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**Making Smooth Transition to the Workplace**

**A Person Centered Approach**

**By**

**Jackie Pederson**

**Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Arts  
in Leadership  
Augsburg College  
2014**

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Thesis  
Pederson  
2014

**MASTER OF ARTS IN LEADERSHIP**

**AUGSBURG COLLEGE**

**MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA**

**CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL**

This is to certify that the Master's Leadership Application Project of:

Making Smooth Transition to the Workplace  
A Person Centered Approach

Jacalyn Pederson

Has been approved by the Review Committee for the Leadership Application Project requirement for the Master of Arts in Leadership degree

Date Non-thesis Completed: August 2014

Committee: *Jenna L. Norman*  
Adviser

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## **Abstract**

### **Making Smooth Transition to the Workplace**

#### **A Person Centered Approach**

**Jacalyn Pederson**

**August 2014**

*The aim of this project is to create recommendations for a better orientation to a new job or a new role within the same organization. Fifteen new employees within an organization were interviewed regarding what was helpful to them and what they experienced that was difficult. Literature was reviewed that pertained to what was helpful and what was difficult for new employees. The servant leadership model was examined as the model that might be useful to use to improve job orientation. It was chosen because of the relational, humanistic, person centered qualities it contains. A plan for orientation is, for organizations to be intentional about orientation, have a mentor-like person assigned for the task, an all in one place folder, clear job descriptions and expectations, a clear vision of the specific unit and organization and a method of checking in.*

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## **Introduction**

An action research project is one that the employee does in his/her own organization. It begins by focusing on an identifiable problem and culminates in a possible solution. Being an insider exposes the researcher to some problems and dynamics that could not be seen from the outside. "Action research is a collaborative, democratic partnership. This is different than traditional research where there are subjects or objects of study. In action research, the subjects engage in the process but also in the solution. The desired outcome is practical knowledge." (Coghlan & Brannick, 2014, p. 6) Most organizations need theory and ideas to meet the reality of real life and practical application. I have taken the real life problem of orientation to a new job and tried to supply some practical ideas and a plan that would be helpful to both the new employee and the organization.

This action research project will address the problem of difficult transitions into a new position of a large non-profit organization. For this project I will gather information about first hand experiences of people who have begun their employment with the agency within the last year and then, with that information and my research, make some recommendations to the agency about ways to help new employees transition to their new positions. Most of the people interviewed are a part of my immediate unit in the agency. Several of the interviewees were in different units. This provided me with a better picture of the whole organization. I found commonalities in all the interviews.

I see orientation as a problem in the agency because of my own experience. At the present time, I have been in this new job for six months. Now I am feeling clearer

about my role and more confident about the job I am doing, but for the first several months I found the transition to this new job rather difficult. During this time, I found myself wondering about my own skills and abilities, not feeling as productive as I wanted to be and wondering if I had made the right decision to make a change. As I spoke with other new employees, I found that others had similar experiences, and I began to think about some things that might make induction into this workplace a little less stressful. Most of the people I have talked to, who have been with the agency for a longer time, say “give it a year.” This seems like a long time, to me, to feel overwhelmed and not as productive as I want to be. I started thinking of some things that might have been more helpful to me. Previous to starting this project, I started putting a folder together for the next person hired in a position like mine. I believe a smoother transition into a new position would be valuable for the agency and the individual. Terry (2001) states that hiring and retaining new people is an expensive and important proposition and he promotes designing systems of orientation that lead to productive work for consistent delivery of services. He sees this as a leadership challenge.

I believe that by awareness of the experiences of new employees and by adopting some humanistic, person-centered leadership ideas and practices, an easier, more efficient and productive entrance into the workplace will lead to more job satisfaction for the employee and more productivity for the agency.

Designing a good orientation for new employees is also about leadership. “Leadership opportunities are everywhere.” (Kouzes & Posner, 2007, p. 8) Kouzes & Posner (2007) say that good leadership can happen in any size organization, whether it is public, private or social. In every venue, there seems to be a need for good leadership.

As organizations grow and change, the opportunities for improvement are endless and sometimes the best opportunities come in overlooked places. Bringing new people into an organization is extremely important and is often overlooked as a way to be more productive and save money. Without the “fresh air” of new perspectives, ideas and new insights, an organization is less able to adapt and fill the needs of a changing society. How people are brought into an organization becomes extremely important for a variety of reasons and the process of helping someone acclimate to the culture of the organization, as well as helping them learn the mechanics of their job and workplace is an important process in the goals and vision of the business or organization.

Good leadership is essential. Effective leaders can promote group cohesiveness, efficacy, efficiency and team productiveness. These things will also help organizations adapt to change. Leaders can act as guides and motivators through the change process, which will lead to more job satisfaction for all employees. Leadership has a big impact on attitudes and behaviors throughout the workplace. (Ruggieri, 2013) Leaders can also “foster personal commitment to collective goals by providing a vivid vision which the followers aspire to achieve.” (Du & Choi, 2013, p. 1573) Du & Choi (2013) say that if leaders do not respect the opinion of followers and limit information, it gives followers feelings of powerlessness, doubt, and an impaired sense of feeling worthy.

The purpose of this project is to explore the problem of new employee orientation and to think critically, through the lens of the servant leadership model, about some ways to be helpful to new employees. Most organizations are just trying to survive in changing times and the occasions are rare to sit back and reflect on practices or the lack thereof.

Most of us are doing the best we can with what we know, but as James Burke, a science historian says; “when what we know changes, we change.” (Burke, 1995)

## **Methodology**

My methods for this action research project are rather simple. I first defined the problem from my own experience and anecdotal information from other new employees. I explored a number of sources about leadership in general, new employee orientation, styles of leadership and information I had acquired through my career, experience and academic work. Consent was obtained from a supervisor in my unit and another person higher up in administration for this project. I got a list of new employees from a monthly newsletter produced by the unit in which I work and sent out an e-mail explaining my project and enlisting their help. I then interviewed fifteen employees who had been with the agency one year or less. I compiled the anecdotal information and put together my research information to come up with some recommendations for a more effective orientation to help make a smoother transition into the workplace.

I believe that my short time in the agency can work for and against me. Coghlan & Brannick (2014) stress some of the difficulties of studying something within your own organization. They say that we can distort reality when we make over-generalizations, jump to conclusions, have all or nothing thinking or in other ways misperceive what is happening. Because of my newness to the agency, there were many things I did not understand completely. Coghlan & Brannick (2014) warn, “If you are careless about your understanding, then your judgments are untrustworthy.” (p. 26) Hence, there is a possibility that my insight and judgment of the situation could be flawed. Another



possibility is, because my choice of topics was based on my own experience, it might be difficult to get enough distance from the problem, and impose some of my own feelings upon the interviewees, or that my interpretations of their experience would color my reporting of the interviews. I tried to have an awareness of this possibility. Another problem might be that without a number of years at an agency, I might be viewed with less credibility and be seen as a complainer.

