tools and training they need to become the best in their role and rewarded in meaningful ways for retaining talent. They must take on more responsibility for their role in engaging and disengaging employees. It is essential managers understand that pay is always the reason employees decide to stay or leave, and accept that their way of managing may be the number one reason.

Human Resource Leaders: These team members are responsible for assisting managers with implementing best practices and tracking the right measurements of success, creating appropriate support systems for managing talent, assist with the development of an employee brand and provide information to managers that help them understand true reasons why employees stay or leave and the manager's role in this decision.

Employees: No manager has as much power to engage their employee as the employee does to engage themselves. The responsibility of engagement is not just the manager's; the employee is just as accountable. In order to maintain the balance between engagement and entitlement, it must be clearly defined that this is a shared partnership between Palo Alto leaders and employees.

Wrapping it Up

...but greater and more beautiful than it was transmitted to us...the Athenian Oath

The secret is not only how to *find* good people, but how to *keep* them. As we are discovering, people are choosing to work for more than just money and job titles. They desire an innovative and engaged work environment, where they are respected, valued and part of a team. Today now more than ever the surrounding community plays a key role in attracting and retaining employees more than ever.

Recruiting, hiring, onboarding, performance management, and motivation/retention are not independent activities. Each step needs to integrate with the other, in order to maximize the end result: hiring highly motivated top people who become highly motivated long-term performers within the organization. This doesn't happen by accident.

Developing ways to engage both *new* and *existing* employees will be critical to the long term success of the organization. The success of any organization cannot rely primarily on its new employees. In order to cultivate a new organizational culture or simply continue cultivating the existing one, the entire employee base must be involved.

The City Manager has the opportunity through employee orientation to share his vision for the organization with new employees; this is the perfect time to really convey a sense of the organizational culture. The Athenian Oath appears to be at the core of the City's values, and is a large part of what he chooses to share with new employees – the importance of service to community. However, the entire organization, from the Executive Leadership Team, to mid-level managers, to administrative staff as well as first day employees should have the opportunity hear this message. What it means to be a public servant and to leave a legacy in the community. Only by working together will they be able to leave Palo Alto better than they found it, which is the true essence of public service.- "...transmit this City, not only not less, but greater and more beautiful than it was transmitted to us."

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Attachments

- A. Project Culture Shock Team Biographies
- B. Palo Alto Site Visit #1: Culture Assessment Questions
- C. IDEO Brainstorming Exercise
- D. 2010 Census Data
- E. Sample Websites
- F. Sample Recruitment Ads
- G. Sample Orientation Checklist
- H. The Buddy Program – A Briefing Document
- I. Leigh Branham's Measurements for becoming an Employer of Choice