Give New Hires the VIP Treatment:

Onboard for Engagement, Retention and Performance

Those new hires you worked so hard to recruit? They're at their most impressionable and vulnerable during their first days and weeks with your organization.

Treat your new hires like royalty! This comprehensive guide contains everything you need to get promising new employees off to a great start.

This eBook will cover:

- *The reasons why onboarding matters to your business*

- *Tips for effective onboarding*

- *Ideas to onboard contingent workers (they need VIP treatment too!)*

- *A mini checklist for your onboarding program*

Put on your best outfit, roll out the red carpet, and let's get started!

Retention and Long-Term Employee Success Starts With Onboarding

The first few days of a new job sets the tone for an employee's entire tenure and informs their ultimate opinion of what it's like to work at your organization.

A rocky start can be difficult to recover from. If onboarding is disorganized or incomplete, it can show a new employee the company is disorganized and unsupportive of new employees.

A comprehensive onboarding program improves engagement right from the start, setting up new employees for success and generating feelings of goodwill and loyalty.

Effective Onboarding Generates Real ROI

Most hiring managers spend more than 40 percent of their time filling vacancies. Turnover is costly for any organization in terms of both hard and soft costs, but turnover can be nipped in the bud with a strong onboarding program. According to data from the Society for Human Resource Management:

- **86 percent** *of employers believe a new employee decides within six months whether they are going to stay with a company long term.*

- *Employees who went through an onboarding program were* **58 percent** *more likely to still be employed by the organization after three years.*

- **66 percent** *of companies with onboarding programs have higher successful assimilation rates.*

- **62 percent** *of companies with onboarding programs had higher time-to-productivity ratios.*

- **54 percent** *of companies with onboarding programs boasted higher employee engagement levels.*

New Employees Will Make Snap Judgments …

A poor first impression can cause a new employee to hit the road before the ink is dry on their employee paperwork.

- **5 percent** of new employees quit after a poor experience on their first day.

- **20 percent** will leave within the first 45 days of employment.

- **Nearly 1/3** of new employees leave a company before the end of their first year.

… *And They Have Long Memories*

Even if an employee sticks it out for three months, a poor onboarding process will stick with them. Those first few days and weeks on the job play a role in whether they decide to stay or go.

According to a 2017 survey that asked employees why they left their jobs:

- **23 percent** *said they would have liked to have had clear guidelines regarding their responsibilities.*

- **21 percent** *said they would have liked more training.*

- **17 percent** *said that a helpful co-worker would have greatly improved their experience.*

What Makes an Onboarding Program Succeed?

Just what type of program lays the foundation for success? The answer depends on the culture of your organization, its structure, and a host of other factors. However, all successful onboarding programs cover three critical areas:

1. **Operational Success:** Employees need tools in order to do their jobs well. Onboarding programs must include comprehensive training on technology, processes and procedures. It should also include discussions about goals for the new employee, so they have a roadmap to guide them in their first few months.

2. **Strategic Success:** Whether an employee is a senior leader or an entry-level contributor, it is important to tie their work and their role into the overarching mission, vision and goals of the company. People want to know where they fit in the big picture. Understanding how even their most mundane tasks move the company forward can set the stage for engagement on day one.

3. **Social Success:** An employee can be highly skilled, but if they don't feel like they fit in with their peers, they will not be happy, they will not produce their best work and they will not stick around for long. Making an employee feel welcome is crucial for laying foundations for social success.

Effective Onboarding: Execution Starts Before Day One

Unique onboarding practices vary from company to company, but the most successful programs begin before an employee's first day.

Once an employee has accepted a job offer, agreed on a start date and returned their preliminary paperwork, their new manager should send them a letter welcoming them to the company and to the team.

This letter should include:

- *A sincere welcome expressing excitement they will be joining the company.*

- *An outline of the new employee's day-one schedule, including where to report when they enter the building.*

- *A list of any materials/documents they need to bring with them.*

- *Helpful tips such as where to park, which elevator to take, etc.*

- *Links to any company intranet information that may be helpful to them before their first day.*

- *Any other personalized tidbits that show the employee you are looking forward to working with them.*

Making Day One a Success

When a new employee starts, the entire team should roll out the red carpet.

Forgetting that a new person is starting, failing to meet them when they arrive, making them wait or wondering where they need to be will not set the right tone.

Use these tips to make day one a success:

Prepare their desk/workstation a few days in advance. If they'll be using a computer, be sure it's properly set up, all necessary logins have been created, and provide them with a few pens, a pad of paper, etc. For non-office jobs, make sure the new hire has all the tools and supplies they'll need to perform their job – and they have a clean, organized and well-stocked work area waiting for them.

Formally welcome them in some way. If you have a lobby sign, add "Welcome Jane Smith" to it, or print out a welcome sign and put it in the new employee's office, desk or workstation.

Make sure someone is there to meet them. If their manager gets called away unexpectedly, assign a senior team member to greet the new person at the front desk and take them to their new workstation.

Print a day-one orientation schedule. Provide the new employee with their orientation schedule, so they know what to expect.

Take them on a tour. Take them around the entire facility, even to departments they may not interact with very much. Make sure the new employee knows where the lunchroom, coffee pot and restrooms are.

Take them to lunch. It's always a nice gesture to take a new employee to lunch on their first day. Traditionally, their manager would do this, but it can be more effective to provide a few team members with some cash and allow some peer-to-peer time.

Schedule an end-of-day debrief. Sit down with the new employee at the end of the day to talk about how things went.

