

# Orientation Process of New Trainees

Case: Tampere Chamber of Commerce

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## **ABSTRACT**

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The purpose of this bachelor's thesis was to improve the orientation process that takes place at Tampere Chamber of Commerce and produce an intern's handbook that the organization can utilize in its orientation procedures. The reason behind improving the orientation process is that the employee turnover rate within the organization is high, hence there is a constant need to orientate new employees. Without an appropriate orientation structure and up to date written materials, the orientation process consumes a lot of resources.

The data for the research were collected via interviews, personal experiences and the practical training advertisement currently used by the organization. The structured interviews were conducted with 3 former interns of Tampere Chamber of Commerce. Based on the data collected, an analysis was made for both the handbook and the existing orientation process.

As an end result, a fully realized handbook was created to facilitate the orientation of new employees. The handbook includes most of the basic work procedures that an intern should learn. Due to confidential information the handbook contains, it is not included in this thesis. Additionally, an orientation schedule proposal, that gradually increases intern's responsibilities, is presented.

The findings of this thesis suggest that the existing orientation process needed a revision due to the large amount of information that an intern must internalize. Presenting a schedule that gradually increases the intern's responsibilities reduces the chances of overwhelming or confusing them. Furthermore, the handbook eliminates the need to memorize or write down everything at once, thus saving time of both the mentor and the intern.

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Key words: orientation, handbook, practical training

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background and objectives

“Good quality does not cost a fortune, but bad quality will cost more eventually” (Kangas & Hämäläinen 2007, 5). The statement holds true when it comes to new employee orientation processes that take place at organizations. At best, a thoughtful orientation process increases employee engagement, reduces mistakes and creates a solid foundation for employment relationship. On the contrary, a neglected orientation process can result in disengaged employees, doubtfulness in work activities and disconnected employment relationship. While organizations are usually aware of the importance of orientation processes; lack of resources, be it time or labor, is usually a cause for insufficiencies.

During the spring of 2019, the author completed his practical training placement at Tampere Chamber of Commerce. The job of an intern consists of processing foreign trade documents, providing customer service and assisting in general office tasks. The idea for improving the existing orientation process started to take shape towards the end of the author’s practical training placement. As the organization semiannually employs university students, there is a constant need to orientate new employees. At present, however, there is no structured orientation plan or written materials that the organization could utilize. Therefore, the objective of this thesis is to discuss characteristics of good orientation and create a base for a handbook that the new interns can use during the orientation phase.

## 1.2 Tampere Chamber of Commerce

Tampere Chamber of Commerce was officially established in May 1918 to support and develop the economic life in Pirkanmaa. There are total of 19 Chambers of Commerce in Finland, which are administered by the Central Chamber of Commerce located in Helsinki. Each Chamber of Commerce has their own region in which they operate.

Tampere Chamber of Commerce has approximately 2100 members, out of which majority are small and medium-sized enterprises. Members of Tampere Chamber of Commerce represent different fields of industries, such as service, manufacturing, retail, construction and others. The membership base has been growing steadily in the recent years. (Tampereen kauppakamari 2019)

Purpose of Tampere Chamber of Commerce, based on Chamber of Commerce law, is to:

- Promote business, entrepreneurship, healthy competition, internationalization and market economy in Pirkanmaa
- Supervise interests of enterprises and improve cooperation between authorities and economic life
- Give statements to authorities regarding economic life
- Provide announcements, publications, training, counselling and research activities to promote entrepreneurship
- Take responsibility over the delegated tasks, such as issuing foreign trade documents

(Tampereen kauppakamari 2015)

## 2 ORIENTATION

### 2.1 Definition

Traditionally, orientation as a term has been unambiguous but over time it has evolved into more of an umbrella term. Nowadays, the term commonly includes both orientation and occupational guidance. Goal of orientation is to introduce new employee to the organization while occupational guidance aims to help new employee internalize work tasks. The division of orientation and occupational guidance can be seen at the Table 1 below. Orientation is a continuously evolving process that changes in unison with the company practices, that is why organizations should keep orientation processes up to date. (Kupias & Peltola 2009, 18-19) In this thesis, the term orientation is used to represent both orientation and occupational guidance.

