



FOLLOW A NEW EMPLOYEE SPRING 2020

RETHINK:KAU

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INTRODUCTION

In the spring of 2020, a project called “Follow a new employee” has been conducted at Karlstad University. The project is based on service design methods and follows the experiences of new employees at Karlstad University. Similar projects have been conducted at the University before — “Follow a student”, “Follow a teacher”, and “Follow an administrator” to name a few. The intent behind “Follow a new employee” has been to understand new employees' experiences and identify areas of improvement.

The project used a number of selection criteria in order to ensure diversity in terms of age, gender, and staff categories. Emails were sent out in early January to around 130 new employees. The emails introduced the project managers and project plan and invited the recipients to participate. 27 new employees expressed an interest in getting involved.

The new employees who participated have continuously contributed their experiences in a very useful way. The new employees have written diary entries, submitted pictures, and met with the project team to talk about their experiences.

The experiences of the new employees are visualised in the report as customer journeys, henceforth called employee journeys, in which critical touch points are identified to subsequently highlight the needs that the experiences represent. Based on those needs, a list of improvement ideas has been created to address the needs of new employees.

“FOLLOW A NEW EMPLOYEE”

The University works with continuous organisational development, in part intended to optimise the experience of being an employee at Karlstad University. There is often no holistic view of user experiences, irrespective of which University service or office the employee is in contact with. Instead of looking at the employee’s comprehensive flow of experiences, improvement efforts are initiated for isolated services or are based on complaints or one-off issues. Using different service design methods creates opportunities to implement change informed by an understanding of the flow that the employee is a part of and that highlights user needs.

Frequently used methods in service design include conversation, diary entries, photo or video journals, surveys, service safari, and shadowing. Experiences are analysed through the creation of customer journeys — visualisations of an experienced journey where positive and negative experiences, so-called touch points, are made visible. In this project, customer journeys are referred to as employee journeys.

Background

To test the effectiveness of administrative processes, the University has carried out a number of user-centric projects since 2014. Two projects that focused on University staff were 2015’s “Follow a teacher” and 2016’s “Follow an administrator”. The projects followed a group of teachers/administrators during a course. The projects resulted in customer journeys that described the experiences of teachers/administrators. After the projects, a number of improvement areas were identified and several improvement initiatives were launched. The next step of the development efforts was to follow new University employees to identify their experiences and needs and their feelings about the available administrative support processes. The project was carried out from 1 January 2020 to 1 June 2020 by Rethink:Kau within the Office for Strategic Support.

Purpose and aim

The purpose of “Follow a new employee” is to understand what it is like to be a new employee at Karlstad University and what new employees need, and to have that understanding inform improvement initiatives. The aim of the project is to use different service design methods to create employee journeys that highlight the journeys of new employees at the start of their employment. These employee journeys will highlight critical touch points and link them to quotes to facilitate a deeper understanding of the positive or negative experience.

Invitation and selection

To achieve its aims, the project required a minimum of 20 and a maximum of 40 new employee participants who would continuously describe their experiences.

Email and internal mail invitations were sent to Karlstad University employees who were selected based on the following criteria:

- First priority, people employed after 30 June 2019.
- Second priority, people employed after 1 January 2019.
- Third priority, people employed after 1 January 2020.
- Gender balance.
- Age balance.

One priority was balance in terms of participants from Central Services; the Faculty of Health, Science and Technology; the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences; Teacher Education; and the Ingesund School of Music.

The idea behind examining a heterogeneous group was to avoid circumstances that were specific to one office or department, but also to try to capture experiences from employees of different genders and ages, and with different backgrounds.

This was the letter that was sent out:

"Hej!

Under våren 2020 genomför vi projektet Följ en nyanställd – vill du vara med?

Du får detta mail då du anställts under 2019.

I projektet är dina upplevelser i fokus. Vad har varit toppen och vad har fungerat mindre bra gällande administrativa stödprocesser som finns att tillgå? Utifrån upplevelser kan vi identifiera och förstå behov kring administrativa processer och system. Behoven i sin tur leder oss mot att ta fram idéer på förbättringsområden.

