

A Sample Calendar for Your New Hire Onboarding Program

When people find themselves in unfamiliar territory during their first days and weeks on the job, says Amy Hirsh Robinson of Interchange Consulting Group, they're much more likely to jump to conclusions—"premature cognitive commitments"—and see bad or simply awkward onboarding as indicative of a poorly run organization that just doesn't care about its people.

You have much less time than you think to make a good impression. So how are you going to do it?

Robinson lays out a detailed plan for bringing newbies on, one you can adapt to your own organization.

Before their first day:

- Assign a buddy to the employee—someone to answer questions as they occur and make introductions.
- Extend a personal welcome.
- Communicate the first day logistics: What should they bring? Where do they park? Who should they ask for?
- Send paperwork in advance or have them complete it through an online portal.
- Issue the employee handbook and have benefits explained.
- Prepare internal workers for the newbie's arrival. Does anyone have any questions about the new employee? Are the phone and computer ready to go? Security badge? Workstation?
- Identify any transition risks, such as a possible capability gap or problematic office politics that might be encountered.

Their first day:

- Introduce the employee to the assigned buddy and other colleagues.
- Situate the employee with the resources or networks required for work.
- Commence an orientation to the organization and its culture.

Their first week:

- Set performance expectations and the scope of the job.
- Explain your performance appraisal process.
- Assign meaningful work—put them on an intriguing project as soon as possible.
- Ensure direct managerial involvement in the first week. Their manager shouldn't be out of the office or immersed in a project that can't be set aside.
- Schedule meetings with senior leadership to guarantee exposure to the broader company.

Their first 90 days:

- Create an employee development plan: Show them the future that can be achieved, and how to achieve it.
- Provide essential training and make sure the employee is not overloaded.
- Assign a mentor.
- Plan team-building activities and inter-departmental mixers.
- Monitor performance and provide feedback.
- Obtain feedback about the company through a new hire survey, online whiteboard, etc.

Their first year:

- Recognize positive employee contributions.
- Provide formal and informal feedback on performance.
- Assess future training and development needs.

Above all, don't forget that onboarding means playing the long game. Too many companies assume it's a two-week or two-month project. Don't think in terms of time frames—those can't tell the whole story of an employee's level of comfort and trust that the choice to pick you has been proven solid.