The Nuts and Bolts of Successful Onboarding

A feel-good first few weeks isn't just about lunches and welcome signs and friendly faces. It's also about setting the employee up for operational and strategic success.

Include these elements for a better onboarding experience:

Give a company orientation: Talk about the company, its history, mission, vision and values. Discuss its current market position and any important industry-specific information the employee needs to know.

Discuss specific responsibilities: Go over the job description and talk about the employee's specific responsibilities. Then tie those responsibilities back to the company mission, vision and values.

Set goals: Goals show the company has a vested interest in the employee's success. It also provides them with a roadmap for their ramp-up phase and communicates priorities. Managers should present the new employee with a set of goals for the first:

- Week
- Month
- Two Months
- 90 days
- Six Months

Assign a mentor: New employees often don't know who to ask when they have a question, so they simply do not ask it. Mentors give them a go-to person they can talk to without feeling intimidated or embarrassed. Choose mentors strategically, and be certain they are people whose habits you want rubbing off on a new person. If your organization doesn't have a mentorship program, pair the new hire with an experienced employee who is willing to be an ongoing resource for them.

Provide a formal training schedule: Learning a new job takes time. Provide employees with a formal training schedule for learning their new tasks.

Make Onboarding a Team Effort

Remember, the social aspect of onboarding is equally as important as operational and strategic aspects. By including the team in the onboarding process, you provide incentives for existing employees to reach out and support new workers.

You can accomplish team onboarding in several ways:

Assign lunch buddies: *Each day for the first week, assign a team member to invite the new employee to lunch to build relationships.*

Give each team member a training task: *Based on strengths, assign training tasks to each member of the team. Include aspects such as:*

- *Critical software programs*
- *Processes and procedures*
- *Training on important clients or vendor relationships*

Set milestones and goals: *Make sure each member of the training team is given a firm date for competency in their assigned area.*

Reward them: *Employees who successfully complete their training should be rewarded with something meaningful. It could be a small gift card, a few hours off or some other type of reward that is worth striving for.*

Schedule a happy hour: *After the employee has completed two weeks, put together an after-hours happy hour to celebrate and give the team a chance to continue to build relationships with their new colleague.*

Onboarding Is an Ongoing Process

Onboarding doesn't stop after week one. Managers and peers need to provide ongoing support for new employees to help them ramp up.

- *Schedule regular check-ins with the new employee to talk about how they are progressing.*

- *Talk to their mentor regularly, to get their perspective.*

- *Celebrate the new employee's milestones in team meetings.*

Don't Forget Your Contingent Workforce!

Many employers struggle to find quality contingent workers, but those same employers often neglect to onboard temporary staff. They simply throw them into the deep end and expect them to swim.

Yes, temporary workers are "used to" starting new jobs, but that actually can be much more of a challenge. Each new assignment comes with new technology, new processes, new procedures, new people and new cultures. They can't be expected to know everything about the job on day one.

Taking time to orient temporary staff can pay dividends, ramping them up much more quickly and making them feel more valued and connected to their work.

How to Successfully Onboard Contingent Workers

Contingent workers do not need to be put through the same intricate onboarding process as permanent staff. However, your temporary program should mirror your permanent program, providing the same types of resources and information.

You can successfully onboard temporary staff by:

- Requiring temporary workers to fill out all their paperwork before day one.

- Providing temporary workers with detailed job descriptions and performance expectations before they start working.

- Making sure all the materials they need are prepared and ready to go before they arrive.

- Having someone welcome new temporaries at the door.

- Having an orientation session to familiarize them with the company.

- Reviewing all vital safety information.

- Assigning each contingent worker a "buddy" to whom they can go to with questions.

Onboarding Mini Checklist

Contingent workers do not need to be put through the same intricate onboarding process as permanent staff. However, your temporary program should mirror your permanent program, providing the same types of resources and information.

Before Start Date

- ☐ Notify staff of new employee and start date
- ☐ Assign a mentor
- ☐ Secure all IT logins
- ☐ Set up workstation
- ☐ Set up phone
- ☐ Send all necessary information to payroll

First Day

- ☐ Provide new employee handbook/orientation materials
- ☐ Review key policies and obtain signed acknowledgment
- ☐ Go over critical safety information
- ☐ Complete paperwork
- ☐ Make introductions (manager, co-workers, buddy)
- ☐ Conduct facilities tour
- ☐ Review position description/job duties
- ☐ Establish first week To-Do's
- ☐ Schedule required training

Ongoing

- ☐ Schedule regular check-ins with new employee
- ☐ Cross-reference progress with established goals and milestones
- ☐ Schedule follow-up training on concepts or tasks
- ☐ Schedule training for new concepts or tasks

Are You Ready to Boost Engagement, Productivity and Retention?

An effective onboarding process that rolls out the red carpet for new employees will pay dividends over the long term. Employees with a solid foundation for success will ramp up faster, produce more, feel more connected to their work and be more loyal to the company.

However, overhauling your onboarding process isn't easy.

Working with a recruiting partner is an effective way to start improving your onboarding processes immediately. A strong partner can ensure new employees are prepared before they ever step through the door, they can provide outside support to employees, and they can even conduct orientations for you.

This support is critical, especially for contingent workers. The right partner can help you onboard short-term workers quickly, so they feel confident jumping in and making contributions immediately.

Your employees are your greatest asset. Make them feel like VIPs from day one, and watch your retention, engagement and productivity skyrocket.

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