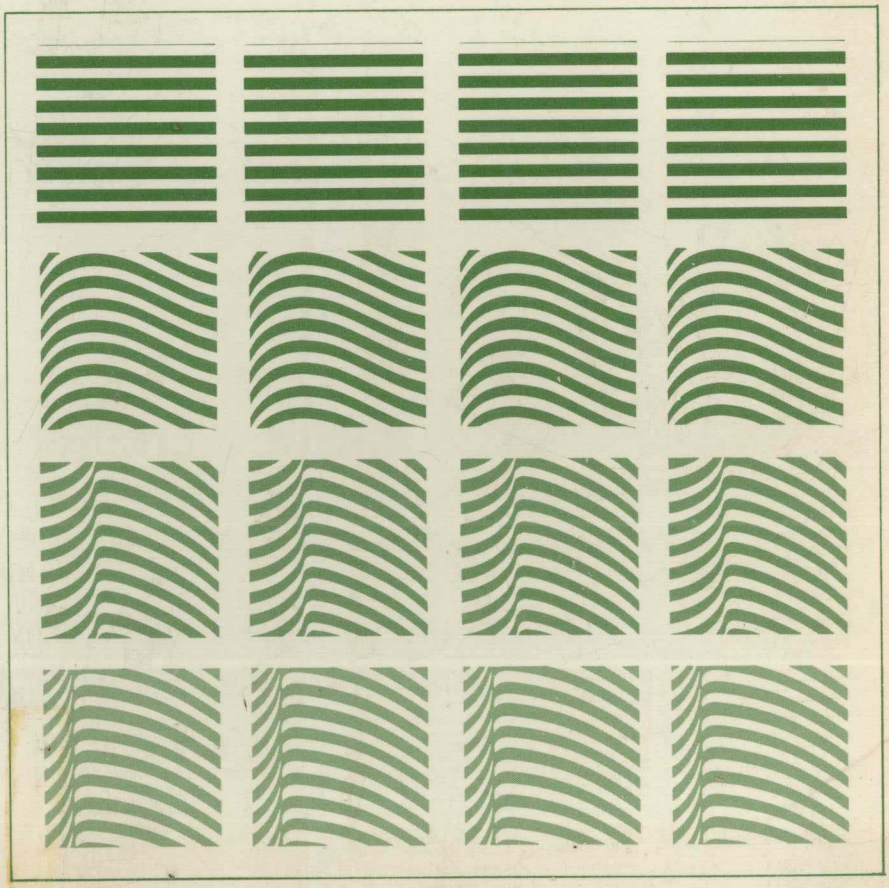
ADDISON-WESLEY SERIES ON
MANAGING HUMAN RESOURCES

Organizational Entry

Recruitment, Selection, and Socialization of Newcomers

John P. Wanous



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Foreword

Widespread attention given to the effective management of human resources came of age in the 1970s. As we enter the 1980s, the importance placed on it continues to grow. Personnel departments, which used to be little more than the keepers of employee files, are now moving to the forefront in corporate visibility.

The difficulties encountered in effective human resource management are without parallel. Surveys of managers and top level executives consistently show "human problems" at the top of most lists. The influx of the behavioral sciences into business school programs is further testimony to the active concern now placed on human resources as a critical element in organizational effectiveness.

The primary objective of this Addison-Wesley series is to articulate new solutions to chronic human resource problems; for example, the selection and entry of newcomers, performance appraisal, and conflict management. The aim is to communicate with a variety of audiences, including present managers, students as future managers, and fellow professionals in business, government, and academia.

John P. Wanous
Series Editor

Preface

This book is the culmination of my interest, which began about 1970, in newcomers to organizations. At that time my interest in, and knowledge of, the study of newcomers was limited primarily to the main thrust of my doctoral dissertation—an experimental comparison between a realistic job preview and traditional company recruiting methods to hire telephone operators. Following this I completed a two-year project on the entry of new students into MBA programs in several different graduate schools of business administration. It was about then that the term "organizational entry" seemed to best describe my research interests.

