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Impact of Structured Induction on Mutually Beneficial Deployment and Talent Retention

Lt. Col Milind Gogate and Suruchi Pandey*

Symbiosis Institute of Management Studies, Pune, India; suruchi.p@sims.edu

Abstract

For any company the employee engagement begins from the day an employee joins the company. Thus a structured Induction Process plays a crucial role in ensuring that the employees are embedded in their respective appointments and assignments properly. It is also known as On-boarding Process or Orientation Process etc. Whichever term one may use, this process is very crucial for both the stakeholders. Therefore a structured Induction Process may be rather termed as "Integration Programme". The quality of this Integration Programme may certainly have a direct bearing on the new employee's decision to continue with the employment or leave, if the situation permits. The duration of this Integration Programme may vary between three months to six months, depending on the nature of industry and quality of talent. The Integration Programme must adopt a practical approach to understand the performance and aspirations of the new employees. Adequate measures may be initiated to fulfil these aspirations partially/fully. An effective and interactive feedback mechanism must be instituted to provide timely guidance and correction to the new employees. If the above mentioned and other such practices are in place in an organisation, the employees would certainly develop a sense of belonging making their bond with the organisation stronger.

This paper presents a study of Induction programme of heavy manufacturing industry unit. The study aims at finding out impact of structured Induction on mutually beneficially deployment and Talent Management. This study presents feedback of employees on the way induction is done in the unit of study and suggests improvement in the Induction process.

Keywords: Deployment, Induction, Retention, Manufacturing Industry

1. Introduction

An induction is a simple process used to integrate recently recruited employees with the organisation. It is also known as On-boarding Process, Orientation Process etc. Whichever term one may use, this process is very crucial for both the stakeholders; the organisation as well as the new entrants, with the latter getting exposed to the organisation and understand their new role and position with respect to the organisation as a whole. Therefore this may be termed as 'Integration Programme', rather than the usual 'Induction Programme'.

The induction module may be considered as the initial phase of an integration programme. This induction may at best provide a limited knowledge to the trainees and may help understand the specific requirements and

needs of the trainees and the organisational response to these needs. This process of integration varies from individual to individual and should not be restricted to a few days or a couple of weeks; some trainees will require more elaboration than others. The induction may be deemed as complete when all the trainees identify themselves with the organisation and consider themselves as an integral part of it. An environment must be created to encourage the trainees to seek knowledge through a process of dialogue with the organisation.

2. Induction Programme

Induction Training is absolutely vital for fresh hires and well structured induction training ensures that they are baptised and settled in quickly and happily into a produc-

^{*}Author for correspondence

tive role. It is more than just technical skills training. It's about the fundamentals that seasoned employees generally take for granted e.g.

- a. Organisation's vision, mission, goals, values and philosophy.
- b. Personnel practices, professional environment, health & safety etc with clear timelines, simplified methods and expectations.
- c. Essential administration requirements like dress code and meals timings and arrangements etc.

Induction process offers a valuable opportunity to establish clear foundations and expectations in terms of the values and philosophy of the organisation like ethics, integrity, corporate social responsibility and all such concepts that establish modern and responsible organisations. This is the first proper impression of the organization for the new employees. It either reinforces or demolishes their decision to come and work for the organisation. Not to mention the statutory obligation that, it is incumbent on the employers to provide new employees with all relevant information and training on the health and safety aspects particularly.

The process of induction is not the responsibility of HR alone; every line manager must be an integral part of it right from the planning stage. The entire organisation, irrespective of its size and spread must be aware of induction. This will make it an inclusive process and not some stand alone routine activity, which is viewed in isolation. This may facilitate a better integration of new employees with the entire system. They would understand the nuances of their new role and responsibilities better and quicker. It has been experienced by one and all that employees who have not been properly inducted need a lot more supervision and hence proves to be costlier in terms of time, effort and money.

The induction process can be achieved through various methods and should be commensurate with the candidates and the job profile involved. It is important to understand that induction training necessitates a great deal of supervision and support due to its peculiar nature as compared to other types of training. The aforesaid supervision is essential unless the job profile demands otherwise or if the position is senior enough. It is essentially a mix of a few or all of the following aspects:

- a. On the job coaching/mentoring.
- b. Delegated yet supervised tasks and projects.

- c. Self study assignments.
- d. Special responsibilities which involve new skills or knowledge.
- e. Customer and supplier visits.
- f. Attachment to cross functional teams.
- g. Job rotation.
- h. Shadowing (shadowing another employee to see how they do it and what's involved).