Insamling av upplevelser pågår mellan vecka 9-19 och du lämnar dina upplevelser genom att skriva digital dagbok (uppskattningsvis cirka 5 min/dag) och, om du önskar, träffa oss för ett samtal. Vi kommer också tillsammans arbeta med att ta fram idéer på förbättringsområden.

Du anmäler dig via följande länk där du också kan läsa mer om projektet: <https://www.kau.se/rethink/studier/folj-en-nyanstalld>

Sista anmälningdag är fredag 14 februari

Hör av dig om du funderar på något!

Hälsningar

Frida Gråsjö, chef Avdelningen för verksamhetsstöd

Sandra Berginge, projektledare

Hi!

During the spring of 2020 the project "Follow a new employee" will start! Do you wish to participate?

You've received this e-mail as you began your employment at Karlstad University during 2019, as such the project defines you as newly employed.

This project focuses on your experience! Which parts have been working smoothly and which parts have been working less satisfying regarding the available administrative support? Based on employees' experiences, we will be able to identify and understand how the administrative processes and systems can be improved.

During week 9-19 we will collect data by using a digital diary in which participants submit their experiences (approximately 5 minutes/day). Participants will also be able to meet us for a dialogue, if they want!

To join the project, please follow the link below and submit your application:

<https://www.kau.se/rethink/studier/folj-en-nyanstalld>

The deadline is February 14.

Feel free to contact us with any questions!

Regards,

Frida Gråsjö

Sandra Berginge"

Signing up

The letter to the employees included a sign-up link and 27 employees signed up for the project. The employees represented diversity in terms of age and place within the organisation. The project team organised an initial meeting to brief the participants about the aim and purpose of the project.

Recording experiences

The project has employed service design methods to create an idea of what it is like to be a new employee at Karlstad University. A key part of the project has been to make it easy for the participants to record their experiences. The employees have been able to choose *how* to record their experiences, *when*, and in *what form*.

The project has sent weekly emails to the participants. The purpose has been to stay in touch with the employees and show that their participation is crucial to the University's chances of developing the induction for new employees. A link to the online form was included in all the emails to give the participants easy access. The same link has been used throughout the project. This is an example of the emails that were sent to the employees:

Hej!

Vad roligt att det redan har börjat komma in upplevelser via den digitala dagboken - fortsätt gärna dela mer er! Det är dina upplevelser i din arbetsvardag som är i fokus!

Här är länken till dagboken; <https://podio.com/webforms/23763895/1717151>

Ha en fin vecka och hör av dig om du funderar över något!

*Med vänlig hälsning
Alexandra Argiroudaki
Projektstöd*

Hi!

How great that we already received some experiences through the digital diary! Please continue to share. The focus is on your everyday work! You decide how often and how much you want to write. Here is the link that you use through the entire process; <https://podio.com/webforms/23763895/1717151>

Please contact foljen@kau.se in case you have any questions!

Have a nice week!

*Kind regards,
Alexandra Argiroudaki
Project assistant*

No specific questions have been asked in the emails or on the online form, such as "Are you able to find your way around the University?" or "How do you feel about using Canvas?" Instead, employees have been able to freely record their experiences based on the concept of "How are you doing?" However, the employees have been asked about how they experience the Covid-19 situation.

Digital diary

An online form was used to enable employees to write diary entries about their experiences and submit them to the project. The form only has two mandatory boxes to fill out, all to make it easier for the employees to complete and submit. 138 diary entries have been submitted via the online form. To enable the project to sort the experiences by person and use them to inform the conversations that follow, employee submissions have not been anonymous.

Rethink:Kau Follow a new employee

First and last name*

Experience*

Attachments

 Browse...

Image 1. The digital diary online form.

Conversations

Three weeks into the project, employees were given the option of meeting with the project team to chat about the employee's experiences as a new employee at Karlstad University. The project offered participants a "conversation", deliberately avoiding the term "interview". The reason was that "interview" could be associated with requirements and a number of questions that the employee had to answer. The purpose of the conversation was to use the employee's recorded experiences to gain a deeper understanding. Conversations have been conducted with 16 new employees.

Example of an email that was sent to the employees:

Hej!