In conclusion, orientation comprises all the processes that help a new employee come to know

- *Workplace and its business idea, activities and practices*
  - *Colleagues, customers and other operators present at the workplace*
  - *Expectations related to work tasks and employee's area of responsibility*
- (Kupias & Peltola 2009, 18-19)

Orientation	
Orientation	Occupational Guidance
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Get to know the organization, colleagues and company procedures</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Instructions for work tasks</li> </ul>

Table 1. Orientation as an umbrella term (Ahokas & Mäkeläinen 2013)

## 2.2 Orientation objectives

The objective of orientation is to introduce a new employee to an organization and their work as efficiently as possible. This is achieved by designing a functional orientation process that helps a new employee to get started in their new position. (Kupias & Peltola 2009, 4-5)

Objective of orientation is to

- *Shorten the learning time of work tasks.* This enables new employee to start working independently sooner.
- *Reduce mistakes that a new employee might make.* Mistakes can have a negative impact on business activities.
- *Save resources of the organization.* With a thorough orientation, the need for follow-up and supervising decreases. Consequently, it allows an organization to allocate resources elsewhere.
- *Integrate an employee to the organization.* Getting to know people of the organization is an important step in making a new employee feel welcomed.
- *Present standardized procedures.* Having standardized procedures minimizes chances of miscommunication or misunderstanding.
- *To reduce anxiety.* New employee will experience some anxiety when starting with a new role. Orientation's objective is to reduce anxiety by presenting guidelines and providing tools so that the employee does not have to experience stress from guessing.

(Kupias & Peltola 2009, 4-5; Brown n.d., 1)

Orientation objectives vary depending on the background of the new employee. An expert does not require extensive orientation and should only be guided whenever necessary (Kjelin & Kuusisto 2003, 196-197). In the case of Tampere Chamber of Commerce, the new employees are mostly university students that are in the beginning of their work careers and for this reason should be offered comprehensive orientation.

### 2.3 Orientation process

The first step of an orientation process is to address a designated person, a mentor, that is responsible for the orientation of a new employee. As the organization, its employees and practices are completely new, having a familiar face within the organization lowers the communication threshold for the new employee. An apt mentor is a person who is fairly experienced with the job description but also capable of relating to what it feels like to start in a completely new working environment. Nevertheless, the orientation process should not always be forced upon a single mentor. Whole work community can participate in the orientation process in various ways to speed up the introduction and adaptation of the newcomer.

Traditionally, orientation practices are lecture driven and presenter focused, they leave little to no opportunity for new employee to interact or actively participate. Usually, too much information, mostly in form of facts and figures, is squeezed in too little time. A new employee is left disoriented and overwhelmed by the flood of information and the core purpose of orientation is wasted. Once the already confused employee is plunged into work tasks, they are far too unprepared. (Lawson 2015) Leaving some room for the new employee to converse and ask questions is a great way to reduce misunderstanding or unclear matters.

A structured and thoughtful orientation process is mutually beneficial for the organization and the new employee, as the core purpose of orientation is to introduce a new employee to an organization as efficiently as possible. Orientation has numerous direct and indirect benefits that can strengthen the employment relationship. Orientation is among the first exposures to an organization which makes it a valuable tool to consolidate the organization's image and make a new employee feel inspired with their new role. Sense of being valued results in greater job satisfaction and performance, carefully planned orientation process is a great way to show this kind of a commitment and value to new employee. (Lawson 2015, Kokemuller 2017) Additionally, if the orientation is comprehensive enough, it allows the organization to allocate resources elsewhere as the mentor does not have to spend a lot of time supervising (Brown 2019).

Multiple aspects contribute to positive first impressions, among which human interaction is the foremost. Facial expressions, tone of voice, eye contact and gestures are all very first noticeable cues. The overall atmosphere at the workplace also plays a large part; has everyone in the organization been informed about a new employee arriving? Has the mentor prepared all necessary materials for the first day? Is the workstation set up for the new employee? (Kangas & Hämäläinen 2007, 9)

It is also important to bear in mind that each individual is susceptible to different learning methods. Consequently, incorporating different learning methods in the orientation process will increase its effectiveness. (Lawson 2015) If the newcomer's mindset is set on the fact that they learn best when doing tasks hands-on, it is harder to motivate them with big piles of literature as the only mean of learning. (Kjelin & Kuusisto 2003, 39) Literature material can be used as a backup if the person in question learns the best with hands-on style.

To prepare the organization for arrival of a new employee, all current employees should be informed beforehand. This information should include who is coming, when and what is their area of responsibility. As previously mentioned, the organization should also address a mentor that is responsible for guiding the new employee. The mentor should be present at the first day to greet the new employee and instruct that they will act as a mentor and a designated contact person. The mentor should be a person that is familiar with the area of responsibility that the new employee will take over. Ideally, the mentor would prepare all the required materials and plan a schedule for the first day before the new employee arrives to ensure a smooth start. In case of absence of the addressed mentor, the organization should appoint a substitute that takes control. (Kangas & Hämäläinen 2007, 9)

## **2.4 Monitoring and evaluation**

“Taught things are not always learned” states Kangas & Hämäläinen (2007, 17). Therefore, monitoring is equally as important as the guidance given. Monitoring a new employee makes it possible to evaluate the effectiveness of orientation program and tailor it if necessary. Learning outcomes can be evaluated together

with the new employee to reach consensus about future learning objectives. The organization should also collect feedback from the orientation process' effectiveness via paper form, development discussion or both. The data provides ways to improve orientation and its implementation. (Kjelin & Kuusisto, 245-246)

Dividing the orientation process over certain time periods, such as first day, first week and first month makes it easier to comprehend and follow the entirety of the orientation program. Setting specific goals for each time period allows the mentor to track what are the current learning objectives and how the new employee copes with their work. In the Figure 1 below are shown different phases of an employment. For the target organization, dividing the orientation process in first day, week and month suits the organization's needs given the relatively short employment contracts.