It is desirable that the induction programme is creative, realistic and practical. It will have some fairly unexciting subjects, which the employees may not identify with, resulting in monotony. To infuse interest and make this experience worth the while, it is essential to include different formats and experiences. It should also include an element of feedback mechanism, to communicate personal strengths and development desires.

The induction program should include the following elements:

- a. General Training: This includes details of the organisation, including its hierarchy, vision, infrastructure, history, values and the philosophy.
- b. Mandatory Training: This will include aspects related to the occupational hazards, health & safety and other legal or essential areas.
- c. Job Training: This pertains to the role that the new trainee will perform appropriate to his/her qualification.

The induction process should ideally begin much before the candidate's physical arrival at the workplace. The same may be divided into three phases as follows:

Phase I: This is the Pre-entry phase, which is mostly non-contact. This may include various activities by HR department. The employee may be given information about the organisation, in printed form or through internet based communication. This would prepare the employee psychologically to accept the new environment to a certain level.

Phase II: This is the Actual Entry phase, which varies from industry to industry, person to person, position to position, time to time (Typically this period may last between 3 weeks to 8 weeks). During this phase the employees may be exposed to limited business objectives. Their feedback may be sought and due weight age may be given to worthwhile suggestions. They may be assigned a mentor.

Phase III: This phase is an advanced version of phase II. The employee may be given a feel of the real time targets and business objectives. A 360° feedback may be obtained from the environment to understand the attitude and aptitude of the new employees. This may facilitate aligning the employees' individual goals with those of the organisation. This in turn would make the employees feel more intimately integrated with the organisation.

2.1 Effective Induction

Is it only about inducting the newly hired employees into their respective appointments or is it something more? A well designed and executed induction programme goes way beyond the mere "Induction". It affords or facilitates the following:

- a. Enable the trainees to settle into their new employment, find their bearings and thus become productive and efficient team members quickly.
- b. Understand the Learning and Development (L&D) needs of the trainee, which may assist in developing a more personalised learning plan for them.
- c. Allows the trainees to commit mistakes (within permissible limits) under supervision, which may be corrected, thereby helping them learn without fear of reprisal.
- d. Develop a strong probably life-ling mentor-trainee relationship.

2.2 Induction Avoided

Despite a well researched and documented necessity of structured induction programme, one tends to doubt and contest the same. Is it really necessary? There have been discussions about the futility of such structured induction programmes as a waste of time, money, efforts and resources. This school of thought advocates the On-Job-Training (OJT) as the best method to introduce the new employees. However, throwing people in, at the deep end of the swimming pool may prove counter-productive due to the following:

- a. The trainees take more time to settle in.
- b. More mistakes and errors are committed by the trainee that could have been avoided, resulting in unnecessary frustration and disgruntlement.
- c. Owing to misplaced disillusionment and frustration, some trainees may quit their new jobs or change

- careers at an early stage and perhaps make a wrong decision affecting their lives.
- d. Experience might improve confidence but not necessarily competence.

Thus, one may say that induction is much more than just about helping newly hired employees survive the initial few weeks. The industry has a professional responsibility to provide a meaningful induction to the trainees.

The Induction Programme varies depending upon the employability of the employee concerned and it is more of sector specific. The manufacturing sector and the services sector are the two broad categories under which the industries are classified. Induction Programme should be designed to encompass all the nuances of a particular industry.

In the instant case, the company belongs to Heavy Forging Industry. It deals with around 6000 plus workforce, which comprises of employees from different backgrounds, from engineering to management to commerce; from diploma holders to graduates. Therefore, the induction process for such a diverse cross section must be different. To validate this observation, we have considered different categories of employees of the level of assistant managers and above, covering all the above mentioned fields.

At the level of assistant managers, the employers would naturally expect a certain level of technical aptitude in general and discipline specific competences in particular. In addition, they are also expected to demonstrate a range of non-technical skills and managerial abilities like leadership, team-building, inter-personal communication, critical thinking, problem solving etc. Specific requirements in terms of professional, personal and social qualities, skills and knowledge may be communicated to the prospective candidates during the Pre-entry Phase. They are the future managers and hierarchy constituents. The focus during deployment may be to identify "High Potential Candidates" and enable them find appropriate employment, progress in their work and in turn facilitate the growth & success of their organisations and contribute to society & the economy. This brings us to the hypothesis, which is as follows:-

3. Hypothesis

Structured Induction has a direct bearing on Talent Retention and facilitates smoother and mutually beneficial deployment.

