



HOW TO CREATE AN ONBOARDING PROGRAM THAT IMPROVES RETENTION

Attracting and hiring talented people means very little to your organization if they leave shortly after hire. This is why focusing on your employee retention efforts is critical – especially in light of high turnover rates.

[Gartner research](#) predicts that U.S. annual voluntary turnover will jump 20% from the national pre-pandemic average due to differing employee expectations. Plus, [Gallup figures](#) have shown a steady decline in employee engagement and an increase in active disengagement. When you combine those statistics, you realize how essential it is to put together initiatives to retain your employees for the long haul. And since first impressions are key, one of the wisest starting places is with a robust, well-considered onboarding program.

The Relationship Between Onboarding and Employee Retention

How does onboarding affect and impact employee retention? Foremost, onboarding builds a foundation for employees to learn about your organization, its culture, its people, and its processes. The faster new hires understand your company, the faster they will acclimate and take ownership of their roles. Encouraging them to promptly integrate with the team generates a sense of belonging.

Onboarding programs serve more practical purposes, too. Onboarding processes focused on education provide new employees with guidance on how to do their jobs. Rather than learning as they go (although that should happen to some extent), they know their specific duties and expectations from the start.





BUILDING YOUR IDEAL ONBOARDING PROGRAM

Indeed: An Example of Strong Onboarding

There are plenty of companies that do a fine job of onboarding their new hires, but let's take a look at one in particular. Indeed has successfully experimented with elements of its onboarding procedure to enhance its workplace culture.

Indeed is the #1 job site in the world, with over 300 million unique visitors each month. Indeed consistently lands on "employers with great onboarding" lists because of its innovative, cross-functional onboarding system. As explained in a [Human Resources Director piece](#), new employees from across different verticals are placed into teams. Each team is given a unique one-week "challenge" assignment to come up with something innovative.

The ultimate goal is to provide an immersive way for Indeed workers to become one with the vision and mission of the company. Along the way, employees discover talents, foster relationships, and develop workable concepts that solve major challenges.

To prove the efficacy of Indeed's unique onboarding, just check out its ratings online. According to a [Great Places to Work](#) study, 93% of Indeed's workers said they felt welcomed from their first day. Nearly as many report that they're proud to be associated with Indeed. Perhaps that's why Indeed [enjoys a 4.5 rating](#) (out of 5) from employees on Glassdoor.

Building Your Ideal Onboarding Program

Are you excited to get started with your onboarding program? You don't need to replicate what Indeed or any other company has done. Be creative and come up with ideas that work with your teams and company goals. Nevertheless, you should focus on constructing an onboarding journey that stretches across a six-month period.

Why extend onboarding over half a year? The answer is simple: The longer you spend time onboarding your people, the fewer surprises you and they will experience long-term. Think of your [onboarding program](#) as a marathon. No one runs for the very first time on race day. Preparation, study, intentionality, and training are involved to achieve the desired result.

For instance, have you ever had a new hire leave abruptly? Maybe you didn't realize the employee was unfulfilled. If you had put consistent, long-term onboarding measures in place, you might have seen some "red flag" warnings ahead of time. This could have allowed you to save the employee and avoid going through the costly recruitment and hiring process again.

To help you divide your six-month onboarding program, our team recommends parceling it into five sections: Day One, Week One, Month One, Month Three, and Month Six. Below, we'll look at some action steps that you'll want to take during each of these pivotal stages.



DAY ONE

Meeting, Completing, and Creating

The last thing you want to do on any employee's first day is to sit them in front of a computer, give them some tasks, and walk away. This could leave your new hire feeling lost, confused, and quite honestly questioning their decision to work for you.

Make sure you or a designated support person discusses their job expectations in detail. Then, ensure the employee has completed all forms, has access to needed tools and systems, and understands the company structure.

Remember that the employee has no way of knowing what's appropriate and what's not at this point. Is it okay to interrupt a manager whose door is closed? Do colleagues prefer emails or Slack pings? These little things can cause stress in a new worker who's unfamiliar with your culture and workflows. Think through these potential questions as you create your onboarding program, as it can be challenging for employees to think of these specific questions from scratch.

Assigning at least one mentor to your new employee may also be helpful. Be sure to train the mentor ahead of time. Mentoring is a terrific way to create an immediate "buddy system," but it can backfire rapidly if the mentor doesn't know what to do. As part of your onboarding program, train and equip your mentors if you choose this route.

WEEK ONE

Engaging, Encouraging, and Ensuring

After the whirlwind of the first day, your new employee will spend the first week getting familiar with everything from your products and services to your organization's objectives and market differentiators. The employee's position will dictate a lot of what they need to learn to get up to speed. A salesperson needs to have different information than an IT specialist. However, all workers should be encouraged to learn as much as possible in the first week.

Rather than assume the employee is getting accustomed to everything, check in often. Ask if they have questions. Ensure the employee's direct support or mentor sets up a few formal and informal check-ins. Scheduling these out in advance is a great way to provide structure for your employee. Preset 30-minute meet-and-greets with critical support teams so that your new team member gets a 360-degree view of how all the teams work together and support each other. Encourage them to write down all questions or concerns they have and bring their list to your pre-scheduled meetings. Create a 30-/60-/90-day plan to set realistic and measurable goals.

Week one is also the perfect place to solidify any compliance-related rules, legalities, and regulations that your employee may not know about. You may even want to start mapping out measurable goals for the employee to reach later. As [The Wall Street Journal](#) explains, more people than ever are quitting jobs within the first month of being hired. Clearing up any confusion can help mitigate that risk.