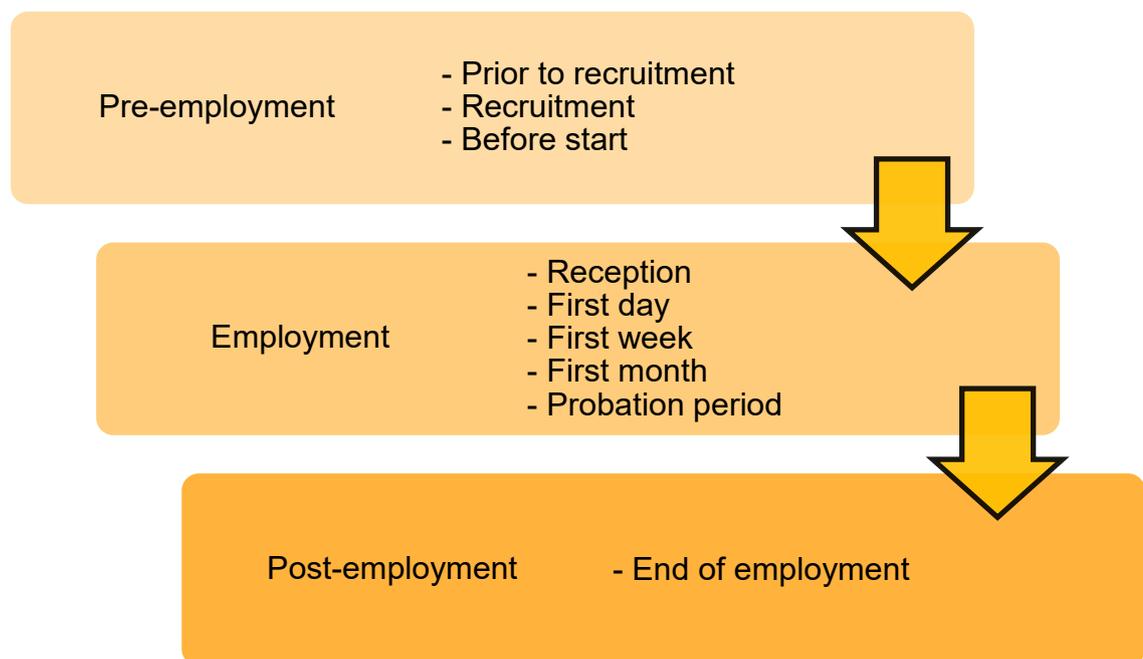


Figure 1. Phases of employment (Kupias & Peltola 2009, 102)

#### 2.4.1 Recruitment and before start

The orientation process begins already before new employee's first day at the organization. Finding a suitable candidate for the position starts the entire orientation process. Focus of the orientation process is determined on whether the organization seeks an employee for a specific and predetermined job description

or tries to find an employee that complements the organization's know-how. (Kupias & Peltola 2009, 102) The former can utilize a ready-made orientation program as the organization is fully aware of the job description and the requirements of it. The latter, on the other hand, requires a tailored orientation program as the job description is not accurately defined. These different orientation processes are called adaptive orientation and dialogical orientation, respectively. Adaptive orientation focuses on acquainting a new employee to a well-defined position. Dialogical orientation's objective is to maximize the utilization that the organization can get from a new employee. Despite their differences, both processes require basic orientation of a new employment relationship. Namely, rules of the organization, getting to know colleagues and value and strategy of the organization, for instance. (Kupias & Peltola 2009, 103) For the target organization, Tampere Chamber of Commerce, it is possible to utilize adaptive orientation as the job description is well-established already.

Once the organization has chosen a suitable candidate for the job, they can inform the selected candidate via phone or other suitable medium. When contacted, new employee has a chance to ask questions and clarify any unclear matters before start. It is also important to give instructions regarding the first day when contacting the candidate. These instructions are, for example, at what time and where will they arrive, who is greeting them and what should they bring along. (Kupias & Peltola 2009, 103)

#### **2.4.2 First day**

Regarding the first day, it is important to keep in mind that only a fraction of new information is memorized at the beginning of an employment. Therefore, in the first day it is important to focus on matters that should be learned immediately or that are practical in terms of the work. These are, for instance, handing over the keys, login details and additional materials. Furthermore, the new employee is introduced to their workstation, office space and colleagues. Some work-related instructions can be discussed in the first day, however, any major topics should be postponed to later days. (Kupias & Peltola 2009, 105) The work tasks are

learned gradually as the new employee gets accustomed to working at the organization (Kangas & Hämäläinen 2007, 10). To ensure a smooth start, the mentor should prepare all the materials beforehand (Kupias & Peltola 2009, 105).

