

# Structure helps new employees adjust, study finds

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With people often changing jobs and careers, organizations need to know how to help integrate and engage newcomers in order to retain them. A new University of Guelph study shows that new employees adjust better to their workplace with structured processes, such as orientation training and mentorship programs.

"Simply throwing newcomers into a job and letting them fend for themselves results in their being socialized by default rather than design," said Jamie Gruman, an [organizational behaviour](#) professor in the Department of Business and the School of Hospitality and Tourism Management.

Gruman's study, conducted with Alan Saks of the University of Toronto, is the first to examine links between "on-boarding" tactics and newcomer engagement. It was published last week in the *Journal of Managerial Psychology*.

Personal engagement at work, described as bringing one's full self to the job (spending time thinking about the job, becoming engrossed in one's work), is considered key to a new employee's commitment and performance. That in turn affects a company's productivity and competitiveness, Gruman said.

The study, which involved 140 co-op [university students](#) on a work term, found that more structured on-boarding tactics made employees happier and more confident, and strengthened their belief that they fit both the

job and organization. In turn, those highly desirable outcomes made employees feel engaged.

Organizations should use structured on-boarding to help build relationships, said Gruman. But he said formal processes should be only a starting point, as they lead only indirectly to [employee engagement](#). To be fully engaged, people must feel "safe" – supported by their superiors and colleagues – and feel that their work is meaningful.

He also suggests companies give [employees](#) opportunities to develop personal strengths such as self-confidence as well as the material resources they need to do their job well.

Gruman plans to study the effectiveness of specific on-boarding practices in supporting personal engagement and newcomer adjustment. "Companies benefit from boosting their employees' well-being. Helping new hires adjust at the start empowers them to achieve their potential later on," he said.

Provided by University of Guelph

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