

# Hired a new employee? Don't skip these four critical onboarding steps

You may have searched months to find that perfect employee, but the real job of turning a new hire into a productive and engaged member of your team has only just begun. Here are some simple onboarding tips to transform a newly hired employee into a valued contributor.

- 1. Make the employee's first day a priority.** Your human resources department may have a formal onboarding process designed to help new employees learn about the company culture, and fill out mandatory new hire paperwork, but don't rely on it to answer all questions or make them employee feel excited about their new role. Confirm that your employee has a dedicated workspace complete with all the technology and equipment she needs to do her job, on day one. Take the employee out to lunch with the team on her first day so she feels welcome, and has an opportunity to see some of the familiar faces she met during the interview process. Despite how busy you may be on her first day, check in with her before you leave. These little efforts on your part form the seeds of a trusting and mutually respectful relationship.
- 2. Establish a list of important connections the employee should make.** Create a list of all the peers, leaders and third-party vendors the employee will interact with regularly in her role and ask her to connect with each during her first few weeks on the job. Include the person's title and a brief explanation of how your new hire will interact with that person. When possible, join in on some of the meetings and show your support.
- 3. Spend time building your new team.** A newly hired employee will change the dynamics of the existing team, for better or for worse. Before your new hire arrives for her first day, debrief your team on her professional background, skill set and key responsibilities. Invite the team to voice any questions or concerns they may have about how this new person's arrival will impact their role. Organize team outings or team building functions to encourage the development of the group with a new member. These events will give you an important opportunity to observe how the team is functioning with the new addition.
- 4. Answer the critical questions.** Regardless of how much experience your new hire has, Michael D. Watkins, author of *Master Your Move* and *The First 90 Days*, says she should not be tasked with any work to manage independently until you've provided clear answers to these questions:
  - *What does the employee need to do?* Define goals and timelines for each task the employee will initially take on, and provide guidance for "ideal" markers of progress. These parameters will signal the cadence of typical project progression at your company and arms the employee to identify when a project may be off track.
  - *How should the employee begin the work?* Provide specific strategies the employee should consider to accomplish the goals or projects you've assigned and explain any required processes or approval flows. Indicate which projects on the employee's list are top priority, and why.
  - *Why should the employee care about this work?* All employees should feel that they work they do is

meaningful to the organization but this is particularly important for new hires who have little sense of the broader corporate vision, and how their work supports it. The more you help employees embrace their role as part of the bigger picture, the more likely it is that they will feel like a key member of the team.

Regardless of the level of experience a new hire brings to your organization, remember that every company is unique and the first few weeks of any new job are full of uncertainty. Don't assume the new hire's role is going well until you hear otherwise. Instead, make it your job to check in regularly, offer your support and guide the employee to what will hopefully be a successful and lasting tenure at your organization.