To pursue the above hypothesis a manufacturing unit was selected for the study.

3.1 Data Collection

In this case a mix of Primary and Secondary data collection methods was used. A sample size of 25 was decided. It was also decided to elicit responses from employees who have recently joined the company to prevent any bias in opinions and receive fresh perspectives. The survey questionnaire was prepared after a lot of deliberation and adequate caution was exercised.

3.2 Feedback on Existing Induction **Process**

The employees were administered the questionnaire in person. The aim of the exercise was explained to them in details and they were encouraged to provide their opinions without fear or favour. They were also interviewed simultaneously to understand correct perspective. A gist of their responses is attached at Appendix B. The responses received from the employees were analysed and the observations are explained in succeeding paragraphs.

4. Analysis and Findings

Demographics



The chart above depicts information about gender, experience and deployment. The following is observed:

- a. The sample contains a diverse population in terms of experience and deployment.
- b. Almost half the surveyed employees (13/25) have put in more than 10 years of experience. Another 20% (5/25) have an experience of 4-10 years.

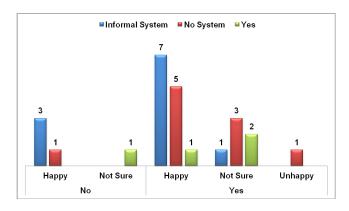
- c. Thus, the opinions voiced by them are supported by adequate exposure in the past and warrant a certain degree of deliberation.
- d. There are no female employees employed on the shop floor. Perhaps the adverse working conditions prevent this situation.

4.1 Inference

- Being a Heavy Metal Manufacturing Industry the number of Women employees is relatively much smaller than Men.
- Majority of these Women are employed in administrative or office jobs.

5. Induction Process **Improvement**

Buddy System & Happiness Quotient



The above chart depicts the relation between Buddy/ Guide/Mentor System, Happiness Quotient and Need to improve the existing Induction Process. The following is observed:

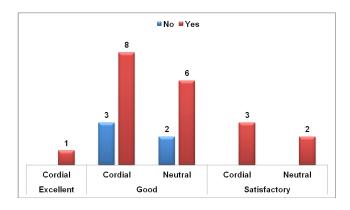
- a. 66% of these (13/20) have also indicated their happiness with their present job profile. Thus despite a higher happiness quotient, the need for improvement in present Induction Process has been expressed.
- b. Only 16% of the respondents (4/25) have mentioned existence of proper Buddy System in their respective departments. The balance respondents have indicated either absence proper Buddy System or presence of an informal system.
- c. Almost 1/3rd of the respondents (8/25) are either unsure about their happiness with present job profile

or unhappy about it. The same may be linked with the absence of a proper Buddy System or inappropriate Induction Process.

5.1 Inference

- A little over 50% of the employees have expressed their satisfaction over their current job profile.
- Only a handful of employees (4/25) have experienced a proper Mentoring or Buddy System. The balance employees have expressed a desire to have a formal mentoring/buddy system.
- A majority (80%) feels the need to improve the Induction Process.

6. Induction Process Improvement: Attitude & **Overall Experience**



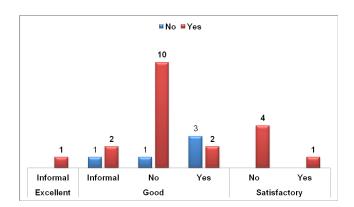
This chart depicts the following:

- a. 80% respondents (20/25) have rated their overall experience as "Good" or "Excellent", whereas 20% have rated it "Satisfactory".
- b. 40% of respondents (10/25) have found the attitude of other employees as "Neutral" during Induction.
- c. 80% of the respondents (20/25) have opined that the induction process needs improvement.

6.1 Inference

- A majority of the employees (80%) are content about their overall experience.
- About 60% employees found the attitude of other employees towards Induction as "Cordial".
- However a majority (80%) feels the need to improve the Induction Process.

7. Induction Process: Dept Induction & Overall **Experience**



This chart depicts relation between need for improvement of present Induction Process and existence of Departmental Induction resulting in overall experience. The analysis is as follows:

- a. 80% respondents (20/25) have rated their overall experience as "Good" or "Excellent", whereas 20% have rated it "Satisfactory".
- b. Close to 80% respondents (19/25) have indicated existence of Informal Dept Induction or lack of it, while others (6/25) have indicated that they underwent Dept Induction.

