EMPLOYCO USA
The Power to Compete

Onboarding Toolkit

INTRODUCTION

The term "onboarding" is often tossed around in the HR realm, but not everyone knows what it is or how to do it. In basic terms, onboarding is the process of getting new hires acclimated to their new roles. It includes setting clear guidelines for performance and company culture, and sharing the knowledge necessary for success within an organization.

Onboarding takes training and orientation to the next level. Unlike traditional employee orientation, onboarding is a systematic process that extends well beyond the first day of employment. The goal of the process is to cultivate a long-term relationship between the employer and the employee while fostering a feeling of belonging and of making the right career choice.

Onboarding helps develop your brand and can build a positive reputation for your company among talented job seekers. A study of 264 new employees, published in the Academy of Management Journal, found that the first 90 days of employment (often called the probationary period) is pivotal for building rapport with the company, management and co-workers. Furthermore, according to a study by the Wynhurst Group, when employees go through structured onboarding, they are 58% more likely to remain with the organization after three years. When you share your company's goals and values with your employees while simultaneously showing them how to do their jobs, everyone benefits.

GETTING STARTED

Simply offering training courses to new hires will not be sufficient for onboarding. You must consider all the smaller aspects that create an efficient and painless transition into the company. This means working with stakeholders well before new hires start. Establishing a strong onboarding foundation prior to day one is key for long-term success. Here are a few simple ways that you can get started with onboarding.

Preboard New Hires
Everyone remembers how stressful the first day of a job can be. Help alleviate some of that stress by preboarding. Sending the following information beforehand can help reduce new employees' stress and prepare them for a busy first day:

- A welcome letter or email
- Information about the company and the industry
- Helpful first-day resources, including a schedule and information about who their manager or mentor will be
- Essential HR and tax forms

Include Everyone
When deciding whom to include in the onboarding process, do not just think about the people who are involved in the new hires' day-to-day operations. Include other stakeholders like HR managers, executives and anyone else who may be important in the company as a whole. Have these people introduce themselves, along with their roles, and encourage them to extend an open line of communication. Do not be afraid to introduce the new hires to important clients either. Doing so can help new employees by providing a glimpse of whom they will be working with on a regular basis—plus, it reassures clients that they will continue to be taken care of.

Formalize the Process
Make sure the onboarding process is formalized, including your training and orientation. This does not mean the process has to be boring— merely that training should not be adlibbed by staff at the last minute when the new hires arrive. A formalized onboarding process can go on for days, weeks or even months. Make the most of this opportunity and get new hires up to speed on everything going on within the organization. Explain the company's structure, its place in the industry and its management hierarchy. Above all, make sure new hires are getting the same training as everyone else in their departments. Formalizing the onboarding process will ease the tensions of starting in new roles.

FOLLOWING THROUGH

Remember, onboarding does not happen overnight. It takes dedication and follow-through from both the new hires and whomever is guiding them. An easy pitfall to slip into is leaving new hires to their own devices during the onboarding period, perhaps to review training materials. While new hires are going through training and orientation, incorporate activities that liven up the process and make them feel involved. Sitting through a series of training lectures makes for a very long day and new hires are likely to feel burned out after a while. Try to avoid isolating new employees, and instead encourage them to talk with others and establish contacts who can help them with questions during their onboarding. Here are some other ways that you can foster a productive onboarding process.

Establish Expectations
It is important that managers contact new hires on day one and make sure they have an open conversation about their roles in the department and in the company as a whole. This would be a good time to give a tour, introduce them to other team members, establish a mentor and reiterate the company's cultural expectations. Managers should share department goals and the method for tracking these goals early on. It also reinforces the fact that new hires are part of a larger team, working toward greater company goals.

Apart from the department and company goals, managers must also lay out clear guidelines for new hire success. This can look different depending on the organization, but it typically includes communicating team expectations, identifying personal responsibilities and having a clear path for the onboarding process. Essentially, new hires should

not have to guess what their managers are expecting from them. Establishing expectations early on will help new hires understand their place in the organization.

Incorporate Technology
Incorporating the right types of technology during the onboarding process can make the first weeks of employment more enjoyable and productive while also laying the groundwork for new employees' success. Since technology is nearly inescapable nowadays, offering innovative programs during onboarding can help to familiarize new hires with the day-to-day systems that your organization uses. The following are some ways you can use technology in your onboarding program.

- Intranet—Many organizations have an internal website (or intranet site) specifically for employees to access important company information. Examples include an employee handbook, training schedules, an employee directory and links to industry websites. During onboarding, be sure to demonstrate this site and ask new employees to explore it.
- Company networking platform—There's a growing need for companies to think about using social networking to provide resources for employees to build meaningful connections within the organization. These platforms act similarly to social media sites, like Facebook, but they are protected behind your company's firewall and only accessible by your employees. This can be a great way to engage with employees in a more casual way, which can be welcoming for new hires.

