

Help new hires to succeed.

# How to onboard a new employee to your small business



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Learning how to onboard a new employee into a small business successfully is critical for effective talent planning. Onboarding sets the tone and helps your new hires succeed. And as more firms pay attention to this pivotal employee experience, small business owners need to follow suit.

A strong onboarding plan improves retention and equips new hires with the necessary tools to become top-performing employees. Your small business doesn't need a large HR department or complex employee manuals to get it right. Here's a simple framework to streamline onboarding and create a great first impression.

## Onboarding starts when the offer is accepted

When planning how to onboard a new employee, start as soon as they accept the offer. New hire onboarding begins before new talent walks through the door. Once they have accepted your offer:

- **Welcome them:** The first email should convey your excitement about having them on board and outline critical information. Cover topics like start date, schedule, logistics and anything they need to bring on their first day.
- **Highlight benefits and technology information:** Part of the onboarding process includes verifying employment, adding new hires to benefits programs and providing access to relevant systems. Share benefits information, so they can review options and ask questions. For remote hires, cover what technology they'll be receiving, connectivity details and when they can expect items to arrive.
- **Start internal preparation now:** Steps like creating an email account, granting software access, obtaining badges for building access and ordering any necessary devices may take longer than you think.
- **Name a point person:** Help alleviate anxiety and ease transitions by giving new hires a point person. That helps them feel like they're part of the team and can get questions answered quickly.

## Focus on “day one” success

A personal, organized welcome creates a positive first impression. Take the time to greet new employees personally. For remote employees, kick off the first day with a video call. Help them focus on what matters most by scheduling a face-to-face meeting with their manager as soon as possible.

From there, show your new employee around the office space and walk them through how key systems, such as email or messaging apps, are organized. Provide them with a schedule for their first week, including training, meetings and time to get situated in their job. Take the time to introduce new hires to their colleagues across departments, find opportunities for cross-training and even consider assigning them a mentor to help them integrate quickly.

## Build momentum in week one

During the first week, help your new employee build momentum. Start early by discussing the role, goals and opportunities in the job. Highlight the company and role-specific training you offer, including both optional and mandatory sessions. Build confidence by allowing new hires to make contributions through small projects that scale with their knowledge. Finally, ensure that you foster open communication. Schedule 10-minute check-ins to recap progress, answer questions and address issues before they escalate or become roadblocks.

## A first-month success roadmap

After a month on the job, employees should feel like a member of the team and be fully contributing. Strategically expanding a new employee's knowledge, providing opportunities to work on projects and offering strong feedback loops as part of your onboarding plan will support this. Other steps to consider include:

- **Create a 30-day roadmap:** Outline what success looks like in their role within the first thirty days, including milestones, training goals and deliverables. Concretely answer the question: What does a successful employee look like in one month?
- **Schedule weekly one-on-one appointments:** As new employees transition into their roles, use regular meetings (even if you don't typically do this with employees) to answer questions and provide feedback for optimal long-term performance.
- **Recognize success:** It's all too easy to focus on knowledge gaps, training and opportunities for improvement. Take the time to offer recognition, even for small wins or efforts, to help keep employees motivated and engaged.

## A 90-day plan for long-term success

On small teams, with lean resources, it's tempting to jump quickly into routine workflow, once the basics of an employee's onboarding are complete. Realistically, it can take months for a worker to fully understand your business, master the nuances of their role and become part of the company culture. An ongoing onboarding plan that extends for three or even six months can help. Stay in touch with new hires at least monthly – check-in on their progress and identify any needs or questions they may have. Consider starting growth and performance conversations early on, so they're ready for reviews and see that you're taking their long-term growth seriously. Finally, have a plan to scale their responsibilities so you're getting the most from their contributions and helping them grow.

## Keep onboarding experiences engaging

Once you start developing a systematized onboarding approach, it's possible to overcorrect and create an experience that's overly engineered. The goal is to have a clear plan, good communication, and provide employees with a positive experience. Keep it consistent with your culture. Simple tools, such as templates and checklists, can help keep you on track. But don't lose sight of the human element. A personalized onboarding experience can engage your talent and let them know they are important to your growing business. It's also helpful to ask for feedback to identify what areas of your onboarding process need improvement.

How to onboard a new employee is about more than just filling out paperwork and sharing passwords. A strong onboarding experience enables you to establish a foundation that transforms new hires into high-performing colleagues. Invest the time upfront.

*The author of this content is a paid contributor for Verizon.*