Inom projektet "Följ en nyanställd" vill vi gärna träffa dig och prata om dina upplevelser! Nu finns det möjlighet att boka in ett samtal på Inslaget under "Bokningslistor". Listan heter "Samtal - Följ en nyanställd 2020" (<https://inslaget.kau.se/bokningslistor/lista/402>). Sista dag att boka tid för ett samtal är 13 mars.

Under samtalet är fokus på dina upplevelser i din arbetsvardag. Dina och övriga projektdeltagares upplevelser tar vi sedan med oss in i workshopen som vi ska genomföra 19 maj! Vid workshopen arbetar vi vidare utifrån upplevelserna och tillsammans identifierar vi behov och tar fram idéer på förbättringsområden kring administrativa processer och system.

Du behöver inte förbereda dig eller ta med dig något till samtalet. Samtalet tar cirka en timme och lokal meddelas senare.

Hoppas du har möjlighet att träffa oss och hör av dig om du har några frågor!

Hälsningar
 Alexandra Argiroudaki
 Projektstöd
foljen@kau.se

Hi!

As a part of the project “Follow a new employee” we would like to meet you to discuss your experiences! It is now possible to book a meeting and to do this you need to visit Inslaget and “Bokningslistor”. The name of the registration list is “Samtal - Följ en nyanställd 2020 / Follow a new employee 2020” (<https://inslaget.kau.se/bokningslistor/lista/402>).

The last day to book a meeting is March 13.

During the meeting we will talk about your experiences in your everyday work! We will collect yours and other participants experiences and during the workshop at May 19 we will be able to identify and understand how the administrative processes and systems can be improved.

You do not need to prepare or bring anything to the meeting. The meeting will last for one hour and you will get more information where to meet later on.

I hope you have the possibility to meet us and let us know if you have any questions!

*Regards,
Alexandra Argiroudaki
Project assistant
foljen@kau.se*

Pictures

Employees were given the opportunity to upload pictures with captions to the digital diary. The idea was to use image and text to convey the experiences of a new employee at the University. Nine pictures were sent in, some of which are included in the “First day” section (page 11).

Workshop

Ten weeks into the project, employees were offered the chance to attend a workshop intended to generate ideas for how the University could work to address the needs that had been identified. 13 employees attended the workshop. In addition to the project employees, the workshop was also attended by representatives from the steering group for University administration and the HR office. The total number of workshop attendees was 19.

FINDINGS

The material recorded is visualised in three employee journeys.

- One employee journey for every employee in the project
- One employee journey for employees who received information and an induction
- One employee journey for employees who had not received information or an induction

Employee journey — compiled journey

Employee experiences have been visualised in a compiled employee journey where positive and negative experiences emerge over time (image 2). The journey is divided into three phases: before, first day, and initial period. The journey has been supplemented with quotes to clarify the impactful factors for the experience in the identified critical touch points (image 3).