Engage Early and Often

According to Gallup, only 30% of the U.S. workforce feels engaged in their work. The rest are either not engaged, or, even worse, actively disengaged. Employees who are not engaged show a lack of enthusiasm and are less committed to their workplaces. To feel engaged, new hires must understand that what they will be doing matters to the company and that their performance will make a difference. Illustrate the impact of new employees' roles in the company by encouraging your workforce to own their work and to take pride in what they do. You should be engaging with new hires and stressing these points throughout the onboarding process.

An employee engagement survey is a great starting place for addressing this issue. Many consulting firms offer such surveys, but you can also create and conduct one on your own. They typically gauge opinions on management, direct supervisors, co-workers, employer-employee communication, opportunities for advancement, job characteristics and HR policies. Consider asking new employees to complete the survey after 90 days of employment, once they have a chance to form opinions.
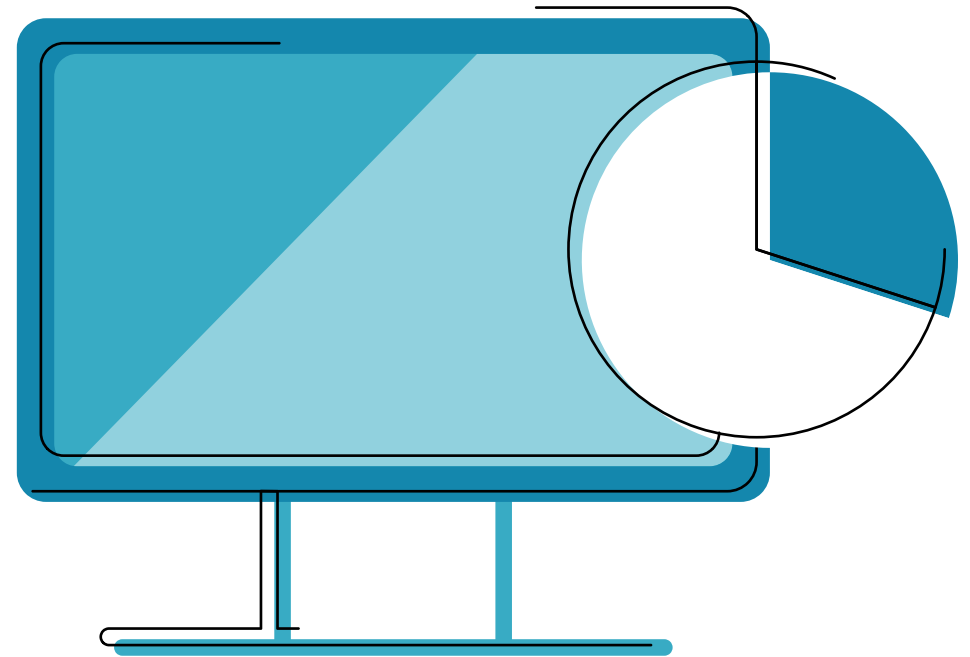
BENCHMARKING

Part of a successful onboarding process involves listening to employee feedback and using that feedback to make changes as needed. Consider asking each employee to complete a short survey after 90 days of employment—when he or she has finished the onboarding process and has had time to become acclimated to his or her job, yet still remembers specifics about the experience.

Some examples of onboarding survey questions include the following:

Hiring Process

- Was the job description clear and understandable?
- Was the HR contact professional and knowledgeable during the hiring process?
- Was the length of time between the submission of your application and the employer's response reasonable?
- Was the length of time between the submission of your application and the job offer reasonable?
- Are you satisfied with the hiring process overall?

Branding

- Before applying for this job, were you familiar with the company?
- Were you sent information before the first day that helped you know what to expect before reporting to work?
- During your onboarding session, were you provided with concise information regarding the following:

     o The company's mission
     o Your role in the department and the company
     o The organizational structure

First Day

- Was your team ready for your arrival?
- Were you welcomed by your manager and introduced to your team?
- Was your workstation or office fully equipped with the necessary hardware and software?
- Was the information you received about employee benefits clear and helpful?
- Was the information you received about personnel policies clear and helpful?
- Did you know whom to contact regarding specific questions after your first day?

First Month

- Were you assigned proper training during your first month?
- Did you know what was expected of you during your first month?
- Did you know where to get the answers to your questions?
- Was the performance management system explained to you?

First 90 Days

- Did you receive ongoing feedback from your supervisor about

your performance?

- Is the work you are doing now consistent with what was described in the job posting and during the interview process?
- Are you satisfied with the overall orientation that you received?

General Onboarding Process Questions

- What was your motivation for choosing and accepting this position?
- Do you have any recommendations for improving our recruitment, hiring or onboarding processes?
- Is there any additional feedback that you can share?

CONCLUSION

Onboarding employees the right way can improve retention and save money, while building upon your company's culture and brand. Use the information in this toolkit to think about how you onboard and whether there is room for improvement. The resources here can help take your process to the next level. Open communication about roles, career paths, impact and personal goals can spread from the initial onboarding process to new employees' entire tenure at the company. Take advantage of the information above and in the appendix below to get a jump-start on making onboarding your own.