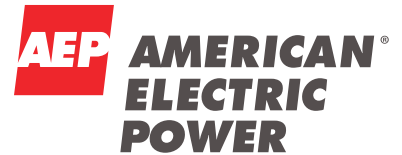


AEP New Employee Orientation

In 2008, an unprecedented change began in the global financial markets, and it continues today. Businesses and industries all over the world are affected, and organizations are hustling to find solutions that will help them transform their companies quickly so they can adjust to the turbulent marketplace changes threatening their survival.



The business need

AEP ranks among the nation's largest generators of electricity, owning nearly 38,000 megawatts of generating capacity in the U.S. AEP also owns the nation's largest electricity transmission system, a nearly 39,000-mile network. AEP's 22,000 employees are spread across 11 states, seven operating companies, and multiple locations. This vast, diverse network of operations created the need for an engaging and consistent "big picture" view for its employees – especially when bringing new employees onboard.

AEP's new employee orientation (NEO) process includes a wide range of information. The problem was that the HR offices across the system utilized different approaches to present this information to new employees. As a result, new employees' understanding of the company was sometimes inconsistent and often incomplete.

The company also wanted a better way to convey the company's culture – "how we do things around here" – to help new employees feel welcome and more readily become a part of the organization. AEP wanted to share its rich 100-year history of innovation and technology, along with its vision of what it will take to succeed in the future.

The solution

AEP had completed previous projects with Root on safety. Gen Tuchow, VP of HR, concluded that the visually engaging Root methodology would enhance AEP's NEO program across the company and make it a more consistent process.

Basically, AEP was looking for an educational yet entertaining way to showcase and summarize the entire AEP Corporation and all it has to offer without totally overwhelming new employees. The object was for new employees to be able to answer the questions: "Who is AEP?" "What do we do?" and "Where are we going?" as well as be excited about becoming a part of the AEP family.

The solution: a paper-based *Strategic Learning Map*® module. AEP leaders chose this application because it felt that a critical component to establishing a strong relationship with new employees was to have the opportunity to sit with them and have a conversation about the company. In this way, the experience would feel welcoming and personal, rather than simply academic and "required."

"The visual makes it fun and interesting – more than just words."





To accommodate the large number of locations that may hire only one or two people at a time, Root also developed an electronic version of the Strategic *Learning Map*[®] module. This allowed AEP to invite new employees from remote locations to participate in a web conference to provide a positive group experience in a virtual learning format. It also saved time and travel costs.

Implementation

The initial plan was to roll out the module for employees who had been with AEP less than a year. However, focus groups recommended that more individuals in the organization could benefit from the learning. As a result, the module is mandatory for new employees but is also available to others who want to use it.

The Strategic *Learning Map*[®] module is one of the very first things a new employee experiences at AEP, helping to reinforce a positive first impression of the company.

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Results

No formal surveys or measurements were developed specifically for these deliverables, but AEP plans to gather feedback on the entire New Employee Orientation program.

Overall, the feeling was that these solutions created not just engagement but “epiphanies,” even for more tenured AEP employees. Some learners’ quotes included:

- “You get the whole picture of how everything works!”
- “I like the interactivity. It’s good to be involved and active.”
- “The visual makes it fun and interesting – more than just words.”
- “I had no idea we owned barges, and that we were the second-largest dry bulk carrier in the country!”

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About Root

Root is a strategy execution company that helps organizations engage people as a catalyst for change using a proven framework that consistently achieves clarity, ownership, and results.

