

How to Create (and Run) a Successful Onboarding Program



While onboarding new employees might seem like an easy task and something that a simple checklist can help you do effectively...most businesses miss the mark when it comes to building an efficient and effective onboarding program. For too many companies, they focus solely on paperwork and documentation—signing contracts, picking benefits, scanning IDs, and more. <u>Only 1 in 10 employees</u> strongly agree that their company does a good job of welcoming and training new employees (including managers and leaders).

The reason? Most businesses fail to effectively create and implement the three phases of an effective onboarding program:

Phase 1: Documentation/Paperwork

While it isn't necessarily fun...this part of onboarding can't be avoided—it's how you get an employee set up to work for your company. It should always include the right paperwork, filling out the right forms, checking the right boxes, etc.

Who owns this onboarding process: HR

Key new hire questions this phase of onboarding should answer:

- a. What are my benefit options?
- b. What document do I need to bring with me?
- c. What paperwork can I complete before I start on day one?

2 Phase 2: Cultural Onboarding

Company onboarding, or cultural onboarding, is a critical-yet often overlooked-piece of a great employee experience. It's an opportunity to help the new hire get acquainted with how the business runs, what it sells, what it believes in, and how employees contribute to the overall culture of the organization.

This stage of onboarding should also include how employees will be recognized at your business—we're talking about your employee recognition program! This is your chance to showcase how employees are recognized for their hard work and rewarded for the great things they do every day. It's the perfect way to make a great first impression as a stellar company to work for.

Who owns this onboarding process: HR

Key new hire questions this phase of onboarding should answer:

- a. What does the company believe in?
- b. What are the company's values?
- c. How does the company recognize and reward employees?
- d. How do I fit in with the broader team and company goals?



75% of companies have an employee recognition program, but only **58%** of employees know about it.





3 Phase 3: Job Onboarding

One of the most important things you can do to help your employees feel supported and set up for success is focusing on effective job-specific onboarding. While this stage can (and sometimes should be) handled by their direct managers, HR can influence this process with proper management training and check-ins with managers.

Who owns this onboarding process: Direct managers

Key new hire questions this phase of onboarding should answer:

- a. What tools do I need to do my job effectively?
- b. Who should I work with?
- c. What is my role?
- d. How can I be successful in my role?

*Note: While the tools each new hire needs to do their job effectively are likely different, HR can help bridge the gap by building a positive working relationship with the IT team. First-day setup should look similar for most employees (e.g. for office workers that can look like getting a company-assigned computer, logins for email and other tools, etc.). Job-specific tool access will likely be brokered between hiring managers and the IT team—not HR.



In this guide, we'll cover the critical steps for phases 1 and 2 of onboarding—documentation/ paperwork and cultural onboarding—and how this can look different for new employees (whether they are remote or in person) and what it looks like for new managers (those that are new to management positions & those that are new to the company).



Onboarding for New Employees

A successful onboarding program can pay big dividends. Businesses with a strong onboarding process slow down turnover and <u>retain 91% of their first-year workers</u>. But in order to see similar results, HR needs to build the right program. This looks different for both on-site employees and remote employees:

Onboarding On-site Employees

For any employee to be successful, especially from their first day, businesses should create an onboarding process that covers these main stages:

Pre-Boarding

At this stage, employees have already received and signed their job offer, but they haven't had their official first day as the newest member of your team. If you want to start your employees off on the right foot before their start-day, give them the opportunity to pre-board—help them gather the right documentation and complete the right paperwork before they even step into the building. Typically, this looks like signing any additional employment contracts and government forms. This stage should also include an emailed agenda or schedule for their first day so they know exactly what to expect!

The goal of the pre-boarding stage is to help your new hire feel prepared and ready to get started on day one. With paperwork out of the way (using digital e-signature where possible) and a clear idea of what they'll be doing on their first day, new hires can walk into their first day with confidence.



Behind the scenes, HR is responsible for consolidating equipment/requesting equipment from IT for the new hire, gathering logins, setting up the new hire's workspace (unless this is in their manager's line of responsibility), and letting the team know when the new hire will start.