A positive point is, because my own experience was so recent, I could see clearly some of the problems I encountered and felt a desire to want to change it. Being new to the agency and to the job, I was able to bring fresh eyes. When you have been at a job a number of years it is easy to forget what you had to learn, because so many things become habits.

I tried to use Coghlan & Brannick's (2014) general empirical method which requires,

- "Attention to observable data;
- Envisaging possible explanations of that data;
- Preferring as probable or certain the explanations which provide the best account for the data; and
- Deliberating between alternative actions and taking action." (Coghlan & Brannick, 2014, p. 28)

My goal was to not make assumptions or be in any way presumptuous as a new person with the agency. My hope is that this action research project would be helpful to the agency and to new employees. I realize the difficulties of a large, ever changing agency.

The following pages contain my research, findings and recommendations for orientation to help employees make a smooth transition to a new job.

## **Literature review**

In this literature review I will cover these topics: The importance of good orientation; issues that have been found problematic for employees in their orientation to a new job or new role within the organization; and strategies that are found to be helpful to new employees to make the transition go more smoothly. I will use the servant leadership model to look at ways and philosophies that might be useful to help an employee acclimate to a new job and new role within an organization.

### *Importance of a Good Orientation*

How orientation is done with new employees is important. Dunn and Jasinski (2009) express the importance of retaining and developing new employees. They state that as many as between 50 and 60 percent of people leave their jobs within the first 7 months of hiring. There is a high cost in hiring new employees and that makes new hire orientation very important. High turnover is expensive for organizations and it can be difficult to find qualified professionals. A good orientation program will have employees feeling comfortable, taking responsibility and being productive fairly quickly. This involves three concepts. “The first concept focuses on the individual being valued within the system. A second concept focuses on the department or work group and their new hire orientation program’s role to increase the overall success of a new hire’s transition to the work team. The third concept of a good orientation program involves the integration

of the organization as a whole by lining up the goals of the workgroup and the individual to the mission of the organization.” (Dunn & Jasinski, 2009, p. 122)

Lorraine (2013) stresses the importance of realizing the cost of employee turnover and new employee orientation. She says that this cuts deeply into profits. Orientation has, in the past, been looked at with indifference, but a failed orientation takes more time and effort and is negative for the employee as well as the employer. The responsibility is on the institution to assist a new employee in adapting to the new situation and feeling comfortable as soon as possible. For an orientation not to progress in a productive manner is both a waste of time and money. (Lorraine, 2013, p. 18)

Employees are seen as stakeholders in the mission and vision of the organization. Dunn & Jasinski (2009) state that the quality and success of the orientation to the job itself depends highly on the individual supervisor and department, and those results are different between new hires getting training and support from members of their work group and or being left to sink or swim.

Good orientation can make a big difference according to a number of studies. Vargus (2013) refers to orientation as “onboarding,” and says that most agencies look at onboarding as a way to acclimatize an employee to the organization’s culture, and provide employees with the basic tools they will need for their job. He says onboarding fails when it is viewed as an event rather than a process, and that good onboarding should get employees to embrace their role and the importance of their individual contribution.

Salopek (2012) talks about the importance of a good orientation and says that for Global Learning and Leadership Development Company, the most innovative learning initiative has been the revamping of the corporate onboarding program. He feels this

investment in human capital helps employees reach full productivity and helps build long term employment experience. Previous to this initiative in the company studied, new employees were unfamiliar with key information to do their jobs effectively and it took longer for employees to be fully productive. “The program has three distinct parts: a two day immersion class; a 90-day structured, on the job training program; and manager and peer coaching.” (Salopek, 2012, p. 40) One of the topics of the two day workshop on employee orientation is an overview of company strategy. The program contains live training, on-line support, manager and peer coaching and avenues for personal development. They have seen “phenomenal outcomes” (Salopek, 2012, p. 40) Much of the research emphasized the importance of paying attention to the orientation process. “An effectively designed orientation or pre-service training experience for new professionals may be one way to address anxiety as well as improve long-term job performance, foster confidence, build organizational commitment and reduce attrition.” (Dean, Thompson, Saunders, & Cooper, 2011, p. 139)

Changes in staff are inevitable and one of the best things about hiring new people is the talent and ideas they bring with them. It is important for new employees to be able to put their talents and abilities to work fairly quickly. George (2003) stresses diversity in the workplace. He says that diversity is not about any certain quota but is about building a breadth of thought and opinion in the workplace in order to make better decisions. New employees want to express their ideas and what they have brought to the workplace. “Varied life experiences make organizations more effective in decision making and more appreciative of its own diverse client or customer base.” (George, 2003, p. 98) Margaret Wheatley (1996) talks about a healthy system being free to bring in

others and with new people the whole organization can contemplate the new information they bring. She explains that when organizations allow new and different members to be open and connected, it improves the system.

### *Problems and Suggestions*

The literature reviewed revealed some things that were problematic for new employees and some suggestions for improvements. Dunn and Jasinski (2009) say one of the problems discovered was that lots of information at once was overwhelming for new hires. Surprisingly, something as simple as the transportation system was confusing. New employees believed they needed more job specific training, professional development, an understanding of the resources available, and a way to understand how their department and job fit into the whole picture at their place of employment. They discovered that too much information at one time was not helpful, and some had misconceptions about their jobs. Neither supervisors nor new hires in the study understood processes involved in computer registration and they were frustrated.

Because large organizations have so much information and new employees have so much to learn, there is bound to be information overload. Youg-Ming, Chien-Hung & Yueh-Min (2012) say that information overload can be a big problem and contributes to fatigue. Almost all workplaces have a plethora of information to learn, some of it is on paper, much of it digital and some visual and sensory. Shepherd (2012) talks about situational and ambient information overload. Situational overload is searching and trying to hunt down a piece of information within an overabundance of information and ambient information overload is struggling to keep up with a large amount of information

coming at you from all different directions. Both of these can be overwhelming and produce stress hormones. With information overload, people can start to disengage from learning and this can have a detrimental effect on their work. "Information overload can be eased by trainers by providing synopses and review, tagging content with useful labels, and building lists." (Shepherd, 2012, p. 70) Over time employees build a mental schema to make sense of their work world, but new employees do not have the benefit of such a mental schema and they do not know what they need to know, so with a stream of new information they suffer cognitive overload causing fatigue and confusion. Shepherd suggests that it requires time and effort to build the network of reliable sources of expertise, sort and categorize the stream of new information. (Shepherd, 2012, p. 71)

Loraine (2013) says the normal learning model indicates that the student learns one tenth of what he is taught. Hence we should expect to repeat what you have taught ten times. Being in a new environment is an automatic stressor and a new employee has a great deal to learn, so don't expect them to remember everything you have talked about. Expecting that is setting them up for failure or, at the very least, feelings of being overwhelmed. Remember a person usually does not learn a new procedure until they do it personally. (Loraine, 2013, pp. 19-20)

