Staff induction activities are designed to provide new-starters with the information they need, as well as getting them up to speed on how the organisation works.

Induction processes are vital to ensuring that new staff are productive as quickly as possible, and should play a key role in knowledge management initiatives.

Despite this, most organisations have inadequate or ad-hoc staff induction processes, with many relying solely on staff just 'working it out as they go'.

Having investigated induction processes in a number of different organisations, this briefing outlines our suggestions for making staff induction a valuable and effective process.

Practicalities, as well as policies

Staff induction often focuses on the corporate policies: safety, security, anti-discrimination, etc. This is useful information, if not the most interesting to participants.

Beyond policies, staff induction should also cover *practicalities*. This includes:

- how to conduct common administrative tasks (changing a phone number, obtaining a business card, ordering stationary)
- what key information systems exist (such as the intranet)
- how to get around the building (security, floorplans)

Training, as well as induction

When new IT systems are introduced, such as a new intranet or transactional system, training is often provided. Beyond these initial training sessions however, there may be little or no further training provided.

New starters who missed this initial training are therefore left unsupported and untrained. To address this, resources must be set aside to provide ongoing training for new staff, or for staff who have moved between different areas of the organisation.

Cultural change

New starters are unfamiliar with the environment and processes of the organisation, so it is the ideal time to induct them into the "new" way of working.

In this way, new starters can be "shaped" in order to achieve cultural change, such as:

- encouraging the intranet to be used as the primary information source
- overcoming the "silos" within the organisation, by providing a holistic view of the organisation

Knowledge transfer

By formalising knowledge transfer, or providing a more rigorous framework for informal transfers, new starters can be provided with the information they need to conduct their work.

Build social networks

One of the main frustrations for new starters is not knowing who to contact in the organisation if they have a question. This is reflected in the comments of long-serving staff: "Well, I've been here for 10 years, so I just know who to go to".

Staff induction can specifically address this, by introducing the new starter to key people in the organisation.

Approaches such as mentoring or 'buddying' are particularly valuable in addressing these issues.

Involve all business units

Staff induction is not just a human resources issue. Instead, induction activities should be developed with the involvement of all relevant business units (such as security, IT, assets, etc), to ensure that new starters are given a complete picture.

Immediate induction

Finally, induction must be provided very shortly after the new staff person starts with the organisation. There is little value in only holding induction seminars every few months, as the new starter will have already been forced to have struggled through for themselves.