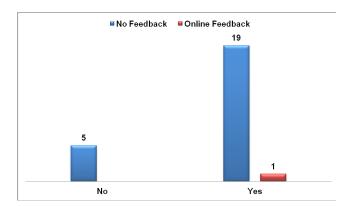
7.1 Inference

- A majority of the employees (80%) are content about their overall experience.
- Only a handful of the employees (6/25) have undergone Departmental Induction, while the balances have expressed a strong desire for the same.
- A majority of them (80%) have opined that the present Induction Process needs some restructuring.

8. Induction Process: Feedback Mechanism

This chart depicts the relation between Feedback mechanism and Induction Process. The analysis is as under:

a. All the respondents barring one (24/25) have indicated absence of any formal Feedback Mechanism in the company. No formal feedback is sought from



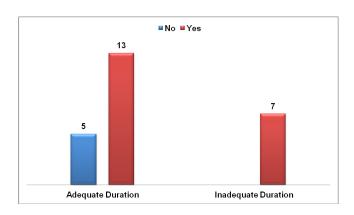
them post deployment by the authorities. Only one respondent indicated presence of some kind of Online Feedback, which was never provided by the respon-

b. 80% respondents across the categories have opined that the present Induction Process needs some restructuring.

8.1 Inference

- Lack of any kind of feedback mechanism was the concern voiced by almost all the employees.
- The employees were more than willing to provide feedback, specific to their deployment or in general. However, they could not find any formal, structured feedback mechanism/forum wherein they could do
- The only time any feedback was exchanged was during the time of appraisal, which is far from a desirable state.

9. Induction Process: Duration and Improvement



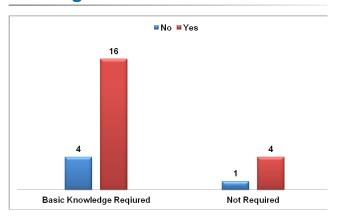
This chart depicts the relation between Duration and efficacy of Induction Process. The analysis is as under:

- a. 72% respondents (18/25) felt the duration of the Induction Process was adequate. However, 13 of these respondents felt the necessity to restructure the Induction Process.
- b. 28% respondents (7/25) opined that the duration was inadequate and there was a need to review the Induction Process as such.
- c. 80% respondents (20/25) from either category thus indicated a need for restructuring the Induction Process.

9.1 Inference

- Induction process of three days (3 days) seemed adequate for people with previous exposure to similar industry. However, those from other fields often found it difficult to understand the proceedings at a Heavy Metal Mfg Industry, in this short duration.
- The Induction Process should be tailor-made for employees from various categories/fields, depending on their background and likely deployment.

10. Induction Process: Knowledge of Labour Legislations



This chart depicts the relation between efficacy of Induction Process and need for knowledge of Labour Legislations. The analysis is as under:

a. 80% respondents (20/25) indicated their desire to learn the basics of Labour Legislations, through Institutional initiatives. Whereas remaining respondents did not feel the need for the same.

b. 80% respondents (20/25) from either category however indicated a need for restructuring the Induction Process.

10.1 Inference

- This being a labour Intensive industry, certain basic Knowledge modules on Labor Legislations may be incorporated during the Induction Process.
- Even those with prior experience expressed their desire to refresh their knowledge on the subject of Labour Legislation.

11. Summary of Feedback from **Employees**

The views of the employees are summarised below. The common views could be plotted on the charts while a few individual opinions could not be plotted on the charts. These uncommon, individual opinions have been mentioned in this summary.

- a. There is no formal system of Buddy/Guide/Mentor designate present. The hand holding mechanism boils down to the head of the department or team, placing undue load on that person. Moreover, there would always be a few issues which are too trivial to bother the team leader and may be resolved within the peer group.
- b. Induction process is viewed as a routine, standalone activity with a neutral attitude by many of the departments. At times due to their routine commitments the process is hurried through. Some of them do try and pitch the information at a level which is understood by the entire batch of inductees.
- c. Departmental induction is being followed informally, depending upon the circumstances, at times results in re-inventing the wheel. A formal mechanism is lacking. It is more of an on-the-job approach, which works well for people with prior experience in similar field.
- d. Currently there is no system of any kind of feedback post deployment, particularly from the employees inducted recently. They strongly feel the need for the same.
- While Induction process of three days (3 days) seems adequate for people with previous exposure to similar industry, those from other fields often find it difficult to understand the proceedings in this short duration.