Dunn & Jasinski (2009) say a longer period of orientation and training is seen as valuable by some of the supervisors, as is an assigned mentor. There is a definite need for more ways for new hires to understand a complicated system and a time of six months to one year was suggested as a time frame for the new employee to be completely integrated into their new position. They see the development of specific goals and services in the new hire orientation process as essential. They believe there should be a

shift to a holistic, long-term approach, with an emphasis on sustainability, and that the process is consistent throughout while being responsive to the particular environment of the organization. (Dunn & Jasinski, 2009, p. 124)

Vargus (2013) is talking about generation Y employees, but what he says can apply to all employees, as he gives the advice for supervisors to ponder and try to explain the questions: “What does it mean to work as part of a multigenerational team? What do team members expect from you and what should you expect from them? How should you communicate with leaders, co-workers, other agencies, and the public at large? What do finished assignments look like in this agency?” He says, “When it comes to onboarding, silence is not golden and tactical information alone won’t complete the onboarding experience. Generation Y employees need high levels of engagement from day one, and that engagement should include, in part, time to review, discuss, and validate workplace expectations.” (Vargus, 2013, p. 60) Vargus (2013) says Generation Y employees need time to digest, understand, and apply the knowledge they have learned, and cramming a lot of information into a few days or a few weeks is not practical. He says agencies should strive for one universal goal, and that is to have a program that prepares staff to meet mission requirements by establishing an encouraging environment.

Vargus says that on-boarding is not a short time event. He makes note that every workplace is different and mentions these things as important:

1. “High levels of engagement.
2. Knowledge of expectations.
3. Time to digest information.

4. Knowledge of the universal goal of the organization.
5. Establishing roles and responsibilities.
6. Regular check-ins.
7. Relationship.” (Vargus, 2013, p. 59)

There are times when we take support and encouragement for granted. The research suggests that even for professional adults these things are very important. Katharine Giacalone says that in many exit interviews she conducts, employees report, “I didn’t feel supported even on my first day.” (Giacalone, 2009, p. 38) Giacalone (2009) feels that short circuiting the orientation process causes employees to not gel with their job duties or their organization. She also covers the mechanics of orientation and says one of the ways to orient a new employee is to establish the roles and responsibilities of each department. A comprehensive overview gives the employee an idea of what is expected of them. Giacalone (2009) says the topics that should be covered are; the history and culture of the organization, how things get done, reviewing policies and procedures, reviewing job expectations and job related duties. The reality of a newly hired employee is that by the time they get into their position a supervisor or manager has been short the position for a fairly long time and it is tempting to shorten the orientation process. Giacalone has these six strategies to help new employees stay:

1. “Schedule an employee’s first day when the boss is in the office.
2. Have their workstations ready for them when they arrive.
3. Give new employees the lay-out-of-the-land.
4. Review and set job expectations and let them know what is accepted and what is not.



5. Train new employees within the first few weeks.
6. Check in frequently during the first weeks, months, and beyond.” (Giacalone, 2009, p. 39)

Although we sometimes feel adults should not need a whole lot of encouragement we cannot discount the value of positive feedback. Loraine (2013) states that positive feedback shortens orientation, helps new people feel more comfortable and accelerates learning. Insecurity lengthens the orientation and new employees need reassurance. Kouzes & Posner (2007) say it is the leader’s job to show appreciation for what people can contribute and that feedback is what keeps people engaged.

Bardwell (2014) says new hires have many questions. Some of the questions are: What is expected of me from day one? How important is the probationary period and what is being assessed? How am I going to bond with my team? He says there are many written and unwritten rules in a workplace and not knowing what the rules are can cause anxiety and frustration for new workers. “Taking on a new position is going to be fraught with anxiety because of the need to adapt to change.” (Bardwell, 2014, p. 44) Different things are important in every workplace. One organization may value exact promptness and another one may honor a flexible schedule. Bardwell (2014) says that managers prefer employees ask questions, and that effective communication is important, as well as setting clear goals and expectations for the employees. New employees sometimes do not know enough to know what questions to ask and the feelings of ambiguity can be difficult. “Wheatley says that there are few things that make us more frantic than ambiguity. Even when we think we can tolerate it, we more often shield ourselves from it. Most of us have a difficult time with a lack of clarity or with questions

that may not have clear answers.” (Wheatley, 2006, p. 22) Bardwell (2014) talks about the multigenerational workplace, with sometimes four generations contributing to the same mission. It is important to find common ground for working effectively. Getting to know and trust the other members on your team is extremely important. Developing and maintaining relationships with people in other departments is also an important part of orientation. These things can help make things less ambiguous and quiet some of the anxiety that a new worker might experience.

In one study, data were collected about new professional’s perceptions of the effectiveness of their orientation experience in meeting their needs. They discovered that “important topics were: Broad policies and procedures, working relationships and work task/job specific training.” (Dean, Thompson, Saunders, & Cooper, 2011, p. 145)

Discussion of work culture, knowledge of roles and expectations and job specific training were some of the issues found to be lacking. Some participants of this study said they received too much information at one time and there was not enough coherence to the information they were receiving. The study revealed that there was more dissatisfaction than satisfaction with the orientation program they had received. There were some things that were found to be helpful. Supervisory and colleagues relationships seemed to ease the process of transitioning to a new position, as well as a good understanding of roles and responsibilities. Some unhelpful things were a lack of connection to formal expectations and performance evaluations, unguided learning and lack of structure. Dean, Thompson, Saunders & Cooper (2011) say that the results of their study reflect a desire by new professionals for effective orientation. They rank understanding the

context in which people work and the organizations expectations of them as being highly important.

Mentoring was brought up numerous times in the research. Welch (2013) found that a relationship with a mentor can increase job satisfaction and that mentoring relationships do not have to be friendships to have a significant effect on job satisfaction. In the conclusion of the paper, Welsh stated that mentoring programs were found to have a positive effect in the public sector and were helpful to the mentee in navigating the political culture of an organization. Bill George (2003) looks upon the mentoring he had in his career as very important. He suggests the relationship is valuable both for the mentor and mentee and that both parties can learn a lot from each other. Older employees can be refreshed about what new employees struggle with and both can learn from each other. "Findings clearly point to the role of a mentoring system as a mechanism that links personnel learning to career outcome." (Gong, Chen, & Yang, 2014, p. 498) Gong, Chen & Yang (2014) say that through mentoring, the relationship between personal learning and career outcome can be intensified, and it also increases job satisfaction. This alone will help retention of good employees and will be cost effective for any organization. Emelio (2011) says that mentoring has proven time and time again to be an effective workforce development tool; the goal in business today is to focus on helping people gain new insights and abilities. This has changed from the past when the goal of mentoring was on grooming the next generation of leaders.

