



The Ultimate Guide To Employee Onboarding In 2022

Get started with our employee onboarding guide to create the ultimate onboarding experience.

You never get a second chance to make a first impression. When we go out for a first date, we know how important it is to get off on the right foot: a date that doesn't start well, never ends well.

So why would we underestimate the importance of the first impression we leave as a company on a new employee?

Welcome to the ultimate guide to create a successful employee onboarding process!

In this comprehensive guide to employee onboarding you'll learn:

- What is employee onboarding?
- Why is an onboarding process so important?
- The golden triangle of onboarding

How to make your onboarding process successful
Let's dig in.

What is employee onboarding?

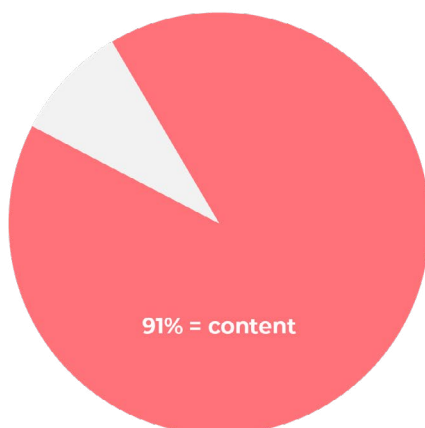
Wouldn't it be great if there were a magic formula, a procedure we could follow to increase the success-rates of our first dates? The bad news is, this doesn't exist for dating. The good news: it does exist for professional relationships, and it's called the onboarding process. It's a clearly pre-defined, thought-through and goal-oriented process, designed to achieve the following objectives:

- Help the company leave a good first impression on the new employee
- Help the new employee feel welcome and feel like a genuine part of the team from the first day
- Help the new employee be successful in his job as soon as possible
- Increase the retention rate of the company
- Increase the general wellbeing of employees

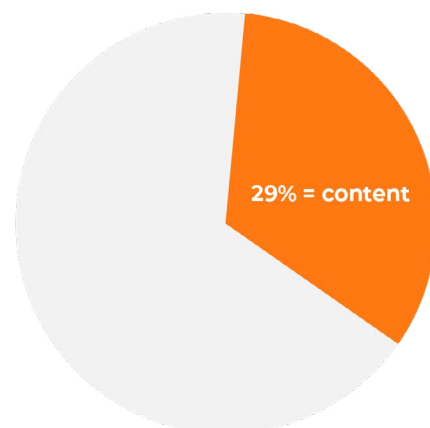
An onboarding process is essential, yet overlooked by so many HR-managers and business owners.

Why is an onboarding process so important?

Employees that had an onboarding



Employees that haven't had an onboarding



A study, recently conducted by the leading HR organization Bamboo, shows the exact impact of a successful onboarding procedure:

89% of 'onboarded' employees say they are well integrated into the company's culture. Only 59% of the employees that didn't go through onboarding say the same.

There are many more numbers and statistics available testifying for the importance of a good onboarding process, but of course, your gut-feeling has been telling you the same for years.

The objective of this guide is to help HR-managers and business owners design an onboarding process that perfectly caters to the needs of the company. We'll provide actionable insights and tools that will allow you to Wdesign your onboarding process quickly and successfully.

The golden triangle of onboarding

Though every company is very different, and every individual employee is different as well, the onboarding process consists of the same three elements throughout the entire economy.

These three elements form the golden triangle of onboarding:

Cultural fit

Managing Expectations

Technical Skills

1. Cultural fit

Cultural what?

The first element of the golden triangle of onboarding is the so-called cultural fit. Every company has its own specific DNA, mission, values, ...

The combination of all these elements is referred to as the company culture. On the other hand, every individual also has his own set of values, identity and character. These are the employee's culture.



A common misunderstanding about cultural fit is that we're trying to find a perfect match between the company culture and the employee's culture. Trying to achieve this would be a mission impossible: every culture – both the company culture and the employee's culture – is the product of years and years of organic growth, education, trial and error, etc. So changing a culture overnight is unachievable, and it would be highly undesirable just as well.

So are we trying to achieve a perfect match through the hiring process? Again, no. If we would limit the pool of candidates we want to hire from exclusively to people who share the exact same set of values and vision with the company, we would be making it extremely hard for ourselves.