Another important matter to remember is that new employees generally are nervous to see if they are qualified for the job or anxious whether they will like their new co-workers and work atmosphere (Kearl 2015). Making the new employee feel welcomed and at ease is a good way to relieve their stress.

### **2.4.3 First week**

Within the first week, the new employee is introduced to the work tasks. The focus should be in understanding the basics of the work, not the details. The mentor and new employee should have a development discussion at the end of the first week to determine the effectiveness of the ongoing orientation program. Purpose of this development discussion is to ensure that the orientation concentrates on important matters and to see if any adjustments should be made for the following weeks. Additionally, the mentor can hand over a feedback form where the new employee can fill in their thoughts and ideas that might not have come up during the development discussion. (Kupias & Peltola 2009, 106)

The organization can also arrange a lunch meeting between the new employee and their closest colleagues to improve team cohesion. The meeting also presents an opportunity to get to know the new employee.

### **2.4.4 First month**

In the first month, the responsibility of learning starts to shift towards the new employee. The new employee can start to express their ideas and visions of how to develop work practices. If any development suggestions come up, the organization should be receptive to them. Additionally, the mentor should organize a development discussion in the end of the first month to evaluate the effectiveness of the ongoing orientation program. The mentor also has an opportunity to give feedback to the new employee. During the first month of employment, it would be

preferable for the new employee to attend a social where they can get to know the organization better. (Kupias & Peltola 2009, 107)

#### **2.4.5 End of orientation**

During the employment, there comes a time when the new employee is nearly fully capable of handling tasks and making decisions independently. This point marks the ending of the orientation process; however, instructions should still be provided when necessary. After the orientation process ends, onboarding of the new employee begins.

#### **2.4.6 End of employment**

End of the employment presents an excellent opportunity to receive ideas and feedback from the departing employee. The mentor should organize a final feedback discussion with the departing employee. The data received can be used to further develop the orientation process and practices of the organization.

The following questions can be asked from a departing employee:

- How was the quality of training you received? Rated on a scale of 1-10
- Did the practical training period meet your expectations?
- Did you understand what were the expectations regarding your work?
- What did you like about your work? Were there any aspects that were rewarding, challenging or too easy?
- In general, how did you feel about working for our organization?
- What could we do to improve things in future?
- Is there anything else you would like to mention?

(Woolf 2019)

#### **2.5 Development discussions**

The main purpose of a development discussion is to figure out how an employee is coping with their work. It is also important to evaluate the performance of the employee to see if they are meeting the requirements of the work or objectives that have been set.

All of the development discussion participants should prepare for the meeting by gathering any necessary materials, organizing a quiet location and reserving enough time for the discussion. The discussion itself should have a ready-made agenda that all the participants are aware of. The agenda can include, for instance, evaluation of the employee's performance, setting new learning objectives, tracking personal development and giving mutual feedback. In the discussion, it is fundamental to have a two-way conversation between the employee and the mentor. It is equally as important to go over work-related matters and performance as it is for new employee to present their thoughts of the orientation process' success and give feedback. (Helsilä 2009, 60)

Generally, providing constructive criticism and feedback can be difficult. Depending on the receiver, one must consider how much constructive feedback the person in question can take in at once. However, feedback is an extremely valuable tool for learning and should not be neglected during the development discussions. Some of the aspects that are beneficial to keep in mind when giving feedback: (Lehtoranta, Leivo & Haapasalo 2006, 35-36)

- Start with positive feedback, focusing on the aspects that have been successful. Afterwards, discuss together any improvement points and how the orientation process or work activities could be developed.
- Give feedback regarding the activities, do not criticize the person or their personality.
- Feedback is used for development purposes. Remember that development is a continuous process as the demands or practices change over time. This essentially means that no employee is ever fully ready and prepared for their job.

(Lehtoranta, et al. 2006, 36)

### **3 HANDBOOK**

During the author's practical training period at Tampere Chamber of Commerce, an idea about an orientation handbook came up from one of the colleagues. Currently, the organization does not have a handbook for orientation purposes, thus it was seen as a beneficial way to facilitate the orientation of new employees.

The handbook is targeted for interns that complete their practical training at Tampere Chamber of Commerce. The job description of the practical training position remains, for the most part, unaltered between the practical training periods. However, as some changes are to be expected in the future, the handbook will be presented in a form that can easily be updated. In the case of this thesis, the handbook will be entirely excluded due to confidential information it might contain. Accordingly, this chapter discusses some general ideas that are worth noticing when creating a handbook.