- f. This is a labour intensive industry. However, there is no formal exposure to labor legislations. Even those employees with prior experience feel the necessity for the same.
- In an industry of this magnitude there are bound to be some gaps. However fresh employees are either unable to pinpoint these or are apprehensive about voicing their observations. A couple of them have discussed the same with their immediate superiors and have found satisfactory solutions.
- One of the respondents spoke about the skewed Pyramidal Structure, wherein the ratio of employees at various levels (1-up and 1-down) was either 1:1 or even reversed.
- Expansion ventures opt for fresh recruitments rather than sidestepping from within the existing skill set i.e. Internal Job Postings (IJPs), thereby depriving the existing manpower of an opportunity of different exposure.
- Digitalisation needs to be given a push. The visual display panels in various departments need to be networked and utilised innovatively rather than using it only for technical displays. e.g., display of social calendar, rewards and recognition, special achievements of the family members of the employees from respective departments etc.
- k. Place touch screen based kiosks at vantage points, wherein employees can access their basic data and convey any anomalies/grievances etc to the division/ department concerned.
- Employer Branding for the Internal Customers needs to be reviewed.
- m. Roles/responsibilities are not delineated in certain cases. This resulted in duplication of efforts, resulting in wastage of efforts and resources.
- n. There are not many opportunities wherein an employee may voice his/her opinions/concerns about individual/collective issues.
- o. The sequence of induction visits seems random, thereby wasting the available time in a lot of crisscross movement through the campus.
- p. In certain cases adequate Job Rotation is not provided. There is a need to do so wherever feasible to prevent setting in of monotony.
- q. Managerial skills such as Inter personal skills, presentation skills and other such soft skills need further refinement.

11.1 Observations

The interaction with employees at three geographically different facilities yielded a fair insight into the working of the company. It facilitated a better understanding of the vision of this Heavy Manufacturing Industry and their work culture. The independent observations made during the study are enumerated below:

- a. This Heavy Manufacturing Industry has progressed at a phenomenal speed and has surged ahead to take the lead in forging industry. This unparalleled rise in a short span was made possible due to their robust policies and efficient Talent Management practices.
- b. This Company has always kept their various activities with the workforce at the centre, on or off the shop floor. This is evident from the general tone and tenor of the responses recorded.
- The training & development aspect of the workforce are never lost sight of, thereby ensuring continuous engagement of the talent available. The various learning & development initiatives are being subscribed to in good numbers by the workforce across the hierarchy.
- d. Notwithstanding the above, the company also has to encounter the various pitfalls faced by any heavy manufacturing industry like complacency, high attrition of high quality talent etc.
- e. The Vision of the company may need a review.
- f. The additional interaction beyond the questionnaire administered yielded the following:
 - i. Probably, there is a great deal of freedom available to think freely in order to encourage originality. This may not have been understood in correct perspective, since this liberty is in direct conflict with the conventional way of thinking i.e. working from within a preset framework. (This is with a reference to the feedback on 'lack of clarity of Roles & Responsibilities').
 - ii. The philosophy behind the sequence of induction visits may be very thoughtful, to ensure that all the employees being inducted MUST SEE each and every corner of the campus and get a firsthand experience of the difficult and hazardous conditions.
 - iii. Treating all the employees from diverse backgrounds like, DETs, GETs, MBAs, CAs and other miscellaneous qualifications at par for Induction

- Process of three days is inappropriate. Various briefings are pitched at a certain level by reps of the respective depts keeping in mind the person on the lowest rung. This situation proves counterproductive more often than not, since the contents of various depts differ from each other like chalk and cheese. Resultantly, individuals from other backgrounds lose interest in the briefing, which in turn reflects on the presenter who too loses interest and undergoes the motion as a routine.
- Absence of any kind of formal departmental induction in most of the departments, the new employees are left to fend for themselves and take that much more time to settle down.
- v Varying degrees of complacency set in as the employees spend more time in the organisation. This complacency manifests in their responses. This is evident from description of their experience with the company so far. 76% of the respondents (19/25) have followed a middle path and described their experience so far as "Good". Whereas, 32% respondents (8/25) have indicated their apprehensions about their current job profile. These two figures add up to 108%. Apparently, a few respondents may have provided ambiguous responses due to a misplaced (but natural) fear of retribution.
- vi The average employees are looking forward to achieve a certain degree of multi-skilling and upskilling while with the company. The fields for this skill enrichment vary from soft skills to technology oriented skills.