In the middle 1970s I became convinced that there were several consistent experiences that are common for almost all newcomers to organizations. This increased my own motivation to define organizational entry as a worthwhile topic for researchers to investigate and for organizations to recognize. It seemed appropriate to share this conviction with both academic and business audiences. In 1975 I published two articles in periodicals read by those in business. The message was to seriously consider changing to realistic job previews as a way to recruit newcomers. This message is repeated in Chapters 2 and 3. On the academic side, the most immediate predecessor to this book is a literature review article published in 1977.

It should now be clear that my intention in this book is to address several audiences. Thus the focus of the book changes from chapter to chapter, and sometimes within a chapter itself. The book is aimed at

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three audiences: students, academics, and personnel managers. For the students I try to describe what it's like to go through the recruitment selection, organizational choice, and socialization stages of entry into a new organization. Students are likely to find some useful information in each of the chapters to help prepare them for future organizational entry.

Trying to satisfy both students and academics is difficult because students may find too many technical terms in some parts of the book, whereas academics may find too few. I have tried to write at a level understandable and interesting to a general audience. To satisfy the academic audience, I have added references throughout the text. Those who want to pursue certain topics in greater detail should have sufficient leads to begin a literature search.

Finally, this book is addressed to personnel managers in various types of organizations. I have not limited the discussion to business because the research shows common experiences for newcomers across different types of organizations. The primary message to this group is to consider changing to realistic recruitment. I have tried to explain the logic of traditional versus realistic recruitment, the expected results from each, and the conditions conducive to each. Chapters 2 and 3 will probably be most useful for this audience.

Besides the intellectual attraction of studying organizational entry, my interest in the topic goes to a deeper, more personal level. Changing organizations has had a significant impact both on my professional and personal life: leaving one graduate school to complete the Ph.D. at another, choosing one university over another for a first academic job, and leaving the first job for a second university. In each of these changes I became acquainted with practically all of the topics covered in this book on a firsthand basis. This book is, thus, also an attempt to make sense out of these transitions for myself by writing about them.

I began to write this book about two years ago. While I was writing it, several people have helped in various ways. Ed Lawler, Tim Hall, and Ben Schneider each encouraged me to undertake the book project. The Graduate School of Business at Michigan State University helped enormously by providing me with released time from teaching duties. Janina Latack and Neal Schmitt at Michigan State provided very helpful comments on early drafts. The Management Department's secretaries were somehow able to read my handwriting and produce a clearly typed manuscript, literally overnight. Linda Penrose, Kathy Jegla, Claire Rammel,

and Maryalice Frantz have my gratitude for doing such a marvelous job, and remaining extremely good-natured throughout.

At the later stages of this project, Ben Schneider, Jim Walker, and Edgar Schein reviewed the entire manuscript. Their comments were extremely useful in guiding the final revisions.

East Lansing, Michigan
November 1979

J. P. W.

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What Is Organizational Entry?

1

Organizational entry includes the wide variety of events occurring when new members join organizations. By its very nature the entry process must be considered from the perspective of both the individual and the organization. Individuals choose organizations, and organizations select newcomers from among applicants.

Organizational entry concerns movement into and out of businesses, schools, the armed forces, etc. Because of the focus on crossing the boundary, the immediate concern of organizational entry is to identify those factors affecting these moves. To put this another way, March and Simon (1958) distinguished between the decision to *participate* in an organization and the decision to *perform* well in that organization. This is a book about participation, not performance. *Both* the individual and organizational viewpoints are considered; March and Simon focused mostly on the individual's choice to stay or leave.

The purpose of Chapter 1 is to introduce readers to various issues in organizational entry and to argue for the importance of studying this particular "slice" of their working careers. A hypothetical "case study" based on a composite of typical entry experiences is presented next. It is used to illustrate key issues that are themselves the subjects for more intensive treatment in later chapters. After this is done, examples are given to show how expensive and inefficient the entry process can be to an organization.