#### **3.1 Handbook as an orientation tool**

Organizations usually give a handbook for new employees at the beginning of the employment. It is among the first contacts that the new employee has to the organization. Therefore, the handbook should present information in a positive and inspiring tone and in a way that promotes the atmosphere present at the organization. Other important aspects in a handbook are that it focuses on essential topics and is easy to read. This fact is even more emphasized for a new employee that has plenty of new information coming in at the beginning of the employment. For this reason, the handbook should also be concise enough to provide interesting read for the new employee. Moreover, it should appear visually pleasant and have a logical order on the topics presented. (Kjelin & Kuusisto 2003, 211-212)

Handbook has plenty of advantages as an orientation tool but also some drawbacks that may affect its functionality. The primary concern is to keep the handbook up to date; as practices change, the handbook must be updated accordingly. The organization should agree on who is responsible for inspecting the cor-

rectness of the handbook and how often the information is verified. Inherent advantage of a handbook is that new employees can revise the information independently at any time, given that the information in the book is valid. It is resource and time-consuming to keep the handbook up to date, if the job description changes radically over time. With the target organization, however, this will likely not be a problem as the job description is already well-defined and not prone to drastic changes. Furthermore, a handbook suits the target organization's needs due to relatively high employee turnover, which allows utilizing it to a great extent.

### **3.2 Handbook contents**

The methods used to determine contents for the handbook are interviews, personal experiences and practical training advertisement. Interviews are conducted for three previous interns of the organization. Despite the job description being already well-defined, new insights and ideas can be derived from the additional interviews and personal experiences. Furthermore, they are used to cut out unnecessary content to keep the handbook concise enough to provide an interesting and informative read for the receiver.

As the contents of the handbook may require minor updating, the organization is provided with two different versions of the handbook; a document that can be utilized by new employees and a document that can be updated. When updating the handbook, it is important to write down the version of it and the date when it was last updated (Kangas & Hämäläinen 2007, 7).

## **4 RESEARCH**

The aim of the research is to determine contents and structure for the intern's handbook. The desired end result is to present a table of contents for the handbook and utilize it when creating the handbook itself. Additionally, the current orientation practices are examined to find out ways to improve them. Overall, the handbook and improvements of orientation practices are used to develop the entire orientation process at Tampere Chamber of Commerce.

In order to reach the aims of the research, data needed to be collected. The primary data collection methods were author's own experiences as an intern as well as structured interviews that were conducted for three previous interns of the organization. The practical training advertisement was also used as a secondary mean of data to further define contents of the handbook. The data collected by the research is analysed in the next chapter.

### **4.1 Personal experiences**

From the author's own perspective, the existing orientation process had some shortcomings that affected its effectiveness. The orientation consisted of a brief introduction to the organization, workspace and the work tasks. Specifically, the introduction to work tasks was concise and without prior knowledge of Chamber of Commerce activities, it was challenging to get started with the work.

The intern's tasks include providing customer service to members of the Chamber of Commerce. Given the spontaneity of the customer service situations, the author often found himself lost in these situations and asking colleagues for help, which slowed down the customer service process. This matter was emphasized even more when providing customer service via phone or face to face. Had the author had enough knowledge from beginning of the employment, the customer service could have been more proficient from the start.

Another major responsibility is to process foreign trade documents. The intern processes dozens of documents daily, most of which follow basic principles. However, these documents are used in exporting and therefore require great attention

to get the details right to avert any troubles at customs checkpoints. Including the principles of processing foreign trade documents in the handbook is beneficial if the intern feels doubtful. Being able to independently go through the principles also saves resources and time of colleagues. However, sometimes the documents do not follow basic principles; these situations are case-by-case and require different way of applying regulations. Consequently, the handbook should only include the basic principles of processing the documents.

During the first month of practical training placement, the author attended a social, where the Tampere Chamber of Commerce was introduced to its new members. Depending on when the socials are arranged, it would be beneficial for new employees to participate in them and learn more about the Chamber of Commerce activities. Additionally, during practical training the author also visited Central Chamber of Commerce twice for a social and training purposes. This helped to familiarize oneself with the Chamber of Commerce activities even more and provide latest information regarding the work. For this reason, it would be beneficial for a new intern to visit the Central Chamber of Commerce even once during the practical training.

## **4.2 Practical training advertisement**

The practical training advertisement that is currently used by the organization can be found from the Appendix 1. According to the practical training advertisement, the job description includes processing foreign trade documents, handling financial administration and general office tasks, updating customer relationship management (CRM) system and providing customer service.

Furthermore, the desired skills or traits that a candidate should have include self-imposed and customer service-oriented attitude, thoroughness and proficiency in English. As majority of the customers are Finnish speaking, the candidate should also be fluent in Finnish.

### **4.3 Interviews**

Interviews were conducted for three employees of Tampere Chamber of Commerce. Each interviewed employee has completed a practical training in the organization. Purpose of the interviews is to gain insight of the current orientation methods and to define key topics for the handbook. The interview questions were prepared beforehand, and each interviewee was presented with the same questions in the same order. The results are compiled into two parts: general aspects and improvement aspects. Finally, the interviewees expressed their own ideas of what topics could be included in the handbook. To preserve anonymity, the interviewees are split up into interviewee A, B and C.

