**Employee onboarding (Induction)**

Building a strong onboarding process is the best way to welcome, and retain, new employees. Effective onboarding is all about planning ahead and thinking from your new employee’s point of view.

Onboarding is a crucial part of the recruitment process. It doesn’t begin and end on your new employee’s first day with you - it starts at the beginning of your selection process and ends when your new employee is fully settled into their role.

And the sooner new employees are made to feel welcomed and equipped to fulfil their role, the sooner your company will reap the rewards of their skills and experience. That makes it critical to develop a carefully considered onboarding process.

Here’s a planning timeline and some checklists that HR professionals and hiring managers can use to design a good employee onboarding experience:

**The onboarding process can increase retention rates**

First impressions count, and an effective employee onboarding process doesn’t just ensure your new employee becomes a productive team member sooner, but it can also [enhance staff retention rates](https://www.roberthalf.com.au/management-advice/team/employee-retention).

**Key steps to effective employee onboarding**

The best way to get new team members off to a brilliant start is to provide a warm welcome and an effective orientation. Welcoming a new staff member involves several important steps.

**1. Have a clear onboarding process in place**

Preparation for onboarding a new employee needs to start well before they walk through the door. Be sure to:

* **Help new employees prepare** – Let your new employee know key workplace details in advance of their first day. Fill them in on the dress code, where to park or public transport options, and of course, the time they should arrive at the office on their first day.
* **Provide a functioning workstation** – Your newest employee needs to be up and running in their role from day one. This means having a phone line and email account established before they arrive as well as a clean work space that is ready to be used.
* **Arrange orientation** – Confidence and clarity are essential to enable new employees to perform the job they were hired to do. A proper orientation not only ensures your new employee is aware of their obligations but also allows them to get up and running more smoothly and quickly than if you leave them to their own devices.
* **Organise the necessary paperwork -** Nothing wastes time and leaves a bad impression more than having to chase forms and manuals on a new employee’s first day. Have any tax or superannuation forms ready as well as any employee handbooks or manuals.

**2. Schedule the first day**

A new employee’s success can be established as early as the first two weeks, so it is important to make the first day a special one. To help a new employee to settle in quickly make them feel welcome and relaxed with these tips:

* **Announce the new hire** with a welcome email to the team and/or organisation in days prior to the new employee commencing. Let the receptionist know in advance to greet your newest employee when they arrive.
* **Introduce the team** to your new employee and guide them around the workplace to meet key people throughout the organisation. Gathering the team for coffee is a good way to bond in a social setting. It can also be a chance to familiarise your new employee with the projects you'd like them to tackle in the coming days and weeks – and meet the colleagues they will be working alongside for each task.
* **Show them around the workplace**. Explain where the stationery cupboard is, where the staff kitchen, toilets and company meeting rooms are located, and offer a few tips on the best places to grab lunch or coffee.

Allow your new employee some downtime to set up their desk and equipment, set new passwords and log in to their new accounts.

* **Assign a buddy** – A buddy can provide guidance during the first few days, introduce the new employee to other team members around the office and provide advice about key events in their new schedule. A buddy can also be charged with taking the new employee out to lunch with some of their key team members.

**3. Weeks 1 – 2** (see [Induction / Onboarding Checklist](Induction_Orientation%20checklist%20template%20-%20Mar%202019.docx))

Part of making a positive impression is to be clear about what you expect your new employee to do, as well as gaining a good understanding of how they would like to work and evolve in their role.

**Establish goals and responsibilities** – You will have touched on this during the hiring process, but the onboarding process offers an ideal time to go into detail about assignments and expectations. Also discuss the evaluation process and scheduling of the performance review. Go over a 3-month roadmap of key projects and set performance objectives for first 3 months, 6 months and year. (see [Performance Review and Development Template](../4%20Retention/Performance%20Management/Performance%20Review%20%26%20Development%20Template%20-130219.docx))

* **Policies and Procedures** (see ICDA Policy Bank)
* **Occupational Health and Safety** (see ICDA Policy Bank)
* **Schedule training** – Talk to your new employee about training opportunities for new skills that may be required. Book in relevant internal training, conferences and webinars. Establishing employee training as a priority for the organisation assures the new employee that you value the contribution they can make to the organisation and that you support their ongoing development.
* **Review mentoring opportunities** – Mentors not only offer invaluable advice and guidance to new employees, they can also act as a sounding board for ideas and concerns. Moreover, having a 'go-to' person can play a pivotal role in retaining top talent, building a better work culture and improving team performance. Consider assigning a mentor early in the employee onboarding process.
* **Broader Onboarding -** Encourage team members (especially those on the interview panel) to reach out to your new employee to congratulate them on their appointment and welcome them to the team. This goes a long way in establishing strong relationships early in their career.

Conduct a formal HR onboarding meeting, including details about pay and benefits, leave and other relevant policies, company structure, team culture and review your company’s vision, mission and values.

Schedule formal meetings with each department, not just those the employee will partner with but all departments throughout the organisation, so that they can get a full understanding of different parts of your organisation.

Schedule meaningful work tasks that get the new employee up and running.

**4. Help them settle into their role**

Successfully onboarding a new employee is not an overnight process. It can take several months so be prepared to check in often, and schedule regular catch-ups to give new employees the opportunity to air any concerns and receive feedback on their progress. Take the time to observe them and ask questions - do they understand the organisation and their role? Ask for feedback on your onboarding process so you can improve the process for future new hires

Don’t overlook recognition. Keep the employee motivated and engaged by celebrating success. It could be as simple as noting the new employee’s achievements in a team meeting.

The time invested in an effective employee onboarding process will reap rewards. It can lead to a faster learning curve, greater productivity and staff retention, and help to build a more motivated and engaged workforce from the start.