It's important to understand that with cultural fit: we're not trying to change anything. We're just trying to make the employee's culture fit in with the company's culture. We're trying to find common ground as well as areas where both cultures can complement each-other.

Communication plays a key role here. It's important for the employee to get a very clear view of the culture of the company. It's equally important that the company – and colleagues of the new hire – get a clear view of the employee's culture as well, as soon as possible.

Tools to use

- Implement a company-culture training early in your onboarding-week
- A well thought-out onboarding box is a very powerful tool
- The onboarding canvas helps structure conversations around the company culture

Once both the employee and the company have a clear view of the key elements defining each-other's culture, the new hire will feel at home at his new company much sooner, which will automatically lead to enhanced well-being and better performance.

Do's and don'ts

Do:

- Let colleagues talk about the company culture to the newly hired employee
- Communicate your company values clearly and often
- Make sure the new employee has a good understanding of the company's mission and vision
- Ask the new hire about his or her value
- Offer a gift: the power of receiving a gift cannot be underestimated, it leaves a lasting impression

Don't:

- Talk about values, but fail to act accordingly
- Talk without asking: getting to know the employee's culture is just as important as informing the employee about the company's culture
- Make the first day of the new employee go by unnoticed

2. Managing expectations

What is meant by expectation management?

Very often, disappointment comes from failure to meet expectations. That's why, managing expectations is a key element of the golden triangle of onboarding. This starts with the job description you're posting: it should be very clear about what you're expecting from the employee and the employee should get a very clear idea about what he or she can expect from the company as well.



The management of expectations enters a new phase when the prospective new hire gets his first interview. The job interview should always be a structured conversation, rather than the inconsistent array of the questions it still very often is today.

Just like the cultural fit, managing expectations works in both ways. What we're really trying to achieve here is for the employee to know exactly what is expected of him or her in the new job, and for the company (and the colleagues) to know exactly what the new employee expects to get from his or her new job.

Once the job description and the job interview were handled correctly, and expectations are managed accordingly, the next step is to implement expectation management in the time leading up to the employee's first day at the company and the actual first days on the job.

Tools to use

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Do's and don'ts

Do:

- Write a clear job description and define what success looks like in this job
- In the job description, make it crystal clear what the employee can expect from the company
- Ask specific questions about the prospective employee's expectations
- Let a future colleague talk about how it is to live and work at the company


Don't:

- Create expectations you know you can't live up to
- Be unclear about expectations and let the employee define them

3. Technical skills

What are technical skills?

Very often when we hire new employees, we do so because they bring a certain set of skills to the table. Skills we need in our organization in order to increase the company's performance. We distinguish four kinds of hirings, based on the matrix beneath:

	The company already has the technical skills in-house	The company doesn't have the technical skills in-house yet
The employee already has the technical skills	Type 1: the quick match	Type 2: the trainer
The employee doesn't have the technical skills yet	Type 3: the trainee	Type 4: the sponge

Type 1: the quick match

With the quick match, both the employee and the company already possess the technical skills. For example: a design agency hires an extra graphic designer. In this case, covering the 'technical skills' aspect of the golden triangle of onboarding, should be quick and easy.

In your on-boarding training, make sure your new hire's team leader, together with one or two of his direct colleagues gives a brief exposition of how they work, and the technical skills required to perform well.

The new hire will quickly notice where the possible blind spots in his or her skillset still lay, and can request additional training to fix them.

Type 2: the trainer

With the trainer, the company hires a new profile because the company has identified a lack of a certain set of technical skills. The new hire is expected to bring these skills to the company and - if necessary - train the other employees in these specific skills.



For example, a design agency hires a new and experienced motion designer, because more and more customers are asking to implement motion design in their marketing campaigns. The new motion designer will be in charge of all motion designs, but the account managers at the company need to be trained about the possibilities of motion design, so they can sell the new solution to their customers.

In this case, it's important to define beforehand which technical skills, you're looking for in the new hire and which skills you're expecting the new hire to train his colleagues about. Together with the new employee, make a structured plan of this training, define KPI's and set dates on which you'll measure whether or not the KPI's are met or not.

