

# 10 common onboarding mistakes that deflate new hires



Want to increase the odds of your new hires sticking around and making valuable contributions to the organization for years to come? Pay greater attention to their first 90 days by onboarding with intention rather than “winging it” and later suffering for errors.

New hires who participate in structured onboarding programs are 69 percent more likely to remain with the company after three years than those who do not. These organized efforts help them feel engaged, valued, and supported – all critical factors for maximizing productivity and strengthening retention.

Eager new hires look for clues about their employer from day one. They will notice even the most minor actions and make hasty, but calcified, judgments. First impressions can be wrong, but they are hard to shake.

Don't squander your chance to lay a great foundation. Watch out that your company is not guilty of committing any of the following common, yet potentially devastating, onboarding mistakes:

## 1. Not having a clean and ready workstation on Day One

Talk about a quick way to make someone feel like an outsider! Don't expect a new hire to feel like an important part of the team when he doesn't have the tools and equipment to start performing (or even a place to stash his briefcase).

Along the same lines, don't neglect other practical matters. Cluing in new hires on parking situations, security procedures, and anything else that helps them fit in says the company cares about every detail involved in a proper welcome.

## 2. Cramming 20 hours of information into four dull hours of orientation

Mind-numbing activities kill the enthusiasm of a new hire excited for action. To make the “interesting stuff” start faster, send paperwork beforehand or allow new hires to fill it out through an online portal by an appointed date.

Likewise, watch out for cognitive overload caused by too many PowerPoints, handouts, and talking heads. Instead, seize the opportunity to address a captive audience. Use the time to tell your company's story and empower new hires to contribute. Get them excited about the big picture and how they'll be a part of it.

## 3. Neglecting the importance of cultural adaptation

Organizational savvy sets up new hires for success. Accelerate the learning process by helping them form connections. Assign a buddy from the start, and encourage other staff members to join a newbie for lunch. Come up with a list of 10 people within the company that the new person's role demands knowing. Ask these key contacts to meet with the new hire to offer encouragement and share perspectives.

#### **4. Ignoring the needs of mid- and senior- level employees**

Just because this job is not someone's first rodeo does not mean onboarding can fall by the wayside. New higher-ups need attention too and benefit from assistance with everything from learning the office entrance code to forging relationships with peers.

#### **5. Failing to address generational needs and differences**

With modern workplaces oftentimes consisting of a range of age groups, employers need to discard notions of one-size-fits-all onboarding. Members of Generation X, for example, tend to value independence and want priorities and metrics in place that allow quick comprehension of expectations for their role. By contrast, Millennials thrive on experiencing a sense of community and understanding corporate culture. Group activities and teamwork help them feel connected.

#### **6. Starting a new hire when his supervisor is absent**

How disheartening to begin a new chapter of life without perhaps the most vital workplace person by your side! New hires expecting one experience and getting another may feel like the organization pulled a bait and switch. Matters become especially problematic if nobody else knows exactly what the new hire should be doing; it makes the newcomer feel like a useless burden.

#### **7. Relying on org charts to explain lines of communication**

Diagrams and other models showing how operations flow can have a place in passing along information to new staff. Such "flat" info alone, however, is not sufficient. Provide actual insight on where to turn for help and how to solve problems. People who understand spheres of influence have a much easier time getting things accomplished.

#### **8. Assuming a new hire can't be productive from the start**

Companies with an attitude that staff members are not very valuable until they have been around a certain amount of time kill morale among fresh faces in the office. Get them working! Putting newcomers on teams with real people solving actual business problems promotes engagement and active learning in ways stacks of reading do not.

#### **9. Running a disorganized program**

Don't for a moment think new hires cannot spot the difference between a well-oiled machine vs. a company flying by the seat of its pants. Your onboarding program must make a new hire feel proud and excited to be an employee here, not anxious and regretful because she is so confused.

Plan out the elements to cover. Go beyond only HR reps presenting information. When direct supervisors get involved in onboarding, new hires take the process more seriously. Also, employers may want to talk to staff members who recently went through the onboarding program to get their perception of how the process went and what improvements could be made.

#### **10. Adopting a "sink or swim approach" because it worked for you**

Figuring out a new workplace on one's own can prove a daunting experience. Yes, some individuals may succeed at your company without a formal onboarding experience. But why not put the odds in your favor with a thoughtful program that sends the message that you care?

Employees who feel challenged, empowered, and acknowledged during the first year – especially during the first 90 days -- reward their employers with loyalty and productivity. Those overlooked or marginalized leave to find opportunities that meet their needs. From the get-go, provide the support new hires need to navigate uncharted waters. Your organization will build a steady stream of confident, competent performers capable of staying afloat for years to com