The final objective of this chapter is to present a schematic model of organizational entry that shows the major factors and how they relate to each other. This model serves as a common reference point throughout the book. Since it will be referred to in each chapter, the reader is advised to study it well.

A CASE STUDY OF ENTRY

Ed enjoyed "working with people." His choice of psychology as a major seemed consistent to him as a way of furthering his understanding of other people. Even though psychology was a popular college major in the 1970s, Ed soon learned that most companies were interested in those who had majored in business administration. So, Ed went east to get an MBA, after first graduating from a state university in the midwest. In graduate business school he chose management and marketing as areas for concentrated study. He had always felt more comfortable with "qualitative" subjects than he did with "quantitative" ones such as math, accounting, finance, or economics.

During his second year of the MBA program, Ed interviewed six different companies on campus, and was invited back to three of them for further assessment. Prior to the campus interviews he had gone to a couple of "crash courses" that the school offered on how to prepare for job interviews. He was given pointers on what to wear, what questions to expect, what questions to ask, and what information about the company he should obtain. At the end of the courses, he participated in a "mock interview" before a videotape machine. He saw himself on TV (for the first time) and carefully listened to the "pointers" given him by the instructor. By the time Ed went to his first interview, he felt prepared. He had talked with other students about their experiences, read the three most recent annual reports for each company, and rehearsed answers to the "open-ended" questions he anticipated.

Fortunately for Ed, two companies offered him a job as a "management trainee." There were differences between the two positions in terms of geographical location, starting salary, general reputation as a desirable place for the new college graduates, and initial job assignment. After weighing all these factors, Ed accepted the position with a very large, multinational corporation that sold business machines as its main product. He

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would begin with them in their sales training program in June, about two weeks after graduation.

Ed's long-term goal was to enter general management rather than to spend his whole career in sales. However, in this particular company, going into sales was regarded by most as the fastest route to district level management. (To go higher than that would require a strong background on the financial side of the corporation, but Ed was unaware of this at the point of his entry into the new job.)

By the time Ed began his first day at work, the company had spent $1,575 in direct and indirect costs. The rough breakdown is shown in Table 1.1.

TABLE 1.1

Printed material, posters, ads	$ 25
Campus recruitment interview	50
First trip to company (travel, food)	400
Assessment center* costs for first trip	600
Second trip to company (travel, food)	400
Miscellaneous indirect costs (letters, phone calls, processing of forms)	100
Total	$1,575

*The assessment center was an intensive three-day session in which Ed and other new recruits participated in simulated management experiences, e.g., organizing a day's work, writing letters and memos, making phone calls, working in a group to make a decision. The assessment center as a selection technique is described in greater detail in Chapter 5.

The initial training period lasted about three months and was held away from corporate headquarters (and the field offices, too) in a special campus-like location devoted to "corporate training and management development." Most of those Ed met either were other newcomers or were from the Human Resources staff assigned to this location. Although the program was well conceived, organized, and interesting, Ed felt that he still hadn't learned "how things really work" in the company. The next six months of initial field sales experience helped to correct this deficiency. During this period Ed was placed under the mentorship of an experienced sales representative.

After the nine-month mark Ed was on his own in the field. Up to this point he had received some feedback about his performance during the training sessions, and his field mentor made a formal appraisal prior to Ed's solo run. Now, however, things were quite different. For the first nine months, Ed had been on a straight salary. Now, he was on a small base salary plus sales commission. The formula for computing it was fairly complicated, and had one striking feature. If a company decided not to renew a machine rental contract, a portion of the lost revenue was "charged back" to the sales division and subtracted from Ed's commission. This was designed to force sales personnel to give good, attentive service to their customers. In practice, however, some decisions to terminate rentals were completely out of the control of the sales person. This meant that Ed's income was not as predictable as it had been. Further, Ed soon learned that the charge-back system was considered a threat by many new sales representatives and was resented by others. The full impact of this compensation system was completely unanticipated by Ed. The previous explanation given to him had seemed abstract at the time—living with this system was another matter altogether.