MONTH ONE

Connecting

When your employee reaches the one-month milestone, start scheduling routine one-on-one meetings. These one-on-ones shouldn't just be with the employee's manager but with any applicable team members and colleagues. In some cases, this may look like sitting down with a supervisor every other week or attending a monthly department meeting. In other cases, your employee may have connections with a variety of coworkers and need to establish an active and diverse meeting schedule.

It's up to you to define the key stakeholders the employee needs to meet with. Make sure you share these key stakeholders with the worker and explain why you chose them. You can also begin to lay out key performance indicators (KPIs) for the employee.

As a side note, you may want to keep track of the employee's organizational fit from this point forward. Although we all do our best to source and hire great candidates, we aren't always correct. If an employee doesn't seem to be working out, it's best to know early for both your sakes. You may not have to let the employee go, either. You may have to return to some of your initial onboarding methods or move them to another role.

MONTH THREE

Progressing and Leading

When your new hire celebrates a three-month anniversary, you should be able to see any progress that's been made. Additionally, you can tell if they're connected to their teams, showing leadership potential, and meeting performance standards.

Arrange to have an in-depth meeting with the employee at this mark. Ask if they feel satisfied in their role. Agree upon future goals and revise any check-in cadences that aren't producing positive outcomes.

MONTH SIX

Observing, Assessing, and Evaluating

Your onboarding program should end at around the six-month mark. By this point, you may want to conduct a full-scale employee performance evaluation. Be ready to provide and receive feedback. Make the experience a two-way street featuring healthy back-and-forth dialogue.

If your employee has hit all KPIs and seems to have more to give, talk about expanding any duties and responsibilities. It's not unheard of for an employee to be promoted, given a bonus, offered a raise, or encouraged to apply for a higher-level position after a stellar six-month review.





TIPS FOR MAKING YOUR ONBOARDING PROGRAM SUCCESSFUL

As you can see, you have to put effort into devising an onboarding plan that sets the stage for employees to feel tethered to your company and brand. Consider the following recommendations as you flesh out your new-hire onboarding experience.



1. Provide every employee with the essentials they need.

Nothing will sidetrack your onboarding faster than if you expect employees to do their jobs without the essential tools they need to be effective. What are the essentials? They'll change depending on the employee's role. However, essentials could be as simple as having access to specific technology, people, or teams.

You will have to set up training if you have a lot of technologies that are new to the employee. Training can be done one-on-one or, if feasible, via online modules, classroom learning, or a combination of several methods. Just don't put the onus on learning everything on your employee. You need to provide access to anything your employee needs to learn and digest the information.



2. Make acclimation and integration two of your primary goals.

Yes, you want your employee to contribute to your company. Yet that will only happen if the employee feels a sense of purpose or belonging. [Research from Deloitte](#) shows that 40% of employees feel isolated. That's a high percentage and could be one factor in high turnover at companies (including yours).

This doesn't mean you have to force your new hire to attend team happy hours. Simply do your best to ensure all employees have mentors and receive regular communication. If your worker is primarily or partially remote, you may want to double down on this tip. Remote work can lend itself to feelings of alienation, especially if employees feel forgotten or ignored by teammates.





TIPS FOR MAKING YOUR ONBOARDING PROGRAM SUCCESSFUL



3. Use KPI data to help your new employee grow.

By and large, new employees want to feel and be effective in their roles. So be sure to find ways to not only establish KPIs but track them as well. This is easier for some positions than others. Case in point: Tracking a salesperson's conversion rates may be easier than determining if a marketing assistant is making improvements. Still, it's not impossible to come up with agreed-upon, measurable KPIs for any job or title.

Sit down with your employee and use KPIs during review sessions as coaching opportunities. The point isn't to make the employee feel bad for not hitting all KPIs, but to develop ways for the employer to become more proficient.



4. Implement employee engagement initiatives.

You should be measuring your employee's engagement as well as those KPIs mentioned above. A practical way to do that throughout the half-year onboarding period is as follows:

- On the first day, make sure the employee completes all the first-day orientation tasks.
- At the week-one mark, set a training curriculum and checklist for the employee to complete.
- During the first month, have the employee complete a 30-day performance evaluation that concentrates on quality, performance, productivity, and accomplishments.
- Work with the employee to set 30-/60-/90-day plans and objectives that can be reviewed monthly during the first three months.
- Between months three and six, hold 360-degree reviews with the employee and the employee's team members to ensure engagement is happening. (You may use satisfaction surveys, participation reports, and other documentation to gauge engagement.)

The information you gather will give you a good idea of whether your employee feels engaged and enthusiastic to be part of your organization.





ONBOARDING FOR YEARS OF PRODUCTIVITY AND SATISFACTION

Most employees don't stay with the same company for as long as they used to. That's no reason to assume that you can't hold onto your strongest performers for many years. An appealing, flexible, ever-evolving onboarding program can be your key to unlocking the secret behind lower turnover and higher participation.



Want help creating a six-month onboarding journey with enough stickiness to keep your new hires from saying goodbye? Reach out to [Integrity Staffing Solutions](#) today!

Integrity Staffing Solutions is a full-service staffing agency and ranks in the top 2% of agencies across the country for quality service based on ClearlyRated's "Best of Staffing" client survey. To learn more about Integrity or for help with your hiring needs, visit [integritystaffing.com](https://www.integritystaffing.com) or call 833-446-1300.