The authors recommend structure for induction of employees of the level of Assistant Managers & above is discussed in the succeeding paragraphs.

12. Proposed Induction and **Deployment**

All the current employees are prospective future leaders of the company. They need to be treated, trained and nurtured accordingly. Their on-boarding process must be very elaborate, under competent supervision. Keeping pace with the present techno savvy environment and an easy access, the power of internet must be exploited to the full extent. The induction process is recommended to be divided into three phases as under:

12.1 Phase I

This is the pre-entry phase, which would be mostly noncontact phase. This may commence immediately after the short-listing of prospective candidates. This phase may be supervised by any mid-level manager or senior engineer from the concerned department at the Industry in concert with the HR department. They may be designated as "Buddies" or "Guides" for the assigned candidates, with their guidance committed for a period of three months after the date of joining. An analysis of the interactions between them and the prospective candidates would help further decisions on roadmap of the candidate. This would reduce the unwanted stress and anxiety on both the sides. It would also ensure focus at both the ends. Various activities taking place during this phase would be centred on the "Buddies or Guides" and "Employees".

12.1.1 Buddies/Guides

The various tasks to be performed by them are as under:

- I. Establish initial communication with the concerned employee and carry out the ice-breaking activity.
- II. Understand the various basic administrative requirements of the new employees and provide them with adequate information and assistance in order to make them comfortable.
- III. If possible, understand the aspirations of the employ-
- IV. This communication must be concise and precise, seeking their inputs within a reasonable time frame.
- V. A close scrutiny of these interactions would provide an insight into various aspects of the candidate.
- VI. As an incentive, this activity may be linked with the performance and appraisal of the concerned Buddies/Guides.
- VII. They may be allowed certain privileges (like additional time off) and permitted to use company resources like internet facility for certain duration per week for this purpose.

12.1.2 Employees

The new employees must be encouraged to undertake the following activities:

i. Understand the various aspects of heavy forging industry in general and those related to the Company in particular.

- ii. Interact with the designated Buddies/Guides and seek relevant knowledge through regular communi-
- iii. Put in genuine original efforts to come up to the expectations of the company.

12.2 Phase II

This is the entry phase. The selected employees would join the company, in due course of time. This phase may be further sub divided into following modules:

12.2.1 Familiarisation Period

This period may be utilised to make the new employees comfortable and feel part of the family. Following activities may be co-opted during this period.

- i. Joining Formalities.
- ii. Initial briefing by Admin and HR.
- iii. Visit to all the major forging lines HFD/MCD/FMD one day each (preferably pre-lunch) followed by a classroom session about that particular line, including a feedback for the day.
- iv. The employees may be clubbed as per their qualifications in order to maintain a homogenous group, facilitating more meaningful interaction during the various visits.
- v. This may necessitate that the new employees join, in groups at regular intervals.

12.2.2 Pre-probation Period

- i. Based on assessment during pre-entry phase and feedback from Buddies the employees may be deployed in their respective departments.
- ii. At the end of four weeks, the employees may be asked for a feedback. This would facilitate their assessment once again to determine their actual aptitude and their departments may be finalised.
- iii. The employees may be made to undergo a separate induction module in respective departments to give them an insight into the routine functioning.
- iv. They may be now given a limited exposure to the routine affairs of that particular department and assigned a project with a timeline of three months.
- v. Project submission would signal end of pre-probation phase.
- vi. A review of performance would yield suitability of the employees for further retention.

12.3 Phase III

This is the actual probation period which may last for about 24 weeks to 30 weeks, during which the employees will undergo a proper probationary training, with following activities taking place:

- a. Receive exposure to real time targets and business objectives.
- b. Regular interaction between the mentor and the mentee will continue.
- c. They will be guided to realign their personal objectives with those of the organisation in a mutually beneficial manner.
- d. A formal feedback may be sought from the probationers about their deployment and other aspects.
- e. They may be facilitated to up-skill themselves, in order to plug certain essential skill gaps in terms of technical and non-technical competences. These may include some or all of the following:
 - i. Labour Legislations.
 - ii. Managerial Skills.
 - iii. Presentation Skills.
 - iv. Inter personal Communication Skills.
 - v. Other Soft Skills as deemed necessary.
- f. A 360° feedback from the environment may be obtained about the suitability of employee for necessary further action.

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