To ensure cultural pre-boarding needs are met, HR should consider ways to introduce the new hire to the company culture ahead of time. One way to do this? Send a swag package to your new team member. This little gift could include a welcome letter from the CEO and/or their manager, information about the company's benefits, the employee handbook, branded gear, treats, and more.



Pre-boarding to-do list for the new hire:	Pre-boarding to-do list for HR (and/or the hiring manager):
 Sign employment contract Sign government forms 	 Send employee contract for signature Send government forms for signature Send agenda/schedule for the first day Send onboarding swag package Consolidate equipment/logins/workspace Communicate to the team who the new hire is and when they will start

First day

The first-day onboarding checklist should be three-fold: help the new hire meet and integrate into their team, finish any paperwork that needs additional attention, and get introduced to the company values and mission.

For in-person new hires, let's get started with a tour of the office. HR can either set up this tour with someone from the team (or an assigned mentor) or give the tour themselves. And, just as a tour of the office can help new hires get their bearings, a welcome team lunch or any meet-the-team activities can help break the ice and make everyone feel connected and integrated into the group.

An essential part of cultural onboarding on the first day is a thorough introduction to the company's values and mission. By introducing these tenets early, you'll cement what your business believes in, set expectations for behavior, and help your new hire relate their everyday work to the greater mission of the company. Many successful onboarding programs also include an opportunity for new hires to complete personality tests or profiles to help others get to know them (and if the results are posted for the rest of the team, new hires can get to know them in this same way as well)!

First day to-do list for the new hire:	First day to-do list for HR (and/or the hiring manager):
 Tour office Attend welcome lunch Meet the team Participate in any team-building activities Finish benefits paperwork Finish any other unfinished paperwork Learn about the company values and mission statement Take any personality tests/profiles 	 Set up office tour/take new hire on tour Set up welcome lunch Facilitate new hire meeting the team Set up / facilitate / recommend team-building activities Help new hire finish benefits paperwork Help new hire finish any other unfinished paperwork Teach new hire about the company values and mission statement Administer any personality tests/profiles

First week

As your new employee moves through the first week of onboarding, the to-do list shifts from checking off boxes and completing paperwork into more connections/meetings with their team, cross-functional team members, and a mentor—when a mentor program is in place. New hires should also start their official job training (provided by their manager and team), meet with their manager for their first 1:1, and focus on completing any other remaining HR tasks, such as safety and harassment training. HR should help facilitate as much of this first-week onboarding as possible. In practice, this looks like introducing the new hire to their mentor, any cross-functional team members that will help them get acquainted with their job responsibilities quickly, and check with their manager to make sure job training is in place and has started.

First week to-do list for the new hire:	First week to-do list for HR (and/or the hiring manager):
 Meet assigned mentor Start job training Complete HR/safety training Meet for first 1:1 with manager Meet with other team members/cross-functional team members 	 Facilitate mentor meeting/introduce mentor program Check in with manager on new hire job training Administer HR/safety training Check in on manager scheduling first 1:1 with new hire Facilitate meetings with new hire and other team members/cross-functional team members

First month

Contrary to popular belief, onboarding doesn't stop after the first week. The first 30 days are critical for every new hire. At this point, you should continue regular check-ins with HR, their manager, and their mentor. Weekly 1:1s are typical with new hires and their manager while check-ins with their manager and HR might follow a once-a-month cadence. Want to ensure cultural onboarding is ongoing? Team-building activities should be continued by their team manager on a regular basis so employees, whether new or tenured, can improve their relationships and feel more connected.

It's always a great idea for HR to send a 30-day onboarding survey to each new hire—check in to see how well they feel prepared and trained for their job, if they have the tools they need to be successful, and gather any feedback on how to make the onboarding experience better. Be sure to check back in with their managers to ensure team-building activities are happening and assess whether your newest team member meets expectations within the first 30 days. Team building activities for new hires:

- ✓ Welcome team lunch
- ✓ Trivia games
- ✓ Offsite activity (e.g. escape room, golf, etc.)
- ✓ Personality tests
- Team games (e.g. basketball, board games, etc.)



