5 Tips for Effectively Onboarding and Training New Hires

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Starting a new job can be exciting, stressful and even a bit scary sometimes. Likewise, bringing someone new into a business that you've shed blood, sweat, and tears over as the founder can also give one pause.

Onboarding and training a new hire should be a positive journey for all parties involved. You are introducing your company to someone new and, like with any introduction, you want to put your best foot forward. You can alleviate stressors and secure a well-trained and prepared employee base by having specific processes in place to ensure successful onboarding and thorough training.

Here are five steps to effective onboarding and training of new hires.

1. Make the right hire

Everything starts with the people. When scaling a business, especially a service-centric one that's focused on human capital, you must hire the right person. This can be a challenge when one job listing can easily net over a hundred or more applicants. Knowing your business, your culture and clarifying expectations can be integral to getting the right

people through the door and into the roles where they will thrive.

Making the right decision when hiring means knowing your business and its culture. A person’s skill set is important, but their personality, temperament and work ethic can also influence whether or not they are a good fit. Sometimes it can be challenging to recognize these attributes until the person has started, but having a thorough interviewing and hiring process can help single out the winners who will bring a lot to the table in terms of skill and disposition.

Take your time and be intentional in the midst of the interviewing and hiring process. Even if you are growing at a breakneck pace, you don’t want to cut corners when having people join your team.

2. Have a strong organizational structure

When a business has clear leadership, solid communication and good managers, it’s easier for new hires to know where they fit on the team. Appointing mentors for new hires will also allow their fellow employees to have some stake in how they do while training and what they eventually contribute to the team as a whole.

Newly hired employees must know who they directly report to, who may report to them and where the “buck stops”, so to speak. A well-defined organizational structure helps with task allocation and can also define operating procedures for a business.

New hires should know who they should turn to in order to have questions answered or tasks assigned. Clearing up any confusion for new employees will expedite training and lead to better results and retention.

Communication among management and from management to staff should be clear and consistent.

3. Preset onboarding training

The days of being locked in a room with a set of circa 1985 VHS training tapes about proper ways to wear a uniform or mop up spills have long since come to an end. These days, companies are taking a cue from online learning mediums like those offered on LinkedIn or Udemy. With pre-recorded video lectures that run about five to ten minutes long, an organization can provide focused training on a wide range of topics. Areas of importance such as role expectations, goals and even software can be covered.

With the pandemic changing the way businesses hire and train new employees, online training will quickly become the standard across many industries. It allows new hires to work at their own pace, pause, ask questions and return to lessons for review as needed.

Online onboarding and training require an organization to have a dynamic HR or management team that can introduce a new hire to the concept and walk with them through the process. The virtual and largely self-guided system doesn’t mean you can allow a new hire to flounder aimlessly until a week is up and they’re thrown to the proverbial wolves. Support from the hiring team or their direct manager is crucial for the employees to eventually learn what they need to know and get to the point of successfully beginning their new roles.

4. Test drive and cross-train

It’s important to give new hires a chance to test drive what they’ve learned in their week of onboarding. This allows them to work through what they may have questions about and get used to physically doing tasks that they’ll be expected to do

on a day-to-day basis. You can also take advantage of cross-training opportunities, which allow people to build on their skills slowly, adding more and more responsibility as they get more comfortable in their roles.

The concept of cross-training employees has also taken on new importance in the wake of the Covid pandemic. When employees train in multiple roles, they can jump in when needed if someone happens to be sick, out taking care of family, or on vacation. Having new hires well-trained in multiple roles reinforces the team structure, as well. It's a "we're all in this together" mentality that allows all new and seasoned employees alike to have buy-in to the business's success.

5. Continuous training and reviews

After a new hire's initial week of onboarding and training is over, it doesn't mean there's no room for continued training. Continuing education is vital to any role in an organization. It's how organizations grow and become better. Offering one-on-one's with management and continued mentorships also shows that you are willing to support new hires and see them succeed.

Offering 90-day, 6-month and 1-year reviews allows a new hire to know where they stand regarding mastering their role and where they may need to improve. This also gives the employer a chance to source feedback from their new employees. Their insight can be invaluable in tweaking processes or figuring out what works or what may not work. This feedback could be constructive for startups just starting to form their systems for hiring, onboarding and training.

Bringing new people to your team doesn't need to be a stressful endeavor. When developing the process of joining your team, it can be valuable to source feedback from existing employees. Reach out to those employees already providing tremendous value to your organization. Their input could

significantly improve the onboarding and training process.

Lastly, don’t negate the importance of the human element in onboarding and training procedures. Each new hire you bring on is going to be different. Allowing them to play to their strengths and make their way, even in the beginning, will lead to higher employee satisfaction and better productivity in the long run. This starts with personalizing some of the onboarding processes, allowing new hires to tell the team a bit of themselves outside of what they do professionally or where they went to college. The social aspect of joining a new work team cannot be discounted or left out of the onboarding process.

With clear communication, robust systems in place, and leading by example, you can make onboarding and training an exciting and pleasant experience.

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