



[Virtual] Onboarding Done Right

Employee onboarding is a complex step in the hiring process. It includes multiple moving parts, including paperwork, training schedules, and team introductions, yet needs to feel seamless for the employee – and it's even more complicated for remote working arrangements.

Whether you're onboarding employees for a satellite office, opening a new location from afar, or adding work-from-home employees to the team, it's important to provide a warm welcome and an organized process, even if you can't do it in person.

If you've been tasked with onboarding remote workers, consider these ten best practices:

1. Don't wait for the first day. There are no second chances at making a great first impression. Onboarding begins before the first day. Prior to Day 1, call or email your new employee to share the itinerary for the first few days, contact information for management, and address any questions or concerns.

To express your excitement, consider sending a welcome package in the mail, such as branded merchandise or a gift along with a letter from the team.

2. Be organized. On the first day, create a "we're ready for you" environment to help your new employees feel confident about their decision to accept the job. There are a number of ways you can be prepared, including:

- Ensure their equipment and tools are in place
- Set up accounts for IT systems, such as email, CRM, cloud-based programs, etc.
- Assign someone to reach out by phone or video conference early in the day

3. Leverage onboarding software. Paperwork is an inevitable part of onboarding. Streamline these steps with an online employee onboarding portal. This provides easy employee access (before the first day, if you'd like) and allows HR to monitor and secure the whole process.

4. Acclimate new employees to the team. It's important for new employees to create meaningful connections with colleagues, management, and direct reports. Set up a video conference call to make personal, face-to-face introductions to the team during the first week. Depending on the size of the team, you may need to spread this out over a few days.

5. Use the buddy system. Assign mentors to new hires. A mentorship program makes an onboarding program more efficient and effective, especially for off-site workers. Mentors serve as resources for questions, help new employees build a network, and offer key information about the company culture.

6. Set the stage for effective communication. Remote workers rely on technology to communicate. Make sure your new hires understand how to use all forms of communication (including company email, instant messaging, video conference software, and phone) and how to troubleshoot technology issues.

7. Map out a training plan and schedule. Create personalized training schedules using a variety of methods and tools to boost engagement and make the process enjoyable. Include a mix of video and interactive training courses, along with games and quizzes. Include links to your intranet and other online resources to make additional learning easy to find and searchable.

8. Define expectations. The last thing you want is confused and unsure employees. Make sure that new hires have a clear understanding of their roles within the company and job duties. During the first week, discuss expectations on deliverables, timelines, and performance. Explain the roles of key team members, how the team works together, and the company's processes and procedures.

9. Assign a small project. To boost productivity and help new employees feel engaged from the start, assign a task that will allow them to quickly make a positive contribution to the team. This will also give you time to review their work style and identify any immediate training needs.

10. Schedule regular check-ins. Nothing can trip up remote working arrangements more than lack of communication. Continue to check in with new employees on a regular basis to make sure the job fits their expectations. As a rule of thumb, call or email every day for the first week and then connect weekly for the first 90 days. This will lay a foundation of trust and respect and establish open dialogue and communication from the very start.

Following these onboarding best practices will help you guide remote workers toward productivity and peak performance, while providing the resources they need to be successful. As a result, not only will you create a positive first impression, you'll have a solid foundation to build lasting working relationships.

If you'd like to learn more about onboarding or need help creating a remote orientation and training process, please connect with us!

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