First month to-do list for the new hire:	First month to-do list for HR (and/or the hiring manager):
 Check in with HR, manager, and mentor Participate in regular team-building opportunities 	 Check in with new hire (consider sending a 30-day onboarding survey) Check in with manager to assess new hire success in first 30 days Check in with manager to ensure team-building activities are planned

First 90 days

Even 90 days in, your new hires should continue to check in with their manager and mentor with consistent 1:1s. HR should administer another onboarding survey—but this time, focus on measuring their job satisfaction! These survey results can help HR identify and resolve any potential early retention issues and make sure the first three months of a new employee's experience is a great one.

While assessing a new hire's job and onboarding satisfaction is important, HR should also check in with managers to see whether their new team member is performing in their role now that they are fully ramped. Two insightful questions to ask managers is whether or not they believe the new hire is a good fit for the team and if they would hire this person for the role if given the opportunity again.

First 90 days to-do list for the new hire:	First 90 days to-do list for HR (and/or the hiring manager):
 Complete 90-day employee satisfaction survey Check in with HR, manager, and mentor 	 Check in with new hire (consider sending a 90-day employee satisfaction survey) Check in with manager to assess new hire success in first 90 days

To fully integrate new employees, cultural onboarding should be sprinkled throughout the first 90 days. Here are a few examples of how you can do this at your company and why they make an impact:

Team building activities

Just as tenured employees need to feel connected to their teams, new hires need ways to integrate into the team quickly and make friends at work. And the data backs this up—when employees have others they can rely on at work, they are <u>1.9x more likely</u> to strongly agree their onboarding process was exceptional.





At Motivosity, we looked at our customers with the highest eNPS scores (+50 and above, which is considered Excellent), and found that the most common company values included:

- 1. Integrity/Authenticity
- 2. Service
- 3. Collaboration and teamwork
- 4. Innovation and Growth
- 5. Excellence
- 6. Positivity

Personality tests

Including a personality test in the onboarding process is a great way to help the company get to know the new hire and vice versa. These tests can help your team lean into their strengths and communication styles, helping them understand how to work best with their new (and not-so-new) coworkers. Personality tests can help breed confidence among your team and may even improve employee satisfaction during the onboarding experience. When employees believe they can apply their strengths to their jobs better, they are <u>3.5x more likely</u> to strongly agree their onboarding process was exceptional!

Company Mission

Every onboarding experience should always include an introduction to the company's mission. Not only does this help employees see where they align with your business's northstar, it lays the foundation for the culture everyone helps build. Plus, when an organization has a well-defined mission statement—63% of employees say they feel motivated compared to just 31% of employees who feel motivated at businesses without well-defined mission statements.

Company Values

Understanding company values is critical for any employee's success at the organization, both culturally and professionally. But as a new hire, connecting with company values can help fast-track brand loyalty—increasing your chances of higher retention right off the bat. By including education on your company values in the onboarding process, employees get a better view of the type of culture the organization wants—and *rewards*.

Performance Management

Best-in-class cultural onboarding should always include an introduction to the way the company views and practices performance management. Just as your company values and mission statement help lay the groundwork for the culture of the business, setting expectations for performance management is just as critical. Plus, when employees have a clear plan for their learning and development at your business, they are <u>3.5x more likely</u> to agree that the onboarding process was exceptional.



Employees are <u>4.7x more</u> <u>likely</u> to say their onboarding process was exceptional when they know how the business likes to see things done at the organization.



Remote employees report that the most critical equipment they need to be successful is a second monitor, headphones, and a mouse.

Recognition and Rewards

No cultural onboarding would be complete without a deep dive into the way the business recognizes and rewards employees. Make sure you implement an employee recognition program that allows your team members to align their work with the company's values—and then reward employees who put them into practice! Information about how the business recognizes and rewards their team helps all employees feel more confident that you care...plus, an employee recognition program, like Motivosity, is a stellar item to add to your list of perks and benefits that will set you apart from your competitors. And when new hires know how they'll be recognized and rewarded for their success, they're <u>1.8x</u> more likely to say that their onboarding process was exceptional.