Up to the nine-month mark, Ed had cost the company $2,000 a month in salary, plus another $700 monthly in fringe benefits, for a total of $24,300. The recruitment cost added $1,575 to this. The training costs, which included the costs of maintaining the training facility, the fees of outside consultants used, and the salaries of all those employed by the company at the training and development center, were about $5,000 more. Thus the company had spent over $30,000 on Ed in only nine months in exchange for no tangible return.

After about six months in the field, Ed left for another company. During the six months before leaving he had made a few small deals, but did not generate more than $3,000 a month—barely enough to "cover" what he had been paid up to that point. In the six months since training Ed just barely paid his own way so that when he quit, the company was clearly out the $30,000 development cost spent in the first nine months. His leaving also meant that another $30,000 would have to be spent on his replacement—with no guarantee to the company that there would be a solid return on the next "human capital" investment.

ISSUES RAISED BY THE CASE STUDY

This short case of Ed's entry into his first job is a composite of many stories. By reviewing several elements of this case, a number of issues concerning *organizational entry* will be raised. This is a book about the entry of new people into organizations of all kinds—business, schools, armed forces. Although there are differences among these various types of organizations (and these differences will be pointed out), there are many more commonalities among them. Thus the entry process of new members into organizations is one that can be thought of as a *general* process in which the issues and events are remarkably similar among different organizations.

Issue 1: What Effect Did Vocational Choice Have on Ed's Decision to Leave the Company?

In the case study, Ed liked to "work with people." This could be an indication of a strong *affiliative* need (McClelland, Atkinson, Lowell, and Clark 1953). However, the job Ed took was in sales. The sales job is commonly regarded as an excellent vocational choice for one highly motivated by *achievement,* rather than by affiliation. This is because the sales job provides opportunities in three key psychological areas crucial to those who have strong needs for achievement. These people are (1) able to take personal responsibility for what is done, (2) able to set goals of moderate difficulty (neither too hard nor too easy), and (3) able to get concrete feedback on their own actions.

It is easy to say that Ed was not matched well to the sales job in this basic, vocational sense. Tracking down the reasons for this mismatch is, however, a much harder task. Ed could have been given poor advice by vocational counselors at school or he may have been given good advice that he chose to ignore. The company may have been partly responsible either for not recognizing Ed's vocational needs or for misdiagnosing them. Ed himself may have viewed the sales job as a convenient route to the top. He may have believed that he could gain his ultimate goal of general administration through a temporary stint in sales, without fully appreciating the costs of doing so. Vocational choice is discussed in Chapter 4.

Issue 2: How Did the Recruitment Process Affect Ed's Decision to Leave?

A number of recruitment issues are raised by this case. First, how much did Ed *really* know about the company prior to his acceptance of its job offer? His reaction to the sales commission method of compensation indicates that Ed was not fully informed in this key area. Issues surrounding what the typical outsider knows about the inner workings of an organization, and where the information comes from, will be raised in Chapters 2 and 3.

A second recruitment issue concerns the company itself. Why should it divulge negative information about itself to an outsider, even if the information is correct? Wouldn't this be suicide in a competitive labor market? How would competent newcomers ever be attracted to the company? And finally, isn't there plenty of time *after* newcomers are hired to let them in on how things really work on the inside? The issue of how much to tell job candidates during the recruitment process will be given extensive treatment in Chapters 2 and 3.

Issue 3: How Did Ed's Own Organizational Choice Affect His Decision to Leave?

Any entry into a new organization involves *two* choices. The organization must choose the candidate (called *selection* here) and the individual must accept it or reject it, (called *organizational choice* here). Several issues about Ed's organizational choice will be raised in this book. Did Ed make the "right" choice? What does the right choice mean? How did Ed actually make the choice; i.e., what was the decision process that resulted in his picking the company he did? Organizational choice is discussed in Chapter 4.

Issue 4: How Did the Company's Selection Process Affect Ed's Decision to Leave?

