

# Employee Onboarding Plan

## Before Your New Employee Starts

The act of onboarding a new employee is often one of the most crucial factors in ensuring your talent will be productive and content. The faster you can get started with the process, the better.

Before a new employee starts, ask yourself:

- What kind of goals will you set for this person?
- How much do they know about the work environment/culture?
- How long will your onboarding process last?
- How will you measure the success of the programme?
- What are the major milestones for the process? (e.g., 1 day, 1 week, 1 month, 3 months, 6 months, 1 year)

As soon as you offer a job to someone new, give them access to as much information as possible, including a glossary of company acronyms, photos of the people they'll be working with, and a copy of the employee handbook. Other things to cover include:

- Setting up the new person's desk, computer, password and email address
- Making sure they know where to go for guidance
- Filling out paperwork and crucial forms
- Providing them with a list of their responsibilities

Now that you're prepared, let's look at what you can do to onboard your employee one milestone at a time.

## On the First Day

The first day will feature a combination of housekeeping tasks and educational moments. You can also offer education in the form of a history of your company, a list of critical values, and a complete guide to the role that the employee has been hired for.

Help your new employee to settle in by:

- Delivering a crystal-clear overview of what their responsibilities are, and how their progress will be measured going forward.
- Taking them on a tour of the office and introducing them to the people that they will be working with both regularly, and on occasion.
- Greeting the employee in a friendly way when they arrive on the premises (let your receptionist know to expect the new team member).
- Explaining the ins-and-outs of the workplace. For instance, when and where do people usually take their lunch, are there any cultural experiences to be aware of, like dress-down Fridays?
- Making sure their workspace is set up for them with all the necessary supplies that they'll need.

Some employers also use welcome gifts like flowers or a branded coffee mug to make newcomers feel like part of the team. The smallest gestures can reduce some of the stress associated with the first day of a new job.

## During the First Week

Studies suggest that three-fourths of new hires consider training to be crucial in the first week of a new job. Though you hired your new employee because they had the right skills, it's up to you to show them how they can use those skills to shine on the job.

During the first week:

- Schedule time for training: Don't inundate your hires with too much information too fast. Provide training in manageable chunks and offer opportunities for shadowing too.
- Immerse them into the team: Make sure that the new hire is welcome at all team meetings, and set up one-to-one sessions with their manager so that they can deliver frequent feedback.
- Assign small, useful starter tasks: Focus on getting your newcomer up-to-date with the ins and outs of their job through tasks that aren't too challenging.
- Provide plenty of time for networking and interacting: Encourage your employee to go to the break room for lunch and take part in after-work activities so that they can begin to develop bonds.

By the end of the first week, your new hire will understand the basics of being a part of your team. They'll feel clear about their role, and how they can interact with other team members, and they will be in the process of making some new friends.

During the first week, your new member of staff will also have an opportunity to find out where they fit within your current company culture, which means that they'll feel less "out of place" in the coming weeks.

## During the First Month

The first month is a process of continuous improvement and development for new team members. Your people will be learning what it's like to be a dynamic part of your team, and they'll also start to come up with personal goals for what they'd like to achieve with your business in the future.

Set up small one-to-one interactions in the first month where you can discuss any questions your new employee might have and clarify any uncertainties. Don't miss the opportunity to ask for your staff member's feedback on the onboarding process so far too. This is a great time to find out whether they need any extra support in a specific area like getting to know new people or understanding the tools they're expected to use.

It's particularly useful to encourage your people to choose a mentor or "hero" employee that they'd like to turn to for guidance by the end of the first month.

A mentor at work can be a valuable tool when you're getting started - particularly if you're exploring a new role or sector. The [Aberdeen group](#) found that high-performing companies are 2 and a half times more likely to assign mentors or coaches to the onboarding process.

If your employee can't find a mentor by themselves, consider assigning them one based on factors like shared ambitions. Once you find a mentor for your new arrival, encourage regular meetings between them, as well as shadowing sessions where the more recent employee can learn from the veteran.

