

5 tips to successfully onboarding newcomers

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Can you confidently say that you are providing a great and memorable experience to new team members?



Here's a scenario: *You have found your "perfect" candidate. They have accepted your offer and you cannot wait for them to start. On day 1, you think that by showing them around and introducing them to the team members that your work is done? No, this isn't an effective onboarding strategy.* Rather, create an impactful employee experience that sends a message that they have made the right decision to join your team and company.

Throughout the recruitment process, both the employer and employee are focused on making a meaningful impact and showcase value. Ask how you can build onto the positive impression made during recruitment? Be intentional to make them feel like they belong, and to promote and equip them so that they can do well and become brand ambassadors as soon as possible.

Need some inspiration? Have a look at these pointers. I always encourage people to "steal and tweak". Take the pointer you find valuable and tweak it to fit your business' needs.

Herewith 5 tips to a successful onboarding process:

1. Don't wait for the first day to connect

You need to be in touch with new employees before the first working day. The obvious is to share admin arrangements of where they can park or who is meeting them, and what they should bring on their first day. It should also be a message from either the manager or HR saying, for example, *"We are looking forward to seeing you next week. We are thrilled for you to join our team. We have already set up your meet and greets with the relevant team members to ensure proper introductions can be made. On day 2, an agency team briefing has been arranged where you will have an opportunity to meet our partners with whom you will be working closely with. On day 3, an onboarding introduction and induction workshop has been arranged which will provide you with an overview of the company and our values."*

In the virtual world, ensure the new joiner has received the required technology and tools ahead of their official starting date, provide clear steps for them to know how to log on for day 1 and an agenda. This will bring a sense of comfort.

Pro-tip: Consider an internal portal for them to log on and get familiar with the values of the company, learning and development options, guidelines for social investment activities etc. If you do not have the luxury of a portal, a short and warm video message by the CEO, sent via WhatsApp, can make a great impact.

2. Don't think that a 'one-day induction' is sufficient

Many companies have taken their one-day induction and split this over a week. This is a good starting point. The difference between induction and onboarding is the timeframe. Induction is usually a once-off event, whilst onboarding looks at the first 100 days of an employee at the company. Have a plan for the first week, first month and a follow-up after 100 days. This can be a short check-in with the new employee at different times to ensure they have the tools, resources, and processes in place to close the gap on feeling uncertain to perform effectively.

Pro-tip: Manager to schedule a meeting to specifically discuss the working relationships. This should include any animosity or hiccups within the team or with you, and encourage transparency and candid feedback. This is a building block to create a safe environment where they feel respected, seen and heard.

3. Don't underestimate the impact of storytelling in introducing them to the brand

The employee value proposition and the journey of your company are two critical points. Ensure new employees are aware and connected to the purpose of your company. Share it in such a way that they will willingly give their talents and strengths to achieve the best results. Think of the NASA story where employees saw a strong connection between their work and NASA's purpose. A janitor's views changed from 'I'm mopping floors' to 'I'm helping to put a man on the moon'.

Pro-tip: Create a culture book or interactive video. A fun and out-of-the-box way of sharing the company's history, the values and behaviours you expect from team members. This can also include goals and how the recognition scheme works. Include quotes from employees about what they love about working at your company.

4. Don't let "perfect" be a blind spot

We often want a new process to be flawless before we introduce it to the business. Rather, embrace a "good enough or good to go" approach. The secret sauce is to involve people in designing a new onboarding process that will stick. The opportunity to co-create with a cross-functional team has more than one benefit. Be specific about the restrictions or boundaries and allow innovative thinking.

Pro-tip: Ideally, we want to include the "users" when designing a new process. Therefore, ask for feedback and listen to what has worked well and what aspects can be changed. Don't ask for the sake of ticking the box, do

something with the feedback. Also, include recent new hires to be part of this process and be open-minded to their feedback.

5. Don't forget the whole brain thinking in your planning

We often fall back to our own thinking preference. By doing a whole-brain check you will ensure you have touched on the *Who? Why? What? How?*

In terms of the 'people and culture' aspect, it shouldn't only be "who is who" and how to get in touch with HR or IT support. A big focus should be on what are the non-negotiable behaviours you stand for. What rituals do you have in place to build a winning culture e.g. Friday afternoon happy hour or how do you give recognition? Highlight the importance of diversity and inclusion. Also, include the vision and plans of your company. Illustrate the importance of innovation and how employees can influence the new ways of working. Touch on the financial side of the business. This may vary based on the audience but highlight some financial targets, profit or year-on-year growth. Highlight any accolades or awards the business has won, for example, "best company to work for". Reiterate that they did make the best decision to join your company.

Some people need detail. Include as much information as possible about the processes and policies or at least where to find it. How do they apply for leave? Where do they find the overtime forms and what steps do they follow to submit a claim? Do this in such a way to not bore the creative minds in the group.

Pro-tip: Use a design thinking approach for a human-centric solution. Having empathy for the new joiner and putting yourself in their shoes will be helpful when designing the onboarding process. The first 100 days of a new employee is the most critical period, and if they are not onboarded efficiently, you will lose that new joiner and you need to start the whole recruitment process again.

Integrating new workers into the workplace and helping them from the onset would inspire them to perform better and reduce their likelihood of leaving.

Giving the new employees the tools and resources, they need to excel would help both them and the company.

ABOUT ANJA VAN BEEK

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