

Ensuring New Employees' Success: Best Practices for Employee Onboarding

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Imagine it's your first day at a new job. You arrive at an office where no one seems to be expecting you. After locating your workstation, you realize that no one has shown you how to log into your computer or get an outside line on your phone. You do not have a clear idea of what you are expected to do first in your new job. Your supervisor is nowhere to be found, and you are starting to question your decision to accept this position.

As the above scenario suggests, an organization never gets a second chance to make a first impression with its new hires. Investing in employee onboarding ensures that an organization is prepared for and committed to positioning its new hires for success in their new roles.

Effective employee onboarding serves three interrelated purposes. First, it ensures that the new hire feels welcomed, comfortable, prepared, and supported. These feelings increase the new hire's ability to make an impact within the organization, both immediately and over time. Finally, employee success leads to satisfaction and retention, which allows the organization to continue to meet its mission.

To position a new hire for success, it is important that an organization prepares in advance and continues to support the new employee throughout the first several months (and beyond). This article explores some tried-and-true best practices for employee onboarding.

Before the First Day

Preparing for a new hire's start date is the first step. Start by completing an agenda for the employee's first week on the job. Schedule times for the new hire to meet with key staff members. Provide staff members with the new employee's résumé and job description and advise them to follow a meeting format that includes sharing a description of their own positions, how their roles interact with that of the new hire, and how they might expect to work together in the future. This is also a good time to assign a mentor or buddy to the new hire as an immediate resource for any questions, help him or her build a network, educate the new employee about resources, and give him or her key information about organizational culture and goals.

Next, create a comfortable workstation for the new employee. Stock his or her workstation with the tools needed to hit the ground running, such as paper, pens, computer, phone, keys, and business cards. Make sure that voice mail and e-mail accounts are set up. Leave a copy of an organization chart, staff list, and phone directory on the new hire's desk. If your organization has a new employee handbook, leave it on the desk as well. To really impress someone on his or her first day, add any branded collateral that you can spare—a logo backpack, hat, T-shirt, or mug.

Finally, make sure all administrative forms—such as employment, direct deposit, and benefits—are ready to be completed on day one.

The First Day

The first day of a new job can rattle the nerves of even the most experienced professional. The better prepared you are to welcome the new hire on his or her first day, the easier this transition will be for everyone.

Schedule a particular staff member to be available to greet the new employee and give an office tour. During the office tour, introduce the new hire to all staff members as well as point out the copy machine, mail room, employee mailboxes, lunch room, and restrooms. Remember that new hires are asked to absorb a lot of information in a short amount of time, so they will likely have questions about these things later.

Balance the first day's schedule between orientation, meetings, and less formal gatherings. Arrange for a group of staff members to treat the new hire to lunch on the first day.

Schedule a meeting with the employee's supervisor for the first afternoon. During this meeting, the supervisor should review the responsibilities of the position and give an overview of what the first 30-90 days in the position will look like.

During the First Week

Whereas the first day entails presenting a good deal of information to the new hire, the first week focuses on the exchange between the new employee and other staff members, primarily between the new staffer's supervisor and/or direct reports.

During the first week, the supervisor and new hire should meet to discuss

desired management style and information about typical processes, such as how decisions are made. This is also the time to agree on expectations and create a timeline for deliverables.

If the new hire will have a supervisory role, ensure that he or she meets with any direct reports one-on-one and as a group within the first week. These meetings will help build the new team, provide context and orientation toward the department/team, and allow the new hire to get a sense of each team member's work style.

It is also important for the new hire to interact with other staff that may not be on his or her immediate team. Schedule at least one meeting per day with staff members outside the employee's team or department. These meetings give the new employee a way to learn about the whole organization from many different perspectives and to create new relationships with key staff members.

In addition to interacting with internal staff, if it is appropriate for his or her role, ensure that the new hire meets in person with partners, funders, board members, or other constituents within the first month. Encourage each new hire to notify personal and professional contacts of his or her new role, thereby providing a marketing opportunity for your organization.

The First Three Months ... and Beyond

Effective employee onboarding continues past the first week. Throughout the first three months, stay mindful of opportunities to integrate new hires into their work groups and into the organization as a whole.

After 90 days, have the supervisor provide formal feedback on the new hire's performance and also solicit feedback from the employee. Depending on the organization's culture and policies, this meeting could involve a representative of the Human Resources Department. During this meeting, any issues of concern should be addressed and accomplishments noted so that all parties are confident that the new hire is poised for success in his or her role.

Finally, remember to build opportunities for feedback into the onboarding process. Encourage the new hire to note any ideas that he or she has for improving the operations, strategy, or culture of the organization. The new hire may or may not feel comfortable sharing these suggestions

immediately, but it is important that the organization be open to the impressions of someone who is coming in with fresh eyes. Allow employee onboarding to be an iterative process, one that evolves with your organization's growth.

Although all of these steps require an investment of time and resources, it is an investment that will pay enormous dividends for your organization for years to come.

Source:

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