ENG

A Guide to Virtual Onboarding

EXECUTIVE
NETWORK
GROUP

MAKING RECRUITMENT *BETTER*.

Background

The past few months have seen a switch to working from home and it looks as though this trend is set to continue. This calls for a change to many processes within businesses, but a major one is the onboarding process. Onboarding new hires remotely brings new challenges and calls for many changes to the traditional processes, however successful employee onboarding can improve employee retention by 82% and productivity by over 70% (Glassdoor). It is important for this to be completed effectively so how can this be achieved?

Getting onboarding right –

The Three C's

- Career
- Community
- Cause

Facebook conducted an employee survey resulting in the "Three C's", this is similar to Abraham Maslow's model around the hierarchy of needs.

- Career is about work: having a job that provides autonomy, allows you to use your strengths, and promotes your learning and development. It's at the heart of motivation.

- Community is about people: feeling respected, cared about, and recognised by others. It drives our sense of connection and belongingness.

- Cause is about purpose: feeling that you make a meaningful impact, identifying with the organisation's mission statement, and believing that it does some good in the world. It's a source of pride.

  These three segments make up the 'Psychological Contract'. These are the unwritten expectations and obligations between employees and employers. When that contract is fulfilled, people bring their whole selves to work. But when it's breached, people become less satisfied and committed therefore including the 3 C's in virtual onboarding is crucial for the employee to get off to a good start!

Virtual Recruitment Pre-Start

Pre-boarding is the time between your new hire accepting a job offer and their first day. It gives you a chance to reach out and ease any anxieties they may feel.

Your pre-boarding activities could include:

- Simply sending an email to say hello that shows you're excited about their arrival. It is also a great way to inform a new hire when to log in for their first day, and to ask if they need anything before they join.
- Setting them up with the video chat and messaging software that your team uses. You can also add them to the most relevant groups, so that they and their new colleagues can say hello before day one.
- Emailing out a welcome pack. This could include a link to online resources such as training videos, useful webinars, product information or demos, and procedure documents.
- You should liaise with your IT team to send out any hardware in advance of your new hire's first day, add any necessary subscriptions to the software they'll use, and create log-in details for them.

Day one, Week one, Month one

Day One:

- Give a "tour" of your virtual workspace. Schedule a virtual orientation with a member of your IT team to get your new hire an overview of the technology and software (e.g. login details).
- Send a new employee announcement to inform your team of the new hire's arrival. Make sure to CC the new employee in so they can see any welcome messages their new teammates send.
- Set up a video introduction with the new hire's team. Have current employees go around and briefly explain what they do, including a fun fact about themselves.

Week One:

Manage Their Meetings

To avoid overwhelming them , keep their first virtual meetings to key people. Limit them to:

- You (their line manager): to begin with, schedule meetings with your new employee every day or two. Try to keep these first catch-ups informal, and use them as an opportunity to check in and build rapport.
- Their teammates: catch-ups with team members will help your new start to get to know everyone, learn about the tasks and objectives that each is responsible for, and begin to see how they fit into the big picture. An end-of-week group video call will also allow your new hire to socialise and start to feel part of the team.
- The CEO or head of department: they can discuss the health of the business, its mission, values, and strategy. If there is more than one new starter, a group online session with the CEO may make everyone feel more comfortable asking questions.

Keep it Fun

Remember, a big part of onboarding is turning any anxiety into excitement about the role. You can inject some fun into proceedings with:

- Virtual Ice Breakers
- Virtual social activities such as online quizzes and group zoom calls on a Friday after work

Month One:

Schedule One-on-Ones

If you spot any skills gaps from the tasks you assigned your new employee, weekly one-on-ones are the place to discuss them and also highlight any training or learning opportunities. These catch-ups will also help you to build rapport and engagement. At each meeting:

- Ask how they're feeling, and don't just focus on work.
- Give praise and show how they're contributing to the "big picture" of your organisation.
- Offer constructive feedback – highlighting areas to improve.
- Set goals and objectives to hit for the following week.

Assign a Virtual Buddy

A virtual buddy from their team can be your new hire's go-to for help with any issues that crop up on the job. The buddy should live and breathe your organisations culture, be willing to help, and share the way they approach their work.

Crucially, the buddy should also invite the colleagues fresh thinking, perspectives, an experiences. That way, your new hires will add to your culture.

Get Feedback

Onboarding remote employees is likely a new experience for your company, so asking for feedback on how you're doing can be a great way to improve the process. Ask new employees what they thought went well and what they think could be improved so you can adapt your virtual onboarding process in the future.

White Collar vs Blue Collar

White-collar employees generally tend to be computer-literate in order to do their jobs. This means virtually onboarding them can be simple by providing them with the hardware and technology needed for the role and following the guidance listed above. Try including more engaging and interactive e-learning to onboard white-collar workers as they are already familiar with e-learning.

In the case of blue-collar employees, however, things are a little different. Some potentially may not be computer literate and their exposure to e-learning may be limited compared to white-collar workers. Therefore they may need extra support in using technology and certain software programmes. By introducing non-interactive e-learning like simple images and graphics, video's and audio that effectively communicates the learning content may be more effective. In some cases it is not possible to onboard a blue collar worker remotely as they cannot work from home in most instances. Where it is possible to do so it's absolutely critical that leaders provide local line managers with the knowledge and communication skills to effectively onboard new team members, that the organisation consider ways to humanise some of the automated onboarding processes.

FOMU = Fear of Meeting Up

'FOMU' is a very real presence in the workplace right now due to remote working and Covid-19. This will be for the foreseeable future, so taking note of such anxieties and acknowledging them is crucial for all leaders. Below are some tips on what you can do to help:

- Let employees know you understand how they feel and listen to their concerns.
- Communicate that any interaction is being closely monitored and assessed for their safety. People in the workplace must feel confident that they can return without putting themselves of their loved ones in any danger of infection.
- If 'FOMU' anxiety is preventing productive working, you may wish to consider if the time is right for workers to return, or how many workers are appropriate for your workplace. If remote working can continue for those feeling the pressure, then assess the situation on a case-by-case basis before making any big decisions.
- Try staggered scheduling. This means having some teams come in half the week and other teams work from the office on different days or give employees control over how often they work from the office.