In choosing a mentor Loraine (2013) suggests making sure the mentor has thorough job knowledge, is patient and is a good teacher. The mentor should be someone who can continue to do their work, but yet have a continuing dialogue with the new

person explaining what is being done. A dark side of mentorship is that sometimes established employees have an investment in seeing the new employee fail and withholding information is a good way to do this. Loraine has three suggestions for mentors. The suggestions are:

1. Demonstrate procedures.
2. Have the new employee try it and show you have confidence in them.
3. Be available to answer questions.

Along with the three steps is getting and giving feedback. (Loraine, 2013, p. 20)

Giving feedback is an important part of communication. How and what we communicate comes up time and time again as an important part of leadership. Foster (2000) says, communication can be a barrier to effective leadership. Communicating is an art and Foster explains that it is important to listen first and then react. There is also a balance between too many words and not enough words. Too many words can cloud good communication. There is great value in appropriate levels of silence. (Foster, 2000, p. 59) Foster explains many aspects of leadership as an art and suggests thinking about the balance between involvement and withdrawal, while considering the needs and wants of each individual. (Foster, 2000, p. 61)

Getting to know the work culture in an organization includes many things and is important. Wheatley (2006) says that the strength of an organization is maintained if we are clear about the purpose and direction of the organization. Foster talks about the culture of the organization as being a force in the role of socializing new members of an organization and that it is a mistake to not appreciate the power of culture. Work culture is a pattern of shared assumptions that contribute to “group think” and sometimes stifles

ideas of newcomers to an organization. Culture also involves a shared sense of manners that a new employee needs to learn. Learning the manners is an important part of “fitting it.” (Foster, 2000, p. 79)

Foster (2000) talks about the importance of learning the day to day rituals of an organization, and along with that, the stories of the organization. The stories can explain why things are done a certain way. The transmission of this type of information is important for the new person and it can help to stabilize the group when new employees come in. A question to be asked is; is the organization formal or informal or both, and if both, what rules and rituals can be flexible and what aren't? Are people expected to be independent and how much independence is too much, are important issues to cover.

(Foster, 2000, pp. 92-93) Foster makes a good point by saying that organizational culture is fluid and dynamic but some organizations strive for stability. (Foster, 2000, p. 101)

With the influence of new employees it would be difficult for an organization to be stable and change is inevitable. Margaret Wheatley says that, “we are constantly creating the world – evoking it from much potential – as we participate in all its many interactions.

This world is a process, the process of connecting, where things come into temporary existence because of relationship to each other. When new employees enter a system, it changes the system just by their presence and what they bring to the table. “Individual behaviors co-evolve as individuals interact with system dynamics.” (Wheatley M. , 2006, p. 69)

Training and support have considerable importance. Conger & Kanungo (1988) believe that empowerment is the process of increasing individuals' sense of competence by identification of conditions through which they feel they do not have power. George

(2003) says, “The front-line employees have the greatest day to day influence and that it is a leader’s job to supply them with the training, education and support they need.”

(p.55) Walters (1987) says, “Genuine leadership is of only one type: supportive. He states that leadership involves people and never loses sight of the fact that people are more important than things or projects. (p. 11)

In the research, the importance of relationships came up. George (2003) says the many leaders believe their job is to create strategy, organization structure and organizational processes and just delegate work to be done, and stay aloof from the people doing the work. He says that today employees require a personal relationship with their leadership before they give themselves fully to their jobs. Employees also like having access to their supervisors. These relationships are different according to the personality and style of the leadership. Access does not mean softness and comfort all the time, but connection that is authentic, shows interest in the person and is clear about what is acceptable and what is not. George (2003) says that people thrive on connectedness and “even when sharing bad news or offering critical feedback, there can be a sense of connection that builds trust and commitment.” (p. 40) Kouzes & Posner (2007) stress social support and say that it enhances productivity, psychological well-being and even physical health. This has implications for all of the workplace.

Terry (2001) emphasizes the importance of hiring and retraining competent people and he advocates emotional intelligence which he defines through relationship. He believes that people skills connect and build relationships, and those relationships are the hallmark of good leadership. Knowing someone can help insure that employees skills are being used in the best way possible. Terry (2001) stresses giving people enough

information and asks managers to think about the comfort that comes from job definition, personnel manuals, organizational charts and knowing job responsibilities and how your job connects with those around you. He feels that knowing roles and rules reduces anxiety in employees and also by employees knowing these things, managers can ensure smoother transitions. Terry (2001) reminds managers to listen to the voices of new employees when they say, “When I come to work, I want to experience a feeling of welcome and a sense of shared values. I get nervous when I see people being treated like things or functions. I feel good about where I work when I have a deep sense of who I am on my team and what we are about.” (p. 135)

Planning ahead for new employees is important and gives the new employee an idea of the kind of organization the workplace expects. “It’s not uncommon in the work world for the new employee to show up for work and be greeted by, ‘Oh, yeah, I forgot you were coming today. Here’s a policy book, go read it.’ No one is impressed by someone else’s hectic schedule and this shouts rudeness and disorganization.” (Loraine, 2013, p. 18)

It seems to be important to be cognizant of what employees need and to be intentional about orientation. Steer (2013) has good advice as he lays out these ideas for intentional onboarding:

- “Prepare, Prepare, Prepare for the new employee.
- Be clear about what is going to happen. Answer the how, what, when and why questions.
- Most employees want to start working. Think about how to get people feeling productive.

- People want to fit in and get to know their colleagues. Figure out the best avenue for that.
- Don't end the orientation in two days. No one can successfully absorb all that knowledge in a couple days without feeling overwhelmed.

Remember it is a process.

- Get people connected.
- Consider people's learning styles.
- Continue to assess whether your orientation program is working.” (Steer, 2013, p. 29)

One of the reasons orientation may be overlooked is because it is what Thich Nhat Hahn calls a nonbusiness element and we don't always consider nonbusiness elements to be essential. He says we have to remember that everything depends on everything else to exist and that our clients, customers, community and employees are all linked together. He takes a more humanistic, person centered view when he says, “When you behave responsibly toward your employees, it benefits the company. (Hahn, 2007, p. 139)

### *Servant Leadership Style*

I choose to apply servant leadership style to the problem of new employee orientation because of servant leadership's humanistic appeal, focus on development and practical nature. Margaret Wheatley said, “When we are together, more becomes possible, we are not the best resource to move into the future, we are the only resource.” (Wheatley, 2014) Walters (1987) says that leadership is service. Servant Leadership is a philosophy and set of practices that enriches the lives of individuals, builds better



organizations and ultimately creates a more just and caring world, it focuses on the growth and well-being of the people and communities and helps people develop and perform as highly as possible. Kent Keith, the CEO of Greenleaf Center for Servant Leadership (Asia), said that “Servant Leadership is ethical, practical and meaningful.” (Keith, 2014)

Waterman (2011) says that some of the advantages of servant leadership are that it values people and treats them as ends rather than means, it enables others to develop and flourish, seeks to improve care through encouragement and facilitation rather than through power and authority and improves performance by developing and nurturing followers. (Waterman, 2011, p. 25) Waterman (2011) says staff needs direction, and servant leaders can aim to support performance and enable people to give their best while providing a vision that can bring staff together for common purpose.

