

Onboarding: 15 questions to ask employees in their first 60 days



With the economy on the rise, employees are finding it easier to leave jobs in which they're not completely comfortable. That's putting more pressure on HR and managers to improve the onboarding process for new hires.

The last thing an organization wants to do is restart the expensive hiring process because a new employee walked out after a couple of months.

The most important step: Talk with new employees soon after they arrive to uncover potential problems that can cause turnover. Don't wait until performance or behavior shows problems—or for an official performance review. By then, the employee could be halfway out the door.

Make it a point to meet with new hires within the first 60 days. Start by reminding them you're glad they're part of the organization and you value their input. Then, ask some of the following questions.

Your goal: Discover what they like and dislike about the job and environment, see if the job meets their expectations and nip potential problems in the bud:

1. Why do you think we selected you as an employee?
2. What do you like about the job and the organization?
3. What's been going well? What are the highlights of your experiences so far? Why?
4. Do you have enough, too much or too little time to do your work?
5. How do you see your job relating to the organization's mission?
6. What do you need to learn to improve? What can the organization do to help you become more successful in your job? (Don't ask these two questions unless you are prepared to follow up with action. Otherwise, you can build false expectations.)
7. Tell me what you don't understand about your job and about our organization.
8. Compare the organization to what we explained it would be like.
9. Which co-workers have been helpful since you arrived? (Goal: Pinpoint which employees can be influential in

retaining the new hire.)

10. Who do you talk to when you have questions about work? Do you feel comfortable asking?

11. Does your supervisor clearly explain what the organization expects of you?

12. How does it go when your supervisor offers constructive criticism or corrects your work?

13. Do you believe your ideas are valued? Can you give examples?

14. How well do you get along with co-workers?

15. Have you had any uncomfortable situations or conflicts with supervisors, co-workers or customers?

Tip: Finish the discussion by asking employees if they have any questions for you or suggestions on how the job can be managed better.

Ditch new-employee probation

If your employee handbook or job-offer letters say new hires will face a 60- or 90-day probation period, you should consider dropping that policy or referring to that period in some other way.

Reason: By setting up a probation period, you could imply that once the probation period is over, the employee becomes permanent or earns some new level of job security. That misunderstanding could eliminate the employee's at-will status. In court, an attorney can easily make it seem like you broke an employment contract.

Alternatives: Think about referring to those early days as an "introductory" or "training" period, words that are less likely to imply a contract.