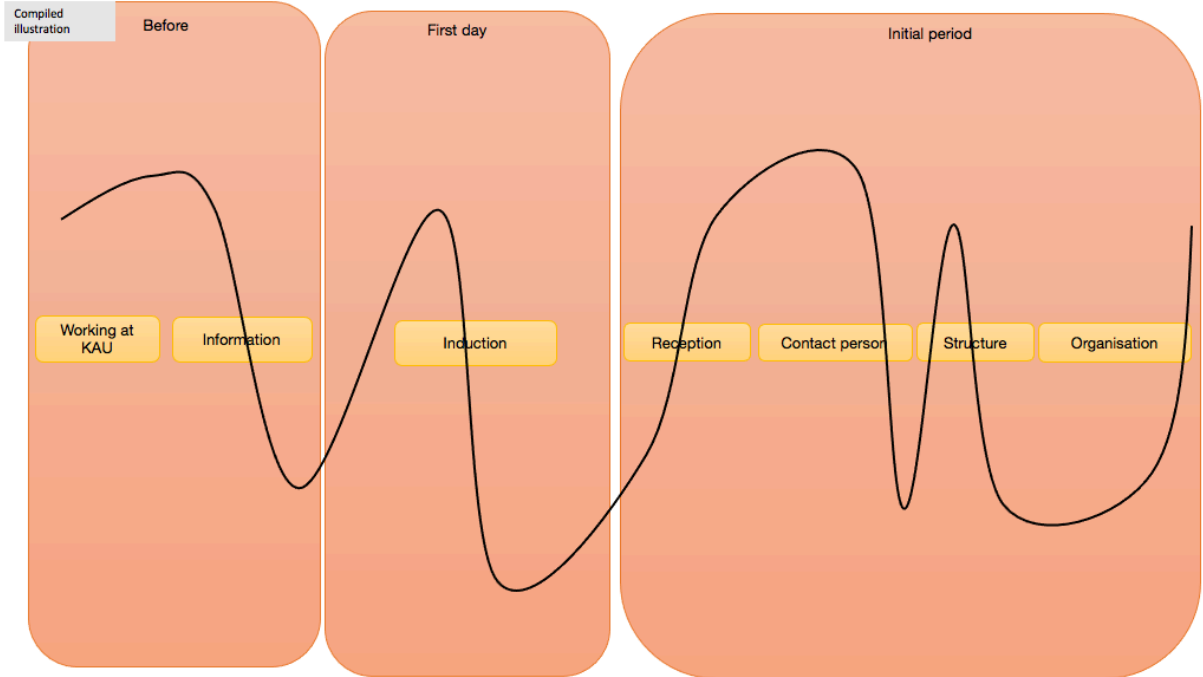


Image 2. Compiled employee journey for all participants

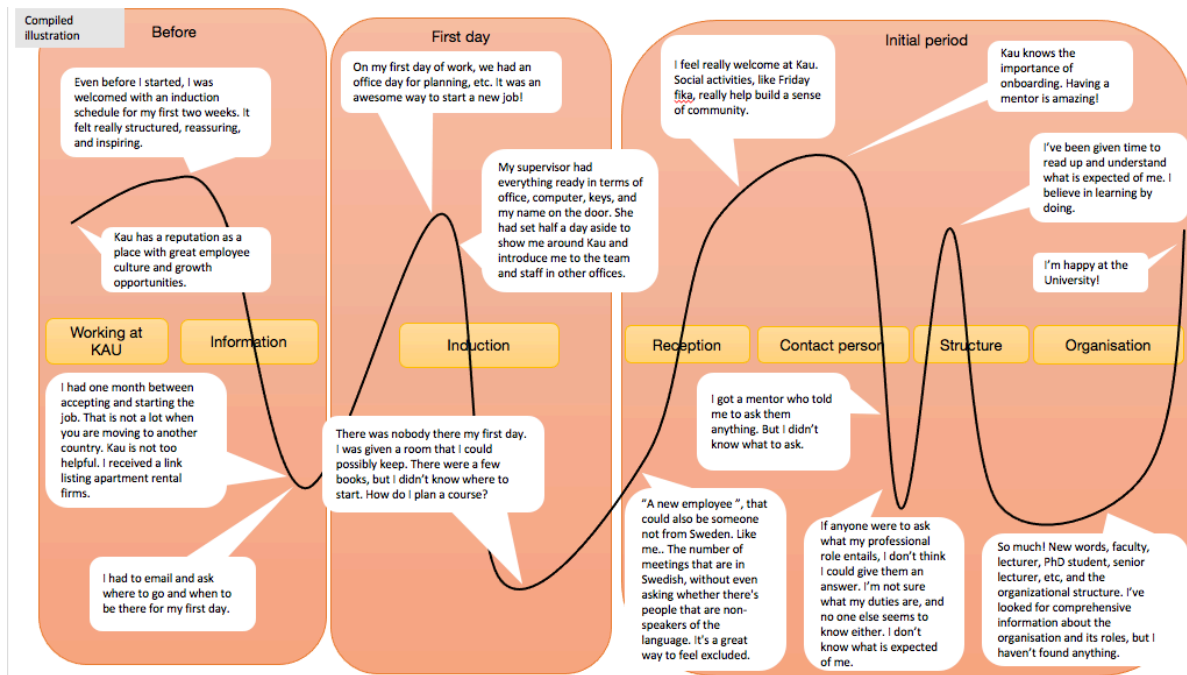


Image 3. Compiled employee journey for all participants supplemented with quotes connected to critical tough points.