As I considered leadership styles that might fit the needs of making the transition to new positions at this organization, the qualities of servant leadership seemed to be a good fit. Mehrau & Bahala (2013) say servant leadership is based on valuing human beings and focuses on satisfying needs. They say that the relationship between empowerment and organizational productivity are mutual and that empowerment has organizational and individual advantages. Their study explored the relationship between servant leadership and employee empowerment and they found that empowerment lead to more effectiveness, competence, autonomy and meaningfulness for employees. Servant leadership supports individual rights of employees and values their personality and this will lead to more empowerment in employees. (Mehrau & Bahala, 2013, p. 97) They discovered that the components of meaningfulness, effectiveness, autonomy and

competence were significant in employees feeling empowered and that servant leadership skills enhanced these feelings. (Mehrau & Bahala, 2013)

This action research project is focused on needs of new employees but the needs of the organization can be met also. It is a win/win situation. Trompenaars & Voerman (2009) say that the ultimate goal of private, public, government or non-profit organizations is meeting the needs of mankind; growth comes from meeting the needs of others. They state that it does not matter whether the people are clients, employees, patients or consumers, if needs are met there will be growth. With servant leadership, leaders are motivated by finding out what people need and making sure they get it. It is a matter of paying attention to the needs of employees and understanding that work is about more than just earning money. Employees look for meaning and advancement in their work and can find this if they are given the chance to use their talents. (Trompenaars & Voerman, 2009, p. 81)

Hill (2008) says that a healthy organization is one in which characteristics of servant leadership are displayed through the organizational culture and are valued and practiced by the leadership and the workforce. It puts the needs of others first and can expect a more dynamic relationship between the leadership and the followers. The Hill study compared servant leadership with autocratic leadership style. The study found that employees were willing to commit to an agency if they felt the supervisors were supportive of them and if they perceived that the supervisors were caring, respectful, compassionate, attentive and passionate about their own work. (Hill, 2008, p. 81) The recommendations coming out of the study were, to use a servant leadership model and

build relationships, create a shared vision, and to get to know, believe in and value employees. (Hill, 2008, p. 90)

Jones- Burbridge (2012) describes a good leader as a leader with a good sense of direction and she says that the power of the servant model of leadership lies in the ability of its ideas to inspire others. A major strength is the contribution to organizational and employee development. She says that this model of leadership places great importance on teamwork and relationship building. Just as important is taking the time and effort to help employees understand their strengths and weaknesses, beliefs and values and identify their potential. (Jones-Burbridge, 2012, p. 45)

Joseph & Winston (2005) found that servant leadership attributes had positive practical implications for employee performance. They discovered that the trust built through servant leadership skills made a difference in job satisfaction, organizational commitment, turnover intentions and belief in information provided to employees. The kind of relationship developed by servant leadership relationships caused employees to have more trust which enhanced productivity. (Joseph & Winston, 2005, p. 11)

There was a word of caution in the literature. In explaining the value of servant leadership Foster brings up an important point about the danger of a servant type leadership as seeming to be paternalistic and that a pitfall for supervisors, is to be elitist. (Foster, 2000, p. 68) Keeping that word of caution in mind, we need to remember to be balanced and critical thinkers and Waters (1987) says it best when he says, leadership is intuition guided by common sense and that a good leader is concerned with what will work.

In summary of the literature, orientation or on-boarding is sometimes looked upon with indifference and is often times neglected. Many times positions have been open for quite some time, other employees may have taken on a higher work load and the temptation is there to cheat or shorten the orientation process. Often new employees are left alone to sink or swim. There is a high cost in hiring new employees and turnover is expensive. Investment in good orientation is one of the best investments an organization can make. It is an investment in human capital and new employees bring new ideas, fresh insights and a healthier system. Orienting new employees should be looked upon as a process and not an event. Longer periods of orientation and training were found to be helpful.

Employees need basic information to do their jobs. They need clear guidelines about roles and job expectations. And they may need to be shown and told the details of the job more than one or two times. There is usually a mass of information to assimilate new employees to their jobs and many times this will result in information overload which contributes to fatigue, stress and disengagement from learning. New employees also need some time to digest what they are learning and apply the knowledge they have learned. It can be kind of a paradox because they need high levels of engagement from day one but they also need some time to digest and assimilate the information and then apply the knowledge they learned. Good orientation requires time and effort and patience.

Clarity of roles, expectations, rules (spoken and unspoken), understanding of work culture, support, encouragement and clear communication were shown to be necessary. Some type of mentorship program has been beneficial for the orientation

process. Support, encouragement, and someone to ask about small and large details are important concepts in a successful on-boarding. Relationship building is important for new employees both with co-workers and supervisors and managers. Human connection stands out as a vital part of on-boarding.

Receiving feedback seems to be important for new employees. There is a need to know if what you are doing is right. This can be a neglected area because supervisors can assume that no feedback is necessary when things seem to be going smoothly. Checking in with people is important.

Efficacy is important. If employees can be productive and feel productive it is mutually beneficial. If more attention is paid to the front end of hiring talent and abilities can be put to work more quickly and what they bring enhances the organization. The research stresses good training to help people be effective as quickly as possible. Work is enhanced when supervisors and managers exhibit confidence in workers.

Servant leadership is above all else relational, and values people first. Servant leadership stresses a good sense of direction and can create a shared vision. It allows people to put their talents to use and can give a sense of autonomy, effectiveness and meaningfulness in the workplace. It can provide the encouragement, connection and also the facilitation that new employees need and can help provide the kind of commitment that creates a sustainable workforce.

I found that my review of the literature was reflected in the findings in my interviews.

## Interview Findings

I was able to take a wealth of information from the personal interviews that I completed. I found all the people I interviewed quite willing, and most were very eager to talk about their experiences. I interviewed fifteen people. The interview questions are in Appendix 4. I broke the information I received into four segments:

1. Problems that were perceived.
2. Descriptions of the work culture.
3. What was helpful?
4. What do new employees need from the leadership?

### *Problems that were perceived*

One of the problems that surfaced in the interviews many times was the difficulty of learning a new job in such a large agency. Most interviewees understood that some of the difficulty is simply, “the nature of the beast” in a large organization. The building we work in is large and it was difficult for some to learn the physical layout of the building and at the time of the interview still did not know where everything was located. Just that lack of building orientation was a hardship in itself. The parking lot system was not explained thoroughly to two people, they caught on quickly but they commented, it would have helped to have had more information.