Before Ed was actually confronted with which job to take, he had to first be considered acceptable by the firm. What steps do organizations go through in (1) deciding what people they need for which jobs, (2) obtaining information about job candidates, and (3) actually making the selection decision? These three issues will be considered in Chapter 5 on selection.

An overriding issue for this company's selection process is what basic criteria were used in making the selection decision. If Ed's potential job *performance* only was considered, the lack of attention to Ed's *human needs* being congruent with the job climate could account for his dissatisfaction and early withdrawal from the company. The basic issue raised here is to what extent a job candidate's *needs* are matched to the organizational *climate* in the same way that the candidate's *abilities* are matched to the demands or *requirements of the job*. (See Fig. 1.1 on page 11.)

Issue 5: What Effect Did the Socialization Process Have on Ed's Decision to Leave?

Newcomers to this organization entered as a group and were kept together for the first three months apart from the rest of the organization. Those in the sales area were then assigned a mentor for six more months before being left to fend for themselves. Although organizations are remarkably similar in their recruitment practices and strategy, there is rather wide diversity in how they attempt to integrate newcomers after they enter. In Chapter 6 on organizational socialization, a category system is developed to organize all the various methods used. A "stage model" of typical newcomer experiences is constructed. Finally, several different socialization strategies are discussed, and four detailed case studies are presented to illustrate the diversity of socialization experiences. The reader will see, secondhand, what it's like to be a new police officer, an army recruit, a first-year student in graduate business school, and a management trainee.

WHY THE STUDY OF ORGANIZATIONAL ENTRY IS IMPORTANT

The story of Ed's experience illustrates one important reason why considerable attention is and should be placed on the entry of new organization members—the cost of "premature" turnover is quite high. It takes a while for almost all organizations to get newcomers to "pay their own way." The costs vary widely from job to job and organization to organization, but there are *always* costs—even for the lowest level, lowest paid jobs. For example, in an insurance company the replacement cost has been estimated to be $6,000 for a claims investigator, $24,000 for a field

examiner, $31,600 for a sales person (with *below* average performance!) and $185,100 for a sales manager (Flamholtz 1972).[1] These replacement-cost figures include such items as acquiring a new person, training, and moving the present holder to another organization or to another position. The United States Navy estimates that it costs $30,000 to obtain a naval officer through the ROTC, $86,000 for one via the Naval Academy, and $1,500,000 for a competent fighter pilot.[2] If a top-quality Ph.D. research scientist leaves an organization such as Bell Labs or DuPont Labs, it can cost that organization $100,000 to $200,000 if the person was a newcomer and didn't remain more than two years. A telephone company estimated the replacement cost for a newly hired operator who left within the first six months to be about $3,500. At one time this company was hiring about 100 operators per month merely to compensate for the loss of operators who left the organization.

The fact that turnover is expensive is certainly a good reason to look more carefully at entry from the individual's viewpoint. This conclusion is further reinforced by also recognizing that the *highest turnover rates are found among the newly hired employees.* Most companies calculate turnover rates as a percentage. For example, if a small manufacturing company had a steady average work force of 500 employees throughout a full year, but hired 75 people during that period, the annual turnover rate for the whole company would be 15 percent. Such rates can also be calculated for departments or smaller units within the organization, and they can be calculated for particular groups of employees based on sex, age, race, or how new they are to the organization. For example, some companies calculate the turnover rates for new MBAs hired. When calculated on a basis other than the total organization, rates can be quite high—often over 100 percent per year within particular types of jobs, or other subgroup.

The experience of one telephone company with its operators serves as a good example. During the late 1960s and early 1970s, a period of strong economic activity nationwide, there was a companywide turnover rate for operators of about 30 to 35 percent. However, when the company looked only at the newcomers who had been employed for less than six

[1] Recent increases in the cost of living must also be taken into account, since these costs were calculated in 1972.

[2] As of 1977 according to Dr. Robert Morrison in personal communication.

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