Before

The visualisation reveals that even if the employee did not know a lot about the University before starting, there was a positive perception of the opportunities for growth and sense of community between employees. The application process was perceived as positive, and the interviews were well organised and good. Nobody raises issues with their proof of employment, the process regarding when to start, or salary offers. When it comes to information provided to the employee between accepting the position and the start date, there are great differences between employees, a fact that will be explained and illustrated when the customer journeys are broken down. Generally, employees are satisfied with the information material provided. It feels comforting to hold a physical copy in your hand and it makes them feel welcome. Specific information about their particular position, complete with an induction schedule, makes employees feel even better and more reassured ahead of their new job.

However, the time between accepting the position and the start date can be stressful, especially to employees moving from another country. A lot of information and administration are required in relation to accommodation, travel, and the Swedish society. One employee said this in a conversation:

"I had one month between accepting and starting the job. That is not a lot when you are moving to another country. Kau is not too helpful. I received a link listing apartment rental firms."

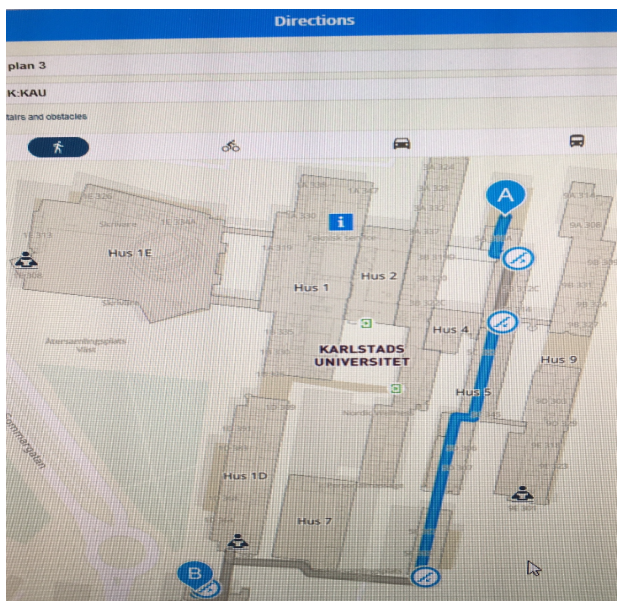
First day

The visualisation reveals that a prepared office and other practical details being taken care of ahead of the first day is a positive experience for the new employee. The opportunity to meet colleagues and someone (not necessarily the supervisor) meeting the new employee and showing them around on their first day is revealed to be a positive experience.

These are two experiences in the form of picture and text submitted by new employees in the digital diaries:



“Friday breakfast! In our office, we have a rolling schedule for breakfast on Fridays. That’s great. Social activities are so important, especially when you’re new.”



“The first is a Mazemap search I tried to follow to get to my introductory meeting at Rethink:Kau. The administrator who was there when I was hired in August 2019 showed me how to use the program. It has given me a better sense of the University’s physical structure, but it still takes me a while to find the right room sometimes. To avoid being late, I normally allow for half an hour to find a room in a part of the University where I haven’t been before. Things like that can be stressful and time-consuming elements in a working day. It makes me feel like I am not accomplishing much or using my time efficiently, even though I know they are necessary elements.”

Initial period

In terms of their welcome, most employees are very pleased with their interaction with colleagues and other people at the University. The importance of social activities is highlighted. Negative experiences for non-Swedish speakers have emerged, for instance if a meeting is in Swedish even though everyone does not understand the language. This represents a negative experience to the new employee.

A personal contact, or mentor, has proven to be a popular feature for many new employees. However, not all mentorships are alike. When the mentor had been given the assignment and there was a

plan for the mentorship, employees highlight it as a very positive experience. Several project participants say that while they were assigned a mentor, the responsibility of asking “the right” questions were on them. That resulted in an experience that was not positive, because they simply did not know what questions to ask.

Another aspect of the initial period for a new employee is related to structure and opportunities to learn and understand their new duties. Vagueness in terms of duties included in the position and what is expected of the new employee has generated negative experiences. Several new employees describe positive experiences after being given the time to understand their new duties and having had the opportunity to structure their own work initially. Some participants said that they wanted to start working right away whereas others wanted to read up on the area first. Having the opportunity to customise the initial period based on individual preference is highlighted as positive.

