Buddy Guidelines

What is a Buddy?

A new employee's onboarding can be greatly enhanced with a Buddy, an employee from another part of MSASS who provides advice and guidance on the different aspects of working at the school and university. A Buddy can also act as a "sounding board" who offers encouragement as the new employee acclimates to the school's culture and workplace.

Selection Criteria and Process

The successful Buddy is an employee who fully understands the school's culture and environment (at MSASS for at least one year), can be positive and constructive in the face of challenges, and wants to be a Buddy.

Additional criteria include:

- Time to be available to the employee.
- Work in a unit of the school the employee may not otherwise interact with
- A solid performer.
- Strong communication and interpersonal skills.
- Exemplifies the school's values.
- Well regarded and trusted by others.

To kick off program MSASS HR will invite people to be buddies and match them with new employees. As program matures individuals can volunteer to be considered as a Buddy or can be recommended by others. MSASS HR will make buddy employee matching decisions.

Buddy Responsibilities

In assisting a new employee acclimating to the school, a Buddy serves as a valuable resource by creating a trusting relationship and maintaining confidentiality.

Responsibilities include:

- Providing information on policies and procedures.
- Identifying resources in the workplace.
- Familiarizing the employee to CWRU/MSASS's culture, norms, and unwritten guidelines.
- Introducing the employee to others in the school and throughout the university.
- Taking the employee on an expanded tour of the workplace and campus.

- Answering questions and referring the employee to the appropriate resources.

Suggested Structure

Ideally, there is a formal, six-month relationship between the Buddy and the new employee. Toward the end of the six months, they can discuss if and how to continue their relationship outside of the structured Buddy role. On the employee's first or second day, introduce the Buddy and employee. This introduction can be facilitated by MSASS HR or the hiring manager. Discuss the Buddy's role and responsibilities as well as the employee's needs, and answer any questions. Ensure that the Buddy and employee meet during the first week. Suggest and then allow the Buddy and employee to decide on the frequency, length, topics, and method of interaction between the two of them. The structure will vary. What's important is that the arrangement is clearly defined and works for both the employee and the Buddy. Here is one of many possible examples:

Week 1:
- Meet for an hour (can be over a meal).
- Learn about each other's background, experience, interests, etc.
- Decide on the most important and relevant things to cover.
- Respond to any immediate questions employee may have.
- Agree on frequency, length and method of communication.

Months 1 and 2:
- Meet bi-weekly for a half hour (in person).
- Be available for phone conversations and email.
- Take employee on a campus tour.
- Introduce employee to other CWRU colleagues.

Months 3 and 4:
- Meet monthly for a half hour (mix of in person and by phone).
- Be available for phone conversations and email.
- Have a check-in with employee, and local HR and hiring manager.
- Invite employee to relevant CWRU business or social events, and introduce him/her to others.

Months 5 and 6:
- Meet bi-monthly for an hour (in person).

- Continue introducing employee to colleagues and inviting employee to relevant business or social events.
- Decide if and how to continue the Buddy relationship. Have a wrap-up with employee, HR, and hiring manager.

Note: HR and/or the hiring manager is responsible for having a mid-point check-in and a wrap-up conversation with the employee and Buddy.

Onboarding Buddy Suggestions and Tips

As a Buddy to a new employee, you play an integral part in helping the employee successfully acclimate to MSASS. Here are some suggestions to help you in this vital role.

Before the Employee's First Day

- Meet with your local HR and the hiring manager to clearly define your role, and schedule a date to meet with the employee during his/her first week.
- If appropriate, call or email the employee. (Get contact information from local HR or hiring manager.)
- Learn about the employee. Get some background from the hiring manager.

On the Employee's First Day

- Stop by the employee's office to introduce yourself. Confirm plans to meet with the employee later that week. Give him/her your business card (or contact information).

During the First Week

- Meet with the employee. Share information about yourself – how long you've been at CWRU; what it was like when you first started; your role, interests, and hobbies. Learn about the employee's background and interests.
- Show the employee around work areas and make introductions.
- Take a walking tour across campus.

During the Following Months

- Plan ahead by scheduling meetings for the next several months.
- Check in with the employee in between regularly scheduled meetings to see how things are going and if he/she has any questions.
- Continue introducing the employee to others.
- Invite employee to relevant business or social events.

Helpful Tips

- Don't worry about being perceived as the "expert" or think you need to have all the answers. Your experience at CWRU is what's most important to the employee.
- In some situations, listening is more valuable than giving advice. Ask questions like "What do you need?" or "How can I help?"
- We all have a preferred communication style. Talk about each other's preferences, as the new employee may have a different style from yours.
- Recognize that it takes time to develop a relationship.
- Be patient, positive, and supportive. Don't try or expect to cover everything over a short period of time.
- Stay open minded, and avoid being judgmental.
- Maintain confidentiality.