Type 3: the trainee

The trainee is an employee you hired because he or she has a certain set of capabilities or qualities that will contribute to the success of the company, but the new hire still has a certain set of technical skills to acquire.



For example, a design agency hires an additional account manager to add to the account team. The new hire used to work as an account manager in a totally different industry. This means, the new hire will need to be trained in the technical aspects of design, so that he knows the possibilities and he can do his job in helping customers with the right design solutions.

With trainees, investing time and means in formal training is key. Way too often still, companies tell new hires “you’ll pick up automatically just by being here” and while that may be true, the new employee will get the feeling to be left to their own devices.

In your onboarding calendar (download template), it’s important to allow enough time for formal training. Use the experts you already have in your team to provide training. Not only will the new employee get the feeling he or she’s being looked after, he or she will be more successful in his or her job much faster and, as an additional bonus: the employees giving the training will become even more skilled, as teaching always is the best way of learning.

Type 4: the sponge

Sometimes the company hires new skills that neither the new hire, nor the company already have at the moment of onboarding. In this case, much like with the trainee, the new employee is hired for the qualities he or she has, and because the company is confident he or she will be able to acquire the necessary skills quickly.

The big difference between the sponge and the trainee, is that the company can’t provide the training itself, so it has to rely on external education.



For example, a design agency could hire a very skilled graphic designer to set up it’s motion design department, even if this graphic designer is not a trained motion designer yet.

Maybe this specific person was responsible for setting up a different department at his previous occupation, and was hired on that basis. In this case, of course, it's vital for the new employee to learn motion design at first.

In case you're hiring a sponge, two things are to be made very clear before the employment actually starts:

1. Which course will the employee follow?
2. Who will pay for the course?

As soon as there's an agreement about the two elements above, it is important that the company displays patience: give the new hire the time and space necessary to complete the course and acquire the new skills.

Tools to use

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Do's and don'ts

Do:

- Identify which kind of hire you're planning
- Give time and space for training
- Invest in formal training, use tests and quizzes to measure performance
- Reward good performance in training with cool stuff

Don't:

- Leave the new employee to his or her devices
- Set performance expectations too soon after onboarding

Make your onboarding process successful

Now that we have explained the importance of a successful onboarding procedure, and we have shared the insights around the golden triangle of onboarding, our final goal is to define a step-by-step guide to crafting your new hire onboarding experience so your new employees will be successful!



1. Define expectation

Have an internal discussion with key stakeholders within your company: a direct colleague, a direct manager, management, ... and define what you'll expect from the new colleague and what the new hire can expect from the company. Use the onboarding canvas to structure your conversation.

2. Identify the type of hire

Use the technical skills matrix to identify the type of hire you're about to plan. Based on your decision, start designing the training based on the specific needs.

3. Write a kick-ass job description

Invest time in writing a job description that leaves very little room for interpretation: define expectations crystal clear and make sure the company culture resonates with the job posting. Pro tip: Let the direct colleagues of the new hire write the job description!



4. Make the job interview a positive experience

This one's a challenge. People being interviewed are nervous, anxious even. Consider carefully who you include in your interview: research has shown that interviews are more successful when direct colleagues of the future hire are also at the table.

Make sure to use our Employee Onboarding Canvas to structure the dialogue and give feedback 'on the spot'. Make sure that also those leaving the interview without a chance of a second interview feel good about your company. A nice leave-behind like a pair of socks to thank them for their effort, displays great class.

5. Have a clear onboarding calendar

The onboarding starts the moment you break the good news to the new hire. Communicate your onboarding calendar at that time, so they know what to expect. Download our 90 day onboarding calendar to help you make your own.



6. Make the first day an experience

This first impression is so important. Make sure you've got the schedule for the first day(s) completely figured out on beforehand. Giving the new hire an awesome onboarding box is more than a gimmick: it makes the new employee feel welcome and motivated right from the start!

7. Continue coaching and listen to feedback

Once you've gotten off on the right foot, you're on the right track. The chances of things going south from there are very limited, but do keep investing in coaching and feedback throughout the first few months of the new employee.

Get in touch with our team.

Contact our team →