Onboarding Plans Tips and Examples

1. Onboarding Plans Tips

According to a recent online survey conducted by The Harris Poll on behalf of CareerBuilder and SilkRoad, 93% of employers agree a good onboarding experience is critical to influence a new hire's decision to stay with the organization. Too many organizations underestimate the importance of the onboarding process while the solution is clear: to retain new hires at every level, spend more time onboarding them. The Aberdeen Group reported that 62% of companies with onboarding programs had higher time-to-productivity ratios, and 54% reported higher employee engagement.

The most effective organizations onboard new hires for the duration of their first year — their most vulnerable period — and focus on three key dimensions: the organizational, the technical, and the social. The last one is even more relevant nowadays when hiring people remotely.

You will find in this document tips for creating a robust onboarding plan, an onboarding checklist, and two examples of onboarding plans from companies.

Organizational Onboarding

Teach them how things work. The first and most common part of onboarding is teaching new employees the information they need to function day in and day out: where to park their car and get an ID card, how to navigate the building, how to enroll in health benefits and educate themselves on regulations and policies. Beyond this, it's also important to teach them your workplace "language." There's almost always a litany of cryptic acronyms that organizations use for key processes or roles — decoding them can be one of the most distressing challenges for new hires. Simple tools, like glossaries of terms, go a long way.

Help them assimilate. Organizations must be intentional about helping new hires adapt to organizational values and norms, especially during that first year. At key intervals — three, six, and nine months — hiring managers should formally engage them in conversations about the organization's history and brand, how performance is measured and rewarded, and how growth opportunities arise. You should also encourage organizational "heroes," or people held up as exemplary, to connect with new hires and share personal stories that demonstrate valued behaviors.

Technical Onboarding

Define what good looks like. Just because someone is hired for their capabilities and experiences, doesn't mean they know how to deploy them at your company. New hires with deep areas of expertise can become insecure when they suddenly feel like beginners. To avoid

this, communicate clearly from day one. Provide your new hire with a job description that includes well-defined accountabilities and any boundaries around authority or available resources they should be aware of. Clearly outline their decision rights to help them understand where their autonomy begins and ends. It's also valuable to schedule weekly coaching sessions to check in and ensure they have opportunities to make meaningful contributions as soon as possible.

Set up early wins. Giving new hires clear goals is another powerful strategy because it allows you to share realistic expectations. A good way to start is to assign tasks with an expectation that they be completed at the three, six, and nine-month marks. Start with targets you are confident your new hires can meet. If all goes well, gradually increase the level of responsibility associated with each task. This will help build trust and show them that you are paying attention.

Social Onboarding

Build a sense of community. Building relationships during their first year can help new hires feel less isolated and more confident. New hires, in partnership with their manager, should identify 7-10 people — superiors, peers, direct reports, and internal and external relations — whose success they will contribute to, or who will contribute to their success. The new hire should then craft plans to connect with each stakeholder, one-on-one, during their first year.

Assign a virtual-onboarding buddy. Good buddies play four key roles: (1) They help orient new hires to the business and its context (2) They facilitate connections to people whose support is necessary or helpful (3) They assist with navigation of processes and systems, and (4) They accelerate acculturation by providing insight into "how things get done here." Of course, you must take care to choose buddies who have the time, ability, and inclination to help, and you need to brief them on how they can be of most assistance.

Facilitate virtual team-building. Helpful in face-to-face situations, a new employee assimilation process is essential when onboarding happens remotely. This is a structured process for creating alignment and connection between a leader and their inherited team. A facilitator asks the leader and team members questions to uncover what they would most like to share with and learn about one another. The facilitator summarizes the resulting insights and uses them to guide a conversation between the leader and the team. The good news is that this process can be done effectively through video conferencing.

2.   Best Practices Examples

The examples of onboarding plans mentioned below are from the corporate world as it is less common in the arts sector to have a defined process. Onboarding strategies need to be tailored to each institution, but we believe that these examples are a good inspiration source and a good application of some of the tips mentioned previously. More examples here.

Netflix - A Culture And Leadership-Driven Onboarding Program

An engineer at Netflix, shared details about Netflix's orientation program, including elements that:

- Explained the Netflix technology stack and introductions to ever-helpful coworkers made life as a software developer super easy and exciting.
- Met with Executive management including Chief Product Officer, Chief Finance Officer and Chief Executive Officer in the first quarter helped to orient him with the company's ethos and aspirations.
- Gave new hires significant responsibility and allow them to have a solid impact from the get-go.

The foundational document [on culture in Silicon Valley for Netflix](#) is available on their website as well as [cultural diversity and inclusiveness resources](#) that communicate Netflix's values and what makes them unique.

Buffer - The 'Three-Buddy' System

Buffer is made up of a remote team with just under 100 salaried employees. This presents a special challenge for maintaining a cohesive team and onboarding program. The company starts the employee onboarding process as soon as they have confirmation from the new recruit accepting the position. They have a group of three "Buddies" who play different roles in their six-week onboarding 'bootcamp experience'; A Leader Buddy, a Role Buddy, and a Culture Buddy. New hires are introduced to these buddies before day one, who help guide them through the 'bootcamp experience' with regular communication and check-ins. Here is a [Free Buddy Program Playbook](#) (Google Document) you can use to get your Buddy Program started at your organization.