## During the First 3 Months (90 Days)

The most successful onboarding programmes don't happen overnight. It can take several months to welcome someone into your business. During the first 3 months, remember to check in frequently, schedule meetings, and give your employees plenty of opportunities to air any concerns they may have.

According to the [Society for Human Resources](#), the first 3 months of your onboarding strategy will concentrate on making hires feel:

- More confident in their roles
- Clear on the expectations you have for them
- Socially integrated into the team
- Immersed in the company culture

To achieve these four goals:

- Deliver plenty of continued training opportunities: Training and shadowing must continue until your employee feels confident and comfortable in their role. Studies show that people can forget up to 79% of what they've learned in a month with no follow-up educational activities.
- Schedule interactions with crucial people in the business: Make sure that your new staff members have a chance to meet with business leaders, shareholders and executives, not just the employees that they'll be working with every day, this will make them feel more immersed within the company culture.
- Assign the first major task or project: Start giving your newcomer a chance to demonstrate their skills and prove their value with significant tasks. Be clear on the objectives of the project and the expected deliverables before they get started.

Remember to regularly solicit feedback from your new hire too. Ask them what's working for them in the current onboarding process, and what they would like to change. As you continue to welcome diverse new people onto your team, you'll find that everyone has their own onboarding needs and preferences.

## During the First 6 Months (180 Days)

The Aberdeen group suggests that only 15% of companies continue to onboard after 6 months. However, 90% of people decide whether to stay or go within that initial period.

When the first 3 months have passed, you're dealing with an employee who understands the basics of your organisation and knows how to perform well in their job. However, this doesn't mean onboarding needs to stop. The goal between the 3 and 6 month milestones is to encourage ongoing development in your staff members.

Maintain progress by:

- Performing an Employee Assessment: After the first 6 months, conduct an assessment to see how much progress your new staff member has made so far. Discuss both the expectations you have for your employee and any personal goals they may have set for themselves.

- **Provide Plenty of Recognition:** During the full first 6 months, don't forget to recognise anything that your newcomer accomplishes. The more you can provide useful feedback, the quicker your team member will settle into their role. During your 6-month review, help the individual see the impact that their work has made on the business to give greater meaning to their role.
- **Introduce New Functional Training Opportunities:** Now that you've finished delivering basic training, it's time to look for development opportunities that serve your new employee's goals. For instance, do they want to become a manager? Look for ways they can learn leadership skills. If they hope to move to a new role in the next 5 years, work on expanding their knowledge in techniques crucial to that position.

The first 6 months is an excellent opportunity for employers to show their people that they're truly invested in their progress. With feedback and new training opportunities, you can help your people to visualise a long-term future with your organisation.

## **During the First 12 Months**

According to a professor from Harvard Business School, Michael Watkins, new employees only begin to show their real value after the first 6 to 7 months. In the period between the 6 month and 12-month milestones, you'll be able to start uncovering your new hire's true potential and planning what you can do to develop them in the years to come.

The end of the first year is the period when the typical onboarding experience transitions into a process of retention and ongoing employee engagement. As well as shifting from on-the-job training to continuous development, make sure that you:

- **Arrange informal meetings with employees:** During this time, discuss the things that you think the staff member can do better, and ask them for feedback on your onboarding process. This is a chance for you to develop your strategy for future employees.
- **Discuss plans for the year ahead:** Let your newcomer know that they're now a valuable part of your team for the long-term and share with them some of your goals for the years ahead. Ask them about their targets too and see where you can make the two concepts align. For instance, if you want to expand your business, you'll need new managers. If your employee wants to earn a promotion, you can look for ways to help them become a good candidate for a managerial position.
- **Celebrate the first year:** Draw attention to the challenges that your employee overcame during the first year and show them that you appreciate their hard work. This is a great way to build their confidence and convince them that they're making a difference to your team.

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I began my career in media sales where I managed large sales teams. 18 years ago I moved to Oxfordshire and began recruiting for the UK automotive industry.

In 2009 I launched Copeland Automotive Recruitment to provide high quality, efficient yet highly personal executive search and recruitment services for Vehicle Manufacturers, Fleet & Financial Services, Marketing Agencies and Automotive Suppliers.

Julia Pennington  
Managing Director

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