Acronyms can be a frustration at any new job; they were an issue with at least half of the interviewees. It was stated that everyone uses them and to new people it is almost like learning a new language. There were comments about not wanting to ask more than a couple times, “what does that mean?” Most people are willing to ask once or twice but

feel rather foolish asking again and would rather stay silent and eventually figure them out.

Knowing the rules and rituals was brought out in the literature as an important part of entry into any organization. It was also a theme in the interviews. Five people said one of the difficulties was; “they did not know what the rules are.” People who have been here a long time do, but that information is not always revealed until you do something wrong.” Similar to that, another person said they were talked to, “like they should know,” but how could they when they weren’t informed of certain processes. It was mentioned in over half of the interviews that there was not enough clear direction, and seven people said they received no direction at all. One person said they were presented with different information from different supervisors or shown what to do by one person and another person said, “We don’t do it that way anymore.” That seemed to cause confusion. Two people said they did not get enough information specific to their job and were left to fend for themselves and find their own information, and they felt it was very time consuming and time wasting. One of the quotes was, “you don’t know what you don’t know and therefore don’t even know the questions to ask.” As a new hire, many times we come from a system we knew well and we feel very vulnerable trying to learn a new system and depending on those around us to inform us.

Meetings were a subject brought up by four people. One problem was they did not know which meetings they were supposed to attend. Another person said that the meetings they had been told to go to did not seem to have a point. Their suggestion about having meetings was to have these questions asked and answered: What are we meeting for? Who should be there? And what is the agenda?

Vision was brought up five times. Two people felt they need a clearer vision of the unit and what everyone did and three people felt they did not have a clear vision for job expectations and how it connected to the unit or what the vision of the unit was. One person reported that the position description was different than what the job actually was and there was not enough clarity about the job role and connection with the other job roles in the unit. There seemed to be a gap between the original job description and the reality of the job.

I believe it is important to understand what new employees were feeling to get a clear picture of what they feel the problem is. Frustration, nervousness, a sense of being overwhelmed, loneliness and isolation were common themes throughout the interviews. Several people mentioned a lack of feeling connected. The feeling of disappointment came up as a theme for two people. Anger was mentioned, as was, feeling less than competent. One of the interviewees felt rule bound and is worried about losing their nimbleness and creativity in their work here. One interviewee said that they came to this job to actually be able to make some changes for clients and was frustrated and overwhelmed because the policies don't seem to tie into the realities in the field.

### *Descriptions of the Culture*

Part of the information gathered from the interviews can be identified as pertaining to organizational culture. A view of the work culture from the eyes of a new person is helpful in our assessment because "new eyes" can sometimes see something that is taken for granted or not noticed by those in the system. I believe it is important to remember that these views are opinions and not facts. There are a variety of opinions. In



the interviews the culture was described as too loose, strong, a bit game playing, open and accessible, strong, punitive and friendly. At least two interviewees said that they felt the culture was isolating and someone said, "They felt like an island all by themselves." It was my observation that many people were very passionate about their work. One person saw some racial disparities in the organization and they felt the organization was not culturally sensitive despite having a good employee base to call on to help address those issues.

One person reported that the work culture did not always have respect for every voice. They felt as if what they brought to their job from working in the field for a long time was not listened to, or respected enough to be incorporated into the work of the unit. This left them feeling as if their opinion did not count even though their experience was extensive.

Lack of camaraderie was mentioned by one person, and they did not get a feel for real collaboration. There also seemed to be a lack, in at least one unit, of inclusion, and the person felt excluded and frustrated. There was some expression from employees of feeling like they did not fit in. This was attributed to not knowing exactly what the job expectations were. There was a fear of backlash if you say something wrong. They felt that what they brought from their work in the field was not really wanted. The statement was made that it seems sometimes people in the organization become so program focused that they forget about the people who the organization exists to serve.

The variety of the opinions is interesting and I believe that personal views of the culture may change with time spent immersed in it. It will also change as personnel

changes are made. I think it may be important for our leadership to think about what kind of culture they would like to be intentional about.

### *What Was Helpful*

Some of the most important pieces of information may be what went well for new employees. These are things that may be important to know to have a better sense of what a new employee needs to get a better start in a new position. Several of the interviewees were welcomed warmly with their work space prepared and some sort of sign introducing them to their unit. The people this happened to said, "It was nice or that it felt good." Several people commented that things were ready for them (the work space was equipped with what they needed to do their job) and that was helpful. One person reported that the supervisor had a "good logical progression of information" and this helped get them acclimated to their position. Another person already knew a lot of the co-workers and that was helpful. Someone said that a person in their unit had a parallel position and that made it less difficult to learn their job. They felt that coming into the position would have been much more difficult without this because there is so much to learn. Being able to attend meetings with collaborative parties helped one person to get the big picture. Having things in writing was brought up. This could include something as simple as a list of work duties. This would enable the employee to see how the work in a certain unit evolves. Making this connection can help people make sense of what they are doing, and give them a bigger picture prospective.

More than one of the people interviewed said that everyone around them has been friendly and helpful and it was most helpful to have co-workers who did the same exact

job and being able to follow them into the field to observe how they did things. One of the interviewees said that they have met a lot of “awesome” people and they really saw how much work people put in. One interviewee mentioned that she received understanding about a difficult family situation from the supervisor and co-workers and that was very helpful to her.

One worker appreciated the fact that there was not an attempt by the supervisor to micro-manage their activities. All of the interviewees seemed to be self-directed and competent which is a credit to the caliber of the work force. One worker liked the fact that there was enough freedom within the position that she could pursue some other interests within their job role. On the other hand, one of the interviewees said that they felt they had much to offer but did not feel taken seriously.

As I spoke with other people throughout the organization I happened to talk to someone in a supervisory role. This person echoed the experience of many of the new employees. They said, “There are so many things I don’t know, sometimes I don’t know who to ask and when I do ask, there are many things no one can tell me for sure, how to do or access. Everything takes so long to learn. There has got to be a better way.”

#### *What Do New Employees need from the Leadership*

One of the most important things in this research is the ideas that the interviewees came up with about what they needed. There were some clear suggestions from the participants regarding what would make transitioning to a new position at this organization. In over half the interviews the concept of some type of mentoring was suggested. Someone specifically termed a mentor as a “go to person,” who would be

assigned for at least six months. They suggested it is necessary for this person to know this is part of their workload and has been agreed upon with their supervisor. A lot of the “mentoring” seems to be informal and there is a sense from new employees that they did not want to be a burden or an infringement on someone else’s time.

There is a need for efficacy. It was mentioned that people need to feel productive and proud of what they do and if the orientation is not good it is difficult to get up and running. I believe that a slow on-boarding was difficult for most of the new employees who are anxious to get working on what they were hired for. Fitting in with the idea of efficacy, is the request that someone had for more feedback from their supervisor about whether, “they are doing things the right way.” At least six people in the in fifteen interviews felt they needed more feedback and even when their probation ended at six months, there was not sufficient feedback or even acknowledgment that the probationary time was ended.