Onboarding Remote Employees

Onboarding remote employees can (mostly) follow a similar pattern and checklist that you use for in-office employees, but be sure to account for a few major differences:

Shipping Swag

While a company welcome package (including branded swag or gear) can be mailed to in-office employees as part of the pre-boarding checklist—it's something all remote employees will need shipped directly to their address. Make sure you give yourself enough time to get a package prepped, ready to go, and sent off before their first day.

Remote Office Setup

Depending on what your remote employee policies include, you may need to ship office supplies (or send a stipend for the employee to purchase their own supplies) to help get their remote work setup up to par.

If your policy includes the company providing and shipping a monitor, computer, or any other similar supplies—you may need to work with IT to manage the delivery and tracking of all equipment. If the policy involves a combination of sending office equipment and a stipend (e.g. sending a computer, but also allowing for the new hire to purchase a monitor, chair, etc., and then be reimbursed for those expenses), your pre-boarding checklist for a remote employee will need to include those tasks!

Virtual Team-Building

For remote employees, meeting the team (and participating in team-building activities) is a critical and non-negotiable piece of the onboarding process. Your remote employees might be prone to feel less connected because of their distributed location, so be sure to put some extra attention on helping them feel integrated.

Virtual Meet and Greet Plan

Whether you create a virtual meet and greet event for the new team members to get to know their new teammate or put together a virtual lunch meeting, plan to include some virtual welcome experience for the new remote hire. Some teams find it works to send everyone a giftcard for lunch and then set up a Zoom link for everyone to eat their food together.

How to Help Remote Employees Be Successful:

Don't fall into the trap of "out of sight, out of mind" when it comes to your remote employees. They need as much care and attention as you would traditionally give to in-office employees. Creating an inclusive onboarding experience requires your team to review every step of your existing (or soon-toexist) process and assess how you can make it remote-friendly. In-person activities, lunches, classes, etc. all need virtual counterparts-or even virtual replacements.

Here are a few team-building activities to try with your remote team:

Welcome Lunch

Send every team member a gift card to order lunch and meet over Zoom while you eat.

🧼 Book Club

Mail everyone the same book and meet virtually on a regular basis to discuss what you've all been reading.

📄 Trivia

Divide the team into groups and put on a trivia activity. Host the call via Zoom or another platform and bring out the (fun) competitive side of your employees.

Scavenger Hunt

Meet virtually to see who can finish the scavenger hunt the fastest. Bring a list of items everyone typically has in their house and see who can take pictures of every item first!

Two Truths and a Lie

Use this fun, common icebreaker activity to help everyone get to know each other and their new team member. Give everyone a heads up before the call to come up with 2 truths and 1 lie about themselves that everyone will need to guess.



Onboarding for New Managers

Onboarding for new managers should follow a similar pattern to onboarding for all new employees, with a few exceptions! New managers will need check-ins with their manager, introductions to the team, a welcome activity, information about the company's mission and values, and more. But for managers to be successful, they'll also need a few things added to their onboarding schedule:

Manager-specific Training

While job-specific training is important for all new hires, manager-specific training is equally critical for the leaders who join your company. This can take various forms—communication skills, time management, conflict management, and more. Plus, the training you include in your onboarding process can (and should) be repeated for maintenance and cultural upkeep on an annual basis.

Consider the following training options as you onboard new leaders:

- Communication: How to manage communication between peers, with direct reports, and across the organization.
- **Conflict Management:** How to handle conflicts with others, between team members, other leaders, and entire teams.
- **Leadership Essentials:** How to lead and manage a team...think of a Leadership 101.
- Management Styles: How to define and refine your management style (collaborative, authoritative, coaching, transformational, participative, etc.)
- **Budget Training:** How much budget is allocated for the team and the team's expenses and how to use any budget-related software.

Pro Tip: Make sure all of your managers have access to the most up-to-date leadership training. Include best practices on how to lead teams, communicate with peers and employees, and manage conflict or crisis in both your onboarding training and ongoing leadership training.



Company Policies/Culture on Performance Reviews and Feedback

Just as new hires are interested in learning about how performance management is executed and how feedback is delivered at the business, new managers will need detailed information about how their own performance will be measured and how they should measure the performance of and deliver feedback to their direct reports. Because this piece of onboarding will require more information for new managers, be sure to include additional time to introduce this to new leaders joining the team.