#### **4.3.1 General aspects of the orientation**

This category presents general aspects of the orientation. The category compiles summarized answers to the following questions:

- How did you feel about the orientation process?
- Do you think that the orientation you received was sufficient?
- What were the best aspects about your orientation?

#### **Interviewee A**

Interviewee A mentioned that in the orientation, they did not go through general matters very extensively. However, the instructions for handling foreign trade documents were more than enough. Interviewee A was mentored by two employees of the organization which sometimes resulted in minor conflicts in instructions due to the lack of standardized orientation practices.

Interviewee A felt that the best way to learn the tasks is to get hands-on with them. Eventually, as the intern gains experience, they can handle the common tasks independently. Interviewee A enjoyed that they had a chance to do tasks in practice as this was an easy way to learn.

Interviewee A visited the Central Chamber of Commerce in Helsinki.

## **Interviewee B**

Interviewee B said that they received guidance from two employees which resulted in some conflicts, especially in customer service instructions. Interviewee B felt that the orientation they received was not extensive enough and that they started working in practice too soon. However, they received guidance whenever required. Some general matters, such as the purpose of Chamber of Commerce was left unclear. Additionally, knowing more about customer's perspective in foreign trade document application and usage would have been useful.

Interviewee B could not visit the Central Chamber of Commerce in Helsinki due to scheduling.

## **Interviewee C**

Interviewee C felt that the orientation was sufficient. New instructions were received every time they encountered a new task or an exception. Interviewee C said that there was a lot of information to take in at once, but still managed to keep up by taking notes. Instructions for handling foreign trade documents were good, however, the use of multiple e-mail accounts caused some confusion. Overall, there were not many situations in which they would have not received instructions in.

Interviewee C visited the Central Chamber of Commerce in Helsinki.

### **4.3.2 Improvement aspects of the orientation**

This category presents improvement aspects of the orientation. The category compiles summarized answers to the following questions:

- What were the weakest parts of the orientation you received?
- Do you feel like the orientation you received was sufficient?
- What were the hardest tasks to learn?

**Interviewee A**

Interviewee A wanted to know more about the activities of Chamber of Commerce. They also wish they had received more customer service instructions, especially knowing the most common questions that the customers might ask.

Knowing how to handle foreign trade documents took the most time. Additionally, gaining enough experience to be able to answer customer questions took plenty of time as well. It would have been beneficial to know the area of responsibility for each employee of Tampere Chamber of Commerce to be able to direct some topics or questions to them.

**Interviewee B**

Interviewee B could not visit the Central Chamber of Commerce due to some scheduling mismatches. Interviewee B mentioned that during the internship, they knew very little about the foreign trade documents. Thus, answering any specific questions regarding the documents caused difficulties.

**Interviewee C**

Interviewee C mentioned the large amount of information that an intern should learn in a short time. As there was plenty of information covered, some details were easily missed during the orientation. Interviewee C also sometimes pondered if some minor details were crucial when processing foreign trade documents. Additionally, as learning how to process foreign trade documents is mainly done in practice, the learning situations were quite hectic occasionally.

Customer service via phone was difficult sometimes, especially as they could not prepare for the phone calls beforehand due to the large variety of customer questions. Moreover, checking the ATA Carnet stamps was unclear in some cases.

### 4.3.3 Ideas for handbook

During the interviews, interviewees were given a chance to present their ideas of what could be included in the handbook. The following suggestions came up during the interviews:

- Frequently asked questions (FAQ) section
- E-mail instructions
- Software instructions
- Foreign trade document instructions
- Checking and cancelling event or training participations
- Instructions for financial administration

## **5 HANDBOOK AND ORIENTATION STRUCTURE**

This chapter discusses the findings from personal experiences, practical training advertisement and interviews. The findings are analysed and based on the analysis, a handbook structure is created and a proposal for orientation schedule is presented.

### **5.1 Analysis**

All three sources; personal experiences, practical training advertisement and interviews provide different aspects about the tasks of an intern and the existing orientation process. The tasks have, for the most part, remained invariable between each practical training period. Consequently, drawing up structure for the handbook based on the interview results will ensure that there should be no need to radically change the contents of it in the future. Once a solid base for the handbook is created, it is simple to update any details to it. Additionally, the intern has plenty of new information to learn at the beginning of the practical training, thus a handbook eliminates the need to write down or memorize everything at once. The biggest disadvantage of a handbook for the target organization is that there are some tasks that have variable procedures or regulations; hence it is not feasible to include all the details as the handbook would become too burdensome to read and difficult to update.

The current orientation process has some flaws that affect its efficiency. Interviewees expressed that during their orientation, some of the instructions they received were either insufficient or even conflicting. In addition, the large quantities of information were hard to take in at once, especially when there was almost no prior knowledge of the Chamber of Commerce and its activities. As the work tasks are already well-defined, it is easy to create an orientation schedule and distribute topics gradually. Following a fixed schedule with the orientation also makes tracking of the process clearer.