More direction was a request of over half the parties interviewed. Even though the work force interviewed were confident, well-educated employees, direction was seen as important. Several people got most of their direction from co-workers. In several cases the supervisors were not familiar enough with the jobs themselves to be of much assistance. One person was supposed to work from home with no instruction about “remote access.” This was frustrating and it took longer than it needed to for them to get up and running. Details like how to get on the internet were not explained to a new employee. “Those details seem small but they are very important when you first come into an organization and every place you work is different.” The lack of good equipment was a concern for at least one person. Lack of information about how things worked

within the unit was a disappointment for most people. They did not know who did what part of the job and how it all fit together.

Almost half of the interviewees said that “showing someone something once and expecting them to do it by themselves the next time” is not sufficient. It was felt that more support with day to day activities is needed. There was a need to be able to ask, “where is that, again,” without feeling like you are bothering someone. It seems that so much new information is presented at one time that people seem overwhelmed and cannot remember so many things.

The above idea brings us to the need to have some of the little details consolidated in one place that is easy for someone unfamiliar with the system to access. Things like “where to find the time cards, explanation of the computer system, etcetera are small details but extremely important. Someone even suggested a visual layout of the computer system might be helpful for understanding where things are located on the main hard drive. Streamlining the process as much as possible was suggested and knowing what other people do and how the work is connected was suggested as something that might be helpful. An interviewee made the suggestion that an overall description of “this is what we do,” and then showing the steps of the job and being open for errors would be valuable.

Strongly suggested was the need for more clarity on job roles and expectations. More concrete leadership was mentioned and goes along with the idea of more clarity. It was found through the interviews that new employees need more of a vision of how they fit into the grand scheme of things. New employees wanted more checking in by supervisors and more respect for people’s talents. It was not clear to some new

employees exactly what the expectations for their job were, and beyond that, what the rules were. It seemed that most people needed more guidance but not over-management. One person said, “It is hard to move ahead when even the partners don’t know what is expected for the position.”

One person brought up an important point that they see lots people who work hard and are trying to make important changes and that the organization has a lot of potential to change with all the retirements ahead, if they are open to change.

### **Recommended Changes in Employee Orientation**

Even though this research project centers on a problem I hesitate to recommend any solutions. Solutions suggest something final and stationary and considering an “ever changing” organization I would like to view it more as an evolving process.

Overall I would encourage the leadership to think about orientation being person centered. I believe this is a value that the organization will benefit from as we strive to be more person centered to the clients we serve. The most important resource in any organization is the people in it and we have learned that effective leadership is relational. Good leadership means understanding the needs of the people who work for you and helping them find their highest potential.

It is important to understand that orientation is a process and that longer periods of orientation may be necessary with information interspersed with periods of allowing people to “soak it in,” and learn by doing with feedback, support, reflection and encouragement.

Making sure roles and responsibilities are clear will help ease anxiety, as will lots of communication and checking in. Some history of the organization and knowing how each job or role fits together may help clarify and give more purpose to the work. Knowing why we are doing something provides motivation and mission.

Some type of assigned mentorship may ease feelings of isolation and provide the security of having a “go to person” without a new employee feeling they are burdening someone. Supervisors will need to consider the infringement on the time and energy of the person assigned as a mentor. Some questions to think about are: Are they willing and capable? Is it always the same person? How will they be compensated for the extra time and energy it will take to orient someone new while maintaining their own job responsibilities?

Having an organized place with information about the organization and the mechanics of it would be helpful. This may take consistent updating and organizing but the time that it may take would be time well spent compared to a new employee searching for information about how to do something.

The following paragraphs contain specific recommendations for orientation based on my research and interviews:

#### *Recommendations for a Smooth Transition to the Workplace*

1. **Be intentional about new employee orientation.** The research is clear about the importance of a good orientation process and those interviewed appreciated a planned entrance into the workplace. The supervisor should plan to be in the office on the first day of a new hire.

They should help make sure the office space is equipped with what is needed to do the job and that instructions for the computer system are clear. Employees will probably want some time to get things set up the way they want them but if everything is there, it feels more welcoming. Time invested up front will have a huge payoff. This type of intentionality can help orientation shift to a holistic long term approach. Take time to think about what kind of a culture exists in the organization and what kind of culture you want to promote.

Communicate the plan of orientation and try to make it as orderly as possible. This will give the new employee an idea about what the next few weeks will entail. Sometimes we have in our own heads a plan of what we will do but it is not always clear to a person following along unless we communicate it.

2. **A mentor like or a “go to” person within the unit should be assigned.** This person should be specially assigned for at least six months. A casual “go to” person will probably not work because the roles will not be clear enough, and new employees do not want to “bother” them unless they know it is part of a job. The intensity of training someone new will decrease as time goes on but having someone available for an extended period of time will help complete the process. This also will help in having a connection for helping to understand the work culture, the spoken and unspoken rules and will address feelings of isolation if they are there. The added



responsibilities of the mentor will have to be addressed in some compensatory way as well as their appropriateness and willingness in training someone new. Often the same person in a unit is given the added responsibility time and time again without appreciation or notice of the importance of training and orientation.

3. **An “all in one place” folder.** This folder would contain information explaining parking, building information, a unit chart and a building chart of the hierarchy with a short description of who does what, remote access information for working out of the office, explanation of computer system and shared documents and how to access. This will have to be kept up to date.
4. **Clear job descriptions, explanation of how the unit works and expectations.** This may not be necessary for everyone but it certainly was a problem for many of the interviewees. I had the sense that a day’s play by play would be helpful. Even a simple description of what a day and then a week in a certain job might look like. It seems that this would be clear from the job descriptions that people applied for but sometimes something on paper can look vague compared to the actual reality of the job. This could help establish roles and responsibilities within the units and might help clarify what others in the unit do and how different jobs connect.
5. **Clear vision of the unit and clear vision of the organization.** Most employees can be creative within their positions when they know what

the vision is. This helps connect people doing their little piece of work to the bigger picture. Have an organizational chart. This does not have to be complicated, there will be time for employees to explore the smaller details but it seems that in order to make sense of a particular job people need something to connect it to and they want to know how they fit in to the bigger picture. This is rather like a “view from the balcony” and can provide more vision that can give more enthusiasm for an individual’s work.

6. **A system of regular checking in with new employees.** This will help accomplish the high levels of engagement that is helpful. It will be beneficial to create a more humanistic person-centered orientation with respect for new voices and opinions. New employees need this type of connection first of all to build relationship and to receive feedback that will help them keep on track and feel they are being productive. Encouragement cannot be underrated. It feels good to everyone. Remember that most of the people hired are in unfamiliar ground and probably feel fairly vulnerable. It is not helpful to micromanage and employees need time to digest information and use it. We all need some “alone time” but taking time to sit down and get to know someone with concern for how things are going is extremely important.

