

# Say 'no' to no-shows: 8 steps to 'pre-boarding'

A generation ago, people who accepted a job but then changed their minds—or, worse, just didn't show up on Day 1—may have felt some unease or shame. Not anymore.

"There really has been an ethical shift. Most new hires just don't feel any guilt about walking away from an accepted job," says consultant Claire Schooley, who noted that people now see a job acceptance as "a bird in the hand while they look for other offers."

The main reason people walk away from accepted offers: "The younger generation expects more contact and information," says Schooley.

That's why more employers are launching formal "pre-boarding" programs. The goal: engage new hires between the time they accept an employment offer and the first day.

Think of new hires like students on their first day of first grade. If the student had already talked to her teacher, visited the classroom, watched a "day in the life of first grade" video and had lunch with other classmates, she'd feel more comfortable and excited about showing up.

Here are eight ideas to keep your new hires committed and interested during the pre-boarding phase:

- 1. Provide a mentor/buddy/company ambassador** who can explain more about the employee experience and answer questions. They should talk on the phone (not online) every few days leading up. The mentor should be a co-worker, not a manager.
- 2. Create an online web portal for new hires** that provides more information about company history, goals, culture, benefits and volunteer work. Some employers send new hires a CEO welcome video or a "day in the life" video. (Various HR software tools can help create pre-boarding portals.)
- 3. Highlight your well-being programs** and get the new employee enrolled in programs they'll get excited about—everything from wellness programs to the 401(k) match to the company softball team.
- 4. Get input from the worker on setting up their workstation and technology** (computer, email address, office supplies, badge, business cards, etc.). Email a photo of their ready-to-go workstation.
- 5. Invite the person for a team lunch**, tour of the company and any happy hours or company meetings occurring in those weeks.
- 6. Send a welcome gift box.** Include a coffee mug, personalized note pads, pens, company-labeled shirt, hat, etc.
- 7. Get most paperwork completed**, including general employment forms and benefit selection.

**8. Send an email introduction** (with photo) of the new hire to your employees before the person's first day. Some employers create a new-employee online “gateway,” where current staff can connect with new hires online, welcoming them and discussing upcoming projects or activities.

**Bottom line:** “No one wants to be counter-offer fodder,” says Schooley. “The best way to avoid that is to make sure the person is committed and interested during pre-boarding.”