## 5.2 Handbook structure and contents

Most time-consuming task in the practical training is to process foreign trade documents. The focus of the handbook is to provide extensive guidelines for processing Certificates of Origin, special certificates and ATA Carnet. The guidelines for foreign documents are based on existing materials, such as customer instructions and the current procedures used in Tampere Chamber of Commerce. Out of the three aforementioned documents, Certificates of Origin require more detailed guidelines due to them being the most common and usually most variable task of an intern. Due to the varying procedures and regulations, however, not every detail is included in the handbook.

Other major tasks that concern an intern are financial administration tasks, customer relationship management and customer service. There are no written guidelines for these tasks, for this reason they are drawn up from scratch according to the procedures that are currently being used. For financial administration, the tasks that will be included in the handbook are, for instance, creating new customer profiles and editing information as well as the monthly certificate-invoicing instructions. Customer relationship management instructions include adding new member profiles and checking or cancelling event and training participations. Moreover, some customer service information is added as customer service is present in most of the intern's tasks. Especially the frequently asked questions - section is seen as a beneficial addition to the handbook so that the intern can have an indication on what kind of questions customers might ask. Finally, as the intern has three different email addresses in use, it is necessary to include a policy on how to use them and for which purpose.

The contents of the handbook are arranged according to the most important tasks. Each major task has its own title and possible subtitles that are used to further define or explain procedures. As previously mentioned, foreign trade documents are the main concern in the handbook and for this reason they are presented firstly in the handbook. Other tasks and their procedures follow the foreign trade documents. The handbook is presented in a clear and logical structure that allows the organization to make any updates to it easily, should the practices change. Additionally, some pictures are included to make the handbook visually

pleasing and to provide more comprehensible instructions on certain procedures. The final handbook structure can be found from Appendix 3.

The handbook can be given to new interns at the beginning of their first workday, so that they can get acquainted with it whenever they have time. However, the emphasis should be on the fact that during the first days, it is not efficient to overload the new intern plenty of information. However, once the occupational guidance begins, the handbook, in addition to oral guidance, will allow the intern to learn new information quickly and get operational faster.

### 5.3 Orientation structure

In addition to the handbook, having an orientation structure can aid in tracking the orientation process. A structure that gradually increases the responsibilities of a new employee also limits the imminent flood of information that a new employee faces at the start of employment. Therefore, it is important not to rush the orientation process but instead distribute the introduction of new work tasks and responsibilities over a certain time period (Zoe 2019). Once the new employee has grasped the basics, they will become more productive sooner as they are already firmly grounded with the basic knowledge required to perform at their job (Brown n.d., 3). At the target organization, during the orientation phase, the amount of information that the intern should learn is enormous. This can complicate the orientation process in its entirety as the new intern might not be able to keep up with the continuously increasing requirements of the work. For this reason, the proposal for gradual increase in responsibilities is made and presented in the end of this chapter.



Figure 2. From orientation to end of Employment

The orientation process usually lasts for a fixed amount of time and after it, the onboarding of the new employee continues. From the Figure 2 above, the progress from orientation to onboarding and finally to end of employment can be seen. Onboarding can last between 90 days to one year. Onboarding includes trainings that the new employee attends and the learning that happens on-the-job, these give more insight about the organization and the job. During onboarding, a new employee can not only perform at their job but start improving their performance by giving ideas and suggestions. (Zoe 2019) In case of Tampere Chamber of Commerce, the onboarding can last for the rest of the employment as the employment time is relatively short. After nearing the end of employment, the organization should arrange a discussion or hand over a feedback form where the intern can bring up any thoughts and ideas regarding the employment and orientation process.

On the Table 2 below is the crude proposal for orientation schedule. The main point of the schedule is that it introduces new work tasks step by step and as such, limits the amount of information that is given at one sitting. Essentially, the orientation schedule ties together the orientation and occupational guidance. Before the beginning of the orientation, everyone in the organization should be informed about the newcomer and the workstation should be completely ready for the new employee. In the orientation itself, firstly, the new employee is introduced to the organization in a traditional manner by presenting the organization's history and purpose, introducing colleagues and handing over all the materials needed at the beginning. Secondly, after the new employee has been introduced to the organization, the occupational guidance begins. The core idea is to give the new employee basic instructions regarding their work. At the target organization's case, instructions for Certificates of Origin, special certificates and membership applications and invoices are given. Moreover, it is important to continue introduction and acquainting of the new employee by arranging a laid-back lunch meeting, where it is possible to get to know the new employee better. Finally, during the first month, the rest of the work tasks are introduced, increasing the responsibilities of the new employee. It would also be beneficial for the new employee to attend a social and visit Central Chamber of Commerce sometime during the first month or the upcoming months.