Most new employees describe struggling with understanding the organisational structure, new words, and titles. Many have searched for information, and the difficulty finding it resulted in negative experiences.

Employee journeys — two premises

Based on recorded experiences in the form of diary entries, conversations, pictures, and a workshop, two distinct premises were made visible.

The employee journeys highlight the importance of there being a clear plan in place for the employee’s initial period at the University. Employees who were included in a plan generally have positive experiences from the time period on which the project focused. Employee induction without a clear plan, however, results in many negative experiences for the employee.

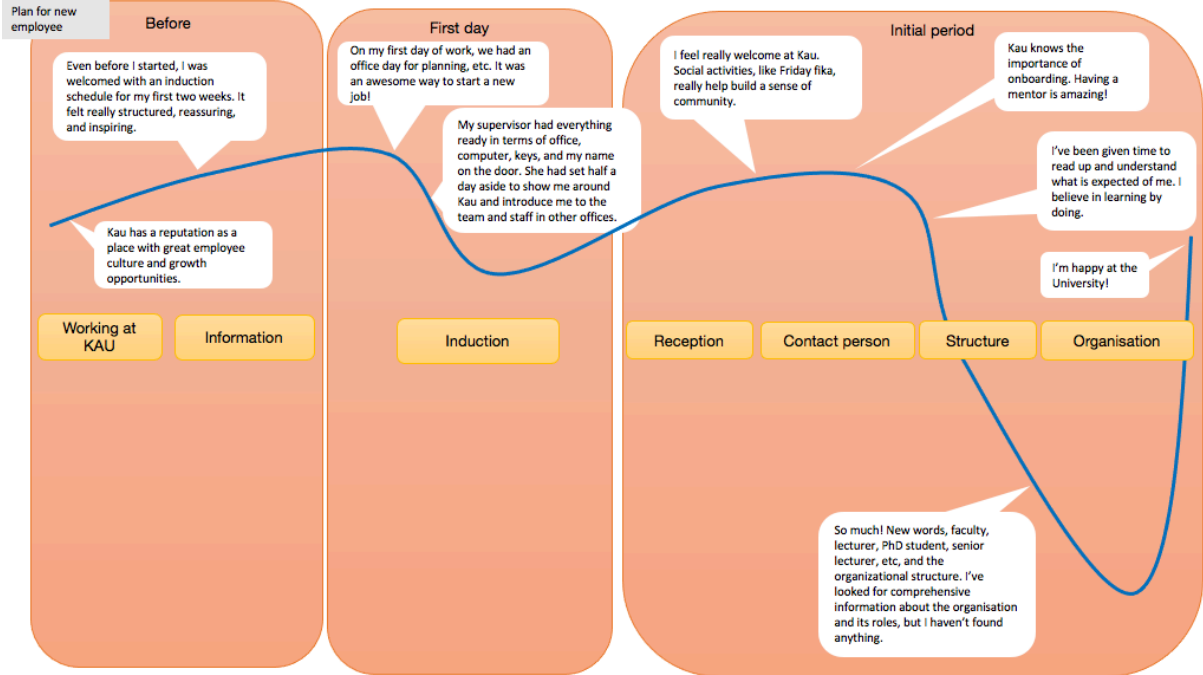


Image 4. The employee where there was a clear induction plan.

