

The Top 5 Must Do's to Effectively Onboard Your New Employees



Research has shown over and over again that when time and effort are put into designing effective onboarding processes, the payoff is increased employee retention and the ability for new hires to become productive quicker for their new employer.

According to a report published by the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) titled, Onboarding New Employees: Maximizing Success by Talya N. Bauer, Ph.D, "Simply put, good onboarding leads to good retention rates. At Corning Glass Works, new employees who attended a structured orientation program were 69 percent more likely to remain at the company up to three years."

Bauer continues, "A study of the onboarding process at Texas Instruments found that employees who went through an improved onboarding program were fully productive two months faster than employees in a traditional program."

The time taken to carefully design a well thought-out and planned onboarding procedure leads to time well spent because it positively affects an organization's financial bottom line in productivity and retention.

Following are the Top 5 "MUST DO's" to help your organization develop an effective onboarding program for your new hires:

#1 DO: Design a well-planned onboarding procedure; clearly define expectations and goals that you expect from the new hire

Just like anything else, if you want a successful outcome, you need to outline a plan to follow to reach your ultimate goals. A customized onboarding plan should be developed for each new hire. Yes, it takes time but it is well worth it in the long run. It puts everything out on the table from the start. The employee knows what to expect from the company, what is expected of him, and circumvents unpleasant surprises.

Defining expectations and goals also provides a plan for supervisors, coaches, and other interested colleagues so they don't have to spend additional time trying to figure out what is next in the onboarding phase—making it easier for all involved.

If you just make up the plan as you go along...it will NOT go unnoticed. Confusion will set in and it will be obvious that there was no thought put into the process.

This reflects negatively on your company and may lead to the new hire feeling remorse for taking the position in the first place. It also says—"We really didn't put too much effort into this experience for you because you're really not that important to us."

#2 D0: Assign a mentor or coach to the new employee:

To increase the probability of success you should assign at least one coach or mentor to the new hire. This can be the "go-to" person to answer any questions the employee may have or to obtain any needed resources.

Additionally, a coach can offer advice, give direction when needed, and provide support to help the new hire feel at home. This support helps him adapt to the position, company and its people much more easily, and boosts the employee's confidence that can be the catalyst that leads to quicker productivity.

Having a "go-to" person helps cut out a lot of added stress that could compound during a time when he is already under pressure in the learning phase—knowing support is available helps alleviate some of this.

Leaving a new employee completely alone to figure everything out in the early stages of his career with your company could give the impression that his new company and its staff don't really care about his progress and thus may eventually lead to him resigning prematurely.

#3 D0: Involve high-level company leaders and stakeholders:

If all of your effort is to pay off, it is very important for high-level managers, leaders, and other stakeholders to be involved in the onboarding process. This lets the new hire know that everyone from top executives down value him enough to take an interest in his success.

It takes all stakeholders to pull together to help the new hire through a successful onboarding process. This would include direct supervisors, training professionals, HR staff, and all co-workers in the same department or team.

#4 D0: Inspire, encourage, and praise your new hire; first and foremost:

You hired your new employee for certain reasons whether they are personality-related, unique skills and/or talents, etc. Don't be shy...make sure you continually remind your new hire how much you appreciate the unique talents he brings to the organization. This communicates to him that you made the right hiring decision and reminds him that he made the right decision in accepting your offer.

#5 D0: Provide two-way feedback communication and follow-up:

When you have a new hire going through an onboarding phase it is important to make sure you provide a channel of open communication with him. Let the employee know he can inquire about any issues or concerns he has and always make it a point to keep in communication with him—giving ongoing updates, feedback, and follow-up. Don't leave the employee guessing.

Keeping a new hire updated is important because it lets him know whether or not he is on the "right track." When you make it a point to communicate, it may take a little extra time out of the work day, but it can save a lot more time down the road. If the employee is on the wrong track for whatever reason and doesn't know for an extended period of time, it will take more time to turn around, go back, make corrections, and then eventually continue on.

When creating a successful onboarding process, it is important to keep in mind that what you put into the process is what you'll get out of it. If you just throw something together for the sake of having to occupy your new hire in his early days...you will have wasted your time and energy because eventually it will be evident.

Remember that in the first days of a new hire's experience with your company, you are creating an impression and whether positive or negative, it will be one that sets the tone and attitude for the new hire both in the short-term and long-term.