Time	Objective
Before start	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Prepare a schedule</li> <li>○ Prepare materials</li> </ul>
First day	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Greet the new employee</li> <li>○ Hand over materials, contact details, login information</li> <li>○ Introduce organization, purpose and history</li> <li>○ Present workstation and office spaces</li> <li>○ Introduce colleagues</li> <li>○ Handle mandatory paperwork</li> </ul>
First week	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Start work-task guidance with basic instructions               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Certificates of Origin</li> <li>○ Special certificates</li> <li>○ Membership applications and invoices</li> <li>○ General office tasks</li> </ul> </li> <li>○ Arrange a lunch-meeting</li> <li>○ Development discussion</li> <li>○ Collect feedback</li> </ul>
First month	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Continue work-task guidance               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ More detailed certificate instructions</li> <li>○ ATA Carnet</li> <li>○ Advanced financial administration tasks</li> </ul> </li> <li>○ Arrange a social</li> <li>○ Plan or arrange a visit to Central Chamber of Commerce</li> <li>○ Development discussion</li> <li>○ Collect feedback</li> <li>○ Start onboarding</li> </ul>

Table 2. Orientation schedule proposal

## 6 CONCLUSION

This Bachelor's Thesis' objective was to inspect and improve the current orientation process of new interns at Tampere Chamber of Commerce. Orientation of new employees is a crucial part of good employment relationship and an effective way to improve productiveness from the very beginning, thus keeping the orientation practices up to date is beneficial for both the organization and the new employee.

Based on the findings, the orientation process in question needed an overhaul, especially due to the large quantities of information that an intern should process at a relatively short time period. The key element in reducing the initial workload of an intern is to provide them with a handbook that presents basic procedures of the work. Furthermore, to make the workload even more manageable and the start of the practical training less stress inducing, it is preferable to incrementally increase the responsibilities of the intern. Presenting new topics step by step will help interns to assimilate the work tasks at a quicker pace.

The literature material, handbook, produced by this thesis was reviewed together with the organization to ensure the validity and correctness of the information it contains. The organization will be provided with two versions of the handbook: one for the interns to use and one for the organization to update. The orientation schedule presented in this thesis was created based on the research results and theory provided in earlier chapters.

The results of this thesis, the handbook and the orientation schedule, will provide Tampere Chamber of Commerce with tools to facilitate the orientation of new trainees.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1. Practical training advertisement

#### **Ulkomaankaupan harjoittelupaikka keväälle Liiketalouden tai International Business – linjan opiskelijoille**

Tampereen kauppakamari on aktiivinen pirkanmaalainen vaikuttaja, joka keskittyy edunvalvonnassaan elinkeinoelämän toimintaedellytysten kehittämiseen. Maailmassa on yli 12 000 kauppakamaria, jotka ovat kukin oman alueensa elinkeinoelämän asiantuntijoita. Kauppakamarit myöntävät ja vahvistavat kansainväliseen kauppaan liittyviä asiakirjoja ja dokumentteja, joita eräät maat vaativat kauppaa tehdessä. Näitä ovat ulkomaankaupan asiakirjat, kauppalaskujen vahvistukset ja Force Majeure -erityistodistukset sekä suositukset vientiyrityksille ja -henkilöstölle.

Tampereen kauppakamari etsii nyt oma-aloitteista ja asiakaspalveluhenkistä harjoittelijaa ulkomaankaupan asiakirjojen sekä toimiston työtehtäviin. Kyseessä on määräaikainen sekä palkaton harjoittelijan työtehtävä.

Harjoittelu sisältää ulkomaankaupan asiakirjojen parissa työskentelyä, reskontran hoitoa, yleistä toimistotyötä, jäsenrekisterimme päivitystä sekä asiakaspalvelua. Tarjoamamme tehtävät ovat monipuolisia ja valmentavat harjoittelijaa työelämään.

Harjoittelun kesto on 3 kuukautta, jonka jälkeen mahdollisuus jatkaa palkallisena sopimuksen mukaan elokuun 2020 loppuun asti joko osa-aikaisena tai kokoaikaisena työntekijänä. Työn aloitus 2.3.2020 tai sopimuksen mukaan (mahdollisimman pian kuitenkin).

Odotamme hakijalta huolellisuutta, asiakaspalveluhenkisyyttä sekä englannin kielen taitoa – muut asiat opitaan työtä tehdessä. Hakijan äidinkieli tulisi olla suomi.

## Appendix 2. Interview Questions

- Millaisena koit harjoittelusi alussa saaman perehdytyksen?
- Oliko saamasi perehdytys riittävä?
- Mitkä olivat saamasi perehdytyksen parhaat osuudet?
- Mitkä olivat saamasi perehdytyksen heikoimmat osuudet?
- Mitkä harjoittelijan tehtävät vaativat sinulta eniten perehtymistä?
- Mitä aihealueita toivoisit sisällytettävän harjoittelijan oppaaseen?

## Appendix 3. Handbook structure

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