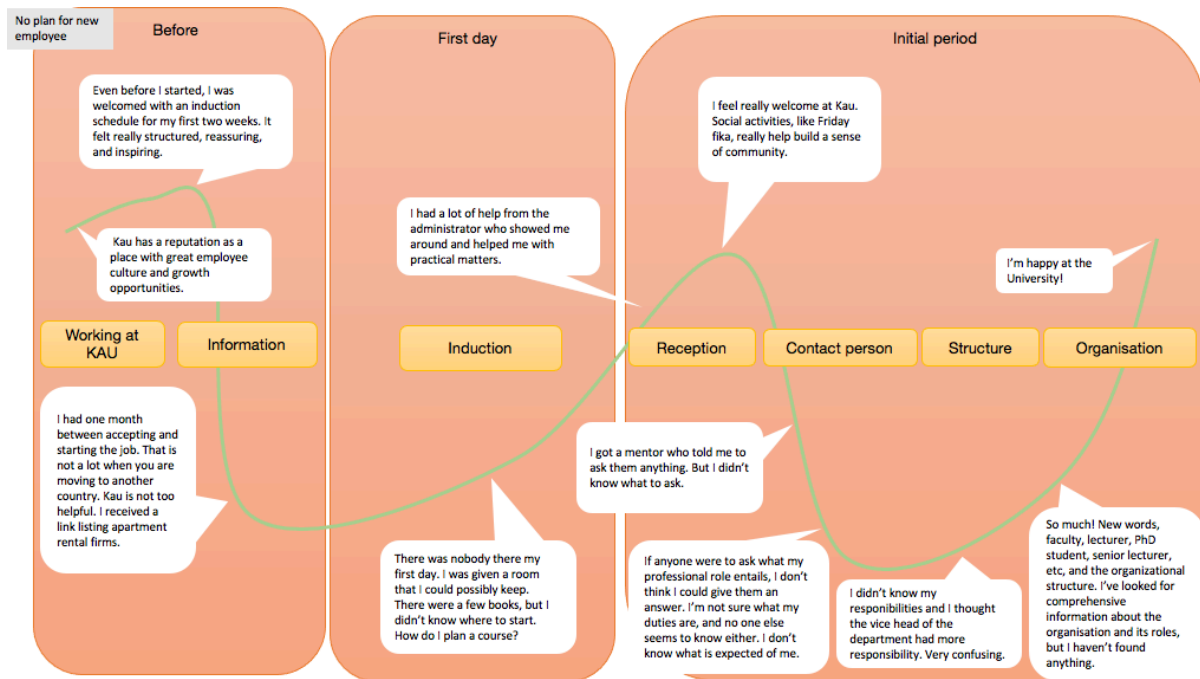


Image 5. The employee where there was no clear induction plan.

Needs and ideas

Illustration of needs

Based on recorded experiences in the form of diary entries, conversations, and pictures, the project has identified needs presented here in the employee journey. The illustration of needs informed the workshop idea generation.

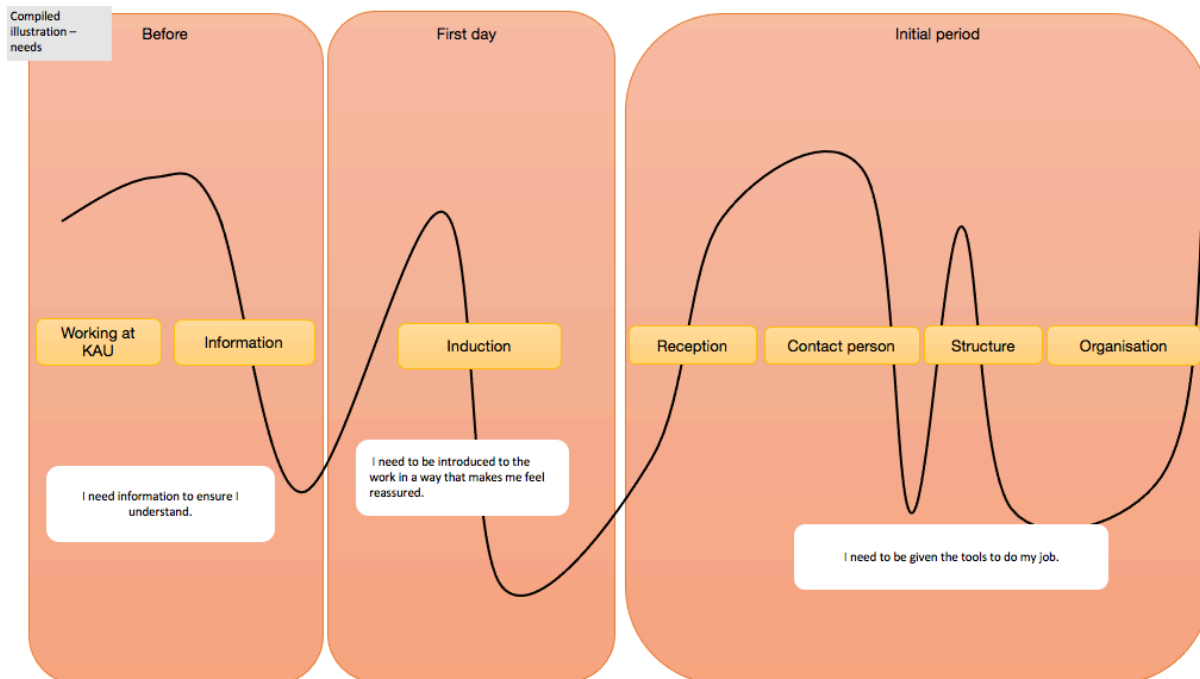


Image 6. Illustration of needs based on employee experiences.