## **Conclusions**

The problem I chose, of new employee orientation, seems a small part of any organizations activities, and can be easily neglected. It proved to be very important in the literature, as well as important to the people I interviewed, as evidenced by the eagerness of interviewees to tell their stories and make suggestions. New employee orientation is one of the most important things in business. It can set the tone for years to come and can enhance employee satisfaction.

The servant leadership model fits because of its attention to relationship and it values people as an end rather than a means to an end. It is interested in developing and nurturing people. It produces a healthy organization that provides a trickle-down effect to consumers. It consists of respect, humanism and also shared vision.

I attempted to create a good level of understanding through the interviews and review of the literature without projecting my own experience and suspending judgment. I tried to pay attention to my observations and offer some ways to take action.

Transitioning someone into the work place is one of the most important things a workplace can do. It brings new perspectives, opportunity for improvement, ideas and insights.

The recommendations are based on needs of real people outlined in the interviews and it matched very well with the research on new employee orientation and employee satisfaction. Most of it is simple common sense and keeping in mind what human beings need from each other.

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*To maintain confidentiality for the organization and the people who participated in this Action Research Project I have blackened or crossed out names in Appendices 1, 3 and 5.*

# Appendix 1

## Permission for Research Project

Consent for Action Research Project Within the [REDACTED]

I am completing a Master of Arts in Leadership Degree at Augsburg College. As a final part of the program I will be doing an action research project. My project will focus on a particular problem in the workplace. The project I have picked is studying making a smoother orientation to job duties in our unit. This is based on my own recent experiences of beginning work at [REDACTED]. There is so much information to learn about the general operations of [REDACTED] and this is handled by a general orientation which was helpful. There is also much to learn about the individual units of [REDACTED]. My experience was one of frustration and confusion as I began to learn the "ins and outs" of my job and also the way the unit worked. The story of my experience is not to fault or blame anyone or anything. The [REDACTED] is in constant change and even as I came aboard, the department was changing, with one supervisor taking another position, one retiring in the near future and the division director retiring. My particular section of the unit is down one individual and the demand for training has risen, which kept the two experienced trainers extremely busy. My feelings of frustration and inadequacy were not conducive to a productive entry into [REDACTED]. This type of change seems quite constant within a large organization.

MY Plan: My plan is to confidentially interview 10 new employees ( employed less than 6 months) to gather information of their experiences at [REDACTED]. Through these interviews I would like to tease out information of what would have been helpful to them and hopefully to develop a format for training new employees that would lead to a more productive and less stressful entry into the world of [REDACTED]. This may also serve as a protocol that may assist in the ever changing environment of a large organization. I believe that what we learn will also trickle down through the counties in our state and thus to the constituents we serve.

I am seeking permission to study this issue within the [REDACTED] and use it as my Action Research Project for a Master of Arts Leadership degree from Augsburg College. This project will be published and be placed at the Augsburg Library for public review. The subjects of the interviews and the [REDACTED] itself will not be identified.

I give permission for Jacalyn Pederson to do research regarding the above subject.

[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
Name	Date	Position
[REDACTED]	5/21/14	[REDACTED]
Name	Date	Position

**Appendix 2**

**IRB**

**Special IRB Application for ML 588 under Dr. Noonan's Approval**

**# 2014-08-4**

**You must also submit a permission letter from the organization you are studying (there is no form for that), a modified consent form (based on the consent template available at [www.insideaugsburg.edu/IRB](http://www.insideaugsburg.edu/IRB)), your survey/interview questions, recruitment letter. Where relevant, a translator's confidentiality form, etc. Consult Professor Noonan if in doubt.**

**This simplified form will be used only because there is master approval for this course**

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**Name: Jacalyn Pederson**

**Title of your project: Making Smooth Transition to the Workplace**

**Description of your project: I am researching how to make better transitions into a new job or new position. I will interview workers about what helped orient them to a new position and what the leaders within their organization did to help with the transition and what the worker might have needed. An added dynamic is that most organizations are constantly changing. It is difficult to start a new job and there are some leadership skills that will help with transitioning and acquainting new employees into their roles.**

**Nature of Subjects/Participants: # and category: I will be personally interviewing 10 to 15 new employees at  
XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX, most of who are working in  
the XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX. These employees will have 1 year or  
less time in their jobs.**



**Will you be studying any special populations: children, undocumented residents, elderly, disabled, etc? Please indicate: No special populations.**

**How will you recruit participants? I will recruit the participants through e-mail. I have a list of names of new employees from a monthly news- letter produced by the XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX.**

**Will you have a survey? Focus group? Individual interviews? I will conduct personal interviews.**

**Submit this completed form with the other documents indicated. Paper copy to Professor Noonan. Bring to class on June 15, 2013 at the latest or mail to her: 4439 Lakeshore Terrace, Eagan, MN**



## **Appendix 4**

### **Interview Questions for Action Research Project**

1. What unit do you work in?
2. How long have you been working here?
3. Describe your first few weeks here?
4. Did you get the leadership you needed?
5. What went well?
6. What could go better?
7. What would have helped to acclimate you to your new job?

## Appendix 5

### Consent for Action Research Project within XXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

I am completing a Master of Arts in Leadership Degree at Augsburg College. As a final part of the program I will be doing an action research project. My project will focus on a particular problem in the workplace. The project I have picked is studying making a smoother orientation to job duties in our unit. This is based on my own recent experiences of beginning work at XXXX. There is so much information to learn about the general operations of XXXX and this is handled by a general orientation which was helpful. There is also much to learn about the individual units of XXXX. My experience was one of frustration and confusion as I began to learn the "ins and outs" of my job and also the way the unit worked. The story of my experience is not to fault or blame anyone or anything. The XXXXXXXXXXXXXXX is in constant change and even as I came aboard, the department was changing, with one supervisor taking another position, one retiring in the near future and the division director retiring. My particular section of the unit is down one individual and the demand for training has risen, which kept the two experienced trainers extremely busy. My feelings of frustration and inadequacy were not conducive to a productive entry into XXX. This type of change seems quite constant within a large organization.

MY Plan: My plan is to confidentially interview 10 new employees (employed less than 6 months) to gather information of their experiences at XXX. Through these interviews I would like to tease out information of what would have been helpful to them and hopefully to develop a format for training new employees that would lead to a more productive and less stressful entry into the world of XXXXXXXXXXXXXXX. This may also serve as a protocol that may assist in the ever changing environment of a large organization. I believe that what we learn will also trickle down through the counties in our state and thus to the constituents we serve.

I am seeking permission to study this issue within the XXXXXXXXXXXXXXX and use it as my Action Research Project for a Master of Arts Leadership degree from Augsburg College. This project will be published and be placed at the Augsburg Library for public review. The subjects of the interviews and the XXXXXXXXXXXXXXX itself will not be identified.

I give permission for Jacalyn Pederson to do research regarding the above subject.

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Name	Date	Position
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