Leadership training can take many shapes; remember to include any specific or mandatory training for your industry.

Performance Review Training

New managers should be taught about your company standards and expectations around conducting performance reviews with each of their team members. Be sure to communicate how often performance reviews should be conducted, what each review meeting should include, and best practices for reporting feedback and reviews.

KPI and OKR Training

Outline the key performance indicators (KPIs) or objectives and key results (OKRs) that new managers should achieve as part of their new job responsibilities. If these achievements are tied to a specific bonus or compensation, be sure to include any and all information about variable payouts based on performance and completion! For example, if a new sales manager leads their team to achieve only 90% of their quota goal for the quarter, how does that impact any bonus payments for the manager and the team? These are things your new employees will want to know, so get ahead of the question and come prepared with answers.

Introduction to Direct Reports

Perhaps one of the most critical and impactful pieces of new manager onboarding is the moment they meet their employees. This part of onboarding should include:

Information About Roles and Responsibilities

Whether this information is gathered and delivered by HR or their supervisor, new managers need to be briefed about the roles and responsibilities of each of their direct reports. Include a description of each team member's job responsibilities, any performance issues or notes to be aware of, current challenges for the team, active goals and objectives, team dynamics (personality information and who works best with each other), and any other strengths or weaknesses that may be critical for the manager to know.



1:1s with Each Employee

As part of the new manager's required onboarding to-do's, they should set up 1:1s with every employee on their team. Not only are these meetings important for the newest leader on your team to connect and integrate with the people they'll be working the closest with, but it's also a great way for your employees to build trust and know they're being supported for success. Win-win!

First-Time Managers Through Promotion

Onboarding doesn't just impact new hires at your company. A comprehensive onboarding program should also include how you onboard first-time managers through promotion. Keep in mind, though, that these people already know your business, company culture, and other employees...so they won't need a traditional onboarding experience. But for these new managers to be successful, they still need an onboarding process that's been tailored to their specific needs. Consider this:

Manager-Specific Training

Any available, relevant training should be offered to new managers through promotion. This should include any leadership skills training, HR-specific training, and more! Think about it this way: what do they need to know to be a successful people leader? By asking yourself that question and thinking holistically about the kinds of management skills they'll need to be successful, you'll be sure to cover all of your training bases.

New manager to-do list for the new hire:	New manager to-do list for HR (and/or the hiring manager):
 Complete any manager-specific training Review information about company policies/ culture on performance reviews and feedback Set up 1:1s with each direct report 	 Set up/deliver any manager-specific training available (communication, conflict management, leadership essentials, DE&I, management styles, budget training, etc.) Deliver information about performance review training, KPIs and OKRs, and how the organization manages feedback with all employees Compile information about the new manager's direct reports' roles and responsibilities Check in to make sure the new manager has set up 1:1s with each direct report Schedule any other introductory meetings the new manager might need with finance, HR, other managers, etc.



Manager Mentorship Program

While onboarding first-time managers through promotion saves time on introductions to employees, company policies. and other company information—you'll need to factor in time to help them develop the right leadership skills. Manager-specific training can help the new manager learn how to lead their team, communicate effectively, and use their budget appropriately, but it doesn't cover the everyday questions a manager might have about becoming a good leader. Where possible, onboarding new managers through promotion should include a mentorship program. Assign an experienced leader to each new manager who can help them answer questions and navigate their new role.



New manager through promotion to-do list for the new manager:

Complete any manager-specific training
 Meet with your manager mentor

New manager through promotion to-do list for HR (and/or the hiring manager):

- Set up/deliver any manager-specific training available (communication, conflict management, leadership essentials, DE&I, management styles, budget training, etc.)
- Assign an experienced manager to the new manager through promotion
- Check in to make sure the new manager has met with their manager mentor



Onboarding Checklist



Ore-Boarding Checklist:

Task	Description	Sent/Done	Employee Completed
Employment contract	Send the new hire an employee contract (when applicable) with an e-signature option.		
Government forms	Send the new hire any applicable government forms that they can complete before their first day (e.g., I-9, W-4, etc.).		
Agenda/Schedule for the first day	Send the new hire a detailed outline for their first day. Include any information about meetings, breaks, and free time that can help them prepare for their start date.		
Onboarding swag package	Send the new hire an onboarding swag package (e.g. branded shirt, treats, a welcome letter from the CEO, employee handbook, branded gear, etc.).		N/A
Consolidate equipment/logins /workspace	Work with IT to gather logins, secure equipment, and set up the new hire's workspace. If this is the hiring manager's responsibility, check in to make sure everything is ready for the new hire's start date.		N/A

Let their team know who is starting and when	Alert the new hire's team about the start date for their new team member.	N/A
Manager specific: Direct report information	Compile information about the new manager's direct reports' roles and responsibilities.	N/A

Sirst Day Checklist:

Task	Description	Sent/Done	Employee Completed
Facility tour (if in office)	Set up an office tour with someone from the new hire's team (or an assigned mentor) or take the new hire on the tour.		
Team welcome lunch	Set up a team activity (or check in with the hiring manager to ensure something is planned). Activity ideas include trivia games, an offsite activity (escape room, golf, etc.), personality tests, team games (basketball, board games, soccer), a movie, etc.		
Finish benefits paperwork	Help the new hire finish any outstanding benefits paperwork.		
Finish any other unfinished paperwork	Remind the new hire to finish any other unfinished paperwork (payroll, government forms, benefits, etc.).		
Company values and mission statement	Include an introduction and explanation of the company's values and mission statement in the onboarding experience.		

Personality tests/profiles

Administer a personality test to each new hire. Results can help employees know how to best work with their new team member.

First Week Checklist:

Task	Description	Sent/Done	Employee Completed
Introduce mentor program (if applicable)	Facilitate an introduction between the new hire and their mentor (when a mentor program is in place).		
Check in with manager on new hire job training	Check in to make sure job training is in place and started.		
HR/safety training	Administer any safety training or other HR training that all employees are required to complete.		
Check in with manager on new hire's first 1:1 with manager	Make sure every new hire has a 1:1 scheduled with their manager.		
Introduction to other team members/cross-functional team members	Facilitate introductions between the new hire and critical members of their department and cross-functional team members that can help them do their job successfully.		
Manager specific: Manager-specific training	Set up/deliver any manager- specific training available (communication, conflict management, leadership essentials, DE&I, management styles, budget training, etc.)		

Manager specific: Performance reviews, KPIs, OKRs, and feedback information	Deliver information about performance review training, KPIs and OKRs, and how the organization manages feed- back with all employees.	
Manager specific: 1:1s with each direct report	Check in to make sure the new manager has set up 1:1s with each direct report.	
Manager specific: Introductory meetings	Schedule any other introductory meetings the new manager might need with finance, HR, other managers, etc.	
New manager through promotion specific: Manager mentor	Assign an experienced manager to the new manager through promotion.	
New manager through promotion specific: Manager mentor meeting	Check in to make sure the new manager has met with their manager mentor.	

Sirst Month Checklist:

Task	Description	Sent/Done	Employee Completed
Check in with new hire (consider sending a 30-day onboarding survey)	Send a 30-day new hire survey to assess your onboarding program.		
Check in with the hiring manager (consider sending a 30-day new hire survey)	Send a 30-day hiring manager survey to assess how well the new hire is integrating into the business.		N/A
Regular team-building opportunities	Make sure regular team-building activities are planned and executed by the hiring manager.		N/A



Task	Description	Sent/Done	Employee Completed
New hire satisfaction survey at 90 days	Send a 90-day employee satisfaction survey.		
Manager check in at 90 days	Check in with the manager to assess the new hire's success in the first 90 days.		N/A

Build a Better Onboarding Experience with Motivosity.

Get new hires integrated into their team and the business as a whole faster with Motivosity. With all the right tools to strengthen cultural onboarding—employee spaces, personality tests, employee surveys, company directory, and more—new hires get up-to-speed quickly, helping you increase retention and increase productivity.

With Motivosity, you can make your employees' experience at work more meaningful, get real-time insights into employee engagement, help managers create the right habits focused on employees, and build a community of connection and gratitude with peer-to-peer recognition.

Motivosity is the people-first Recognition and Rewards solution for today's workforce.