Needs

The identified needs that informed the workshop were:

- **Before I start:** I need information to ensure I understand.
- **First day:** I need to be introduced to the work in a way that makes me feel reassured.
- **Initial period:** I need to be given the tools to do my job.

Workshop

In mid May 2020, a workshop with 13 of the new employees and 6 University employees was conducted to generate ideas on how to address the needs of new employees.

The participants were divided into groups who worked together. A designated management group was formed to keep employees who were unhappy with their induction from finding themselves in the same group as their supervisor. At the workshop, the experiences and needs were presented first. The groups then discussed the feeling connected to the needs. Finally, the groups worked on generating ideas for how to address the needs.

Because of the current situation with Covid-19, the workshop took place on Zoom, the University's tool for online meetings. The workshop started with a run-through of the recorded experiences and a quick survey to see if the workshop participants could relate to the experiences. The illustration of needs was then discussed, allowing the participants to describe the needs of new employees through illustration or drawing a picture. The purpose was to give the participants the opportunity to connect needs with a feeling.



Image 7. How does it feel? Result from one workshop group.

Ideas

The next step in the workshop was to generate ideas for how to address the needs of new employees and specify the value of an idea to the new employee. A great number of ideas was generated by

the participants. After the workshop, the feasible ideas were identified and compiled to inform a discussion about concretisation and organisational responsibility.

- Training management in welcoming new employees. Creating a checklist, guidelines, and reminders. Incorporating it in management induction. Reception includes the mentor, everything being ready, activities, keeping the rest of the team updated.
- An onboarding system that could be personalised.
- More information for new employees on Inslaget.
- Help for new employees. One designated person per faculty/Central Services in charge of organising short lunchtime/coffee lectures dedicated to new employee FAQs where they have a chance to meet other new employees and get to know each other. These could include tours, info about organisational structure, various labour law issues, etc. The same person should be helpful with issues related to accommodation, bank matters, or getting a personal identity number if the employee is moving from abroad.

CONCLUSIONS FROM A SERVICE DESIGN PROCESS

In a study where user experience informs the understanding of needs, it is important to reflect on the selection of methods and how they influence the findings. This project has prioritised the emphasis on employee autonomy in terms of how they submit their experiences. This has been consistent throughout the project. The employees have chosen to submit their experiences in different ways and the project team has been active in their efforts to understand the employees' submission preferences. Another prioritised part of the project method has been not to ask the employees specific questions. The basic idea has been to ask the employees how they are doing and how things are going, and to think back to when they first started at Karlstad University. This is key in ensuring that the project team and project participants do not influence the project findings.

Some employees wrote more elaborate diary entries once a week, others wrote shorter entries several times a week. Some employees only submitted one or two text entries but participated in conversations. Freedom in terms of submission form is a success factor for this type of project.

The project made the deliberate choice to conduct *conversations* and not call them *interviews*. The purpose of this is connected to the aim of making the employees feel at ease knowing there is no pressure to perform within the project. The word conversation was chosen to lower the bar and emphasise the point of the conversations: To talk about the employees' experiences and gain a deeper level of understanding of the situation for new employees at Karlstad University. Ahead of each conversation, the individual employees submitted experiences that informed the conversation. The employees then felt that their submitted experiences were received and used, which may have encouraged them to submit more experiences.

Visualisation through employee journeys very clearly describes the employees' experiences. Connecting quotes from the employees' experiences to the employee journeys further amplifies the message. Visualising employee needs in the form of an employee journey has also proven very useful in the project. The workshop that was organised for new employees and University staff used an employee journey with identified and highlighted needs as an entry point for the generation of ideas and activities.