



The easy guide to a great onboarding process



Research tells us that 90% of employees will make the decision to stay with their employer within the first year. We also know that 20% of employees that decide to leave will do so in the first 45 days.



**This means you've
got less than...**

45 DAYS

**...to give staff a
reason to stay**

Effective onboarding has been proven to reduce turnover and increase the likelihood employees will remain with you for the long term. This Cognology guide will step you through the key ingredients for an onboarding experience to exceed your new hire's expectations. Following our tips for success, your business will reap the rewards of more productive and engaged staff, and your turnover issues will be history.

Houston, we have a problem...

You show up on your first day of work after receiving a verbal offer from a recruitment agency about 4 weeks ago. The receptionist tells you the manager is away and no one knew you were starting. After waiting in reception for an hour, a HR officer appears with some paperwork and a clipboard and asks you to "fill this in". After another hour of battling to read the poorly photocopied forms, the receptionist leads you through the closed door to a desk piled with papers and the odd sticky, stained coffee cup. She tells you that you can sit here because Jack is on holidays this week. Eventually, a guy called Peter brings some product manuals over and says you can read through these today until the manager gets back tomorrow. The rest of the week unfolds with you borrowing security passes to get to the loo, getting lost on the way to the cafeteria, and trying to figure out what your job is in between the manager rushing off to meetings. You still haven't met most of the team - who just give you a shy smile laced with pity as they pass you in the hall - and you don't know who to ask for help. You won't have your own desk until the lady in the corner goes on parental leave next Friday and IT has promised to sort out your login and computer once the paperwork has been lodged by your manager...

How are you feeling right about now? Valued? Doubt it. They don't even know who you are. Committed? No way! You'd take any job offer right now just to get out of here. Regret? You're drowning in it. You wish you had never left your last job with the view over the river. Sadly, this is a really great job with a fantastic team and is going to lead to big things in the future. But you are never going to know that because you're not going to stick around long enough to find out. This nightmare however, could have had a happier ending with the right onboarding process.

Onboarding is a series of activities and interactions for new hires to help them settle in, introduce them to the expectations of their new job, ensure they build the skills and knowledge they need to succeed, and most importantly, understand the culture of your company. Unlike traditional inductions that last a few hours or a few days, onboarding starts from recruitment and encompasses the first 6 - 12 months of a new hire's time with you.

An effective onboarding process increases staff engagement with the business, reduces turnover (particularly in the first 12 months) and results in staff becoming more productive more quickly - which boosts your bottom line.

Step 1. Start with a plan.

Tailor the onboarding plan.

The first rule of onboarding is that not all onboarding programmes are created equal. This is not to say some staff are more important than others, just that different staff will have different needs.

Cover job specific skills and knowledge.

Onboarding should be tailored for the nature of the role. Consider the differences between onboarding a call centre operator and a management accountant. One must learn product knowledge, be trained in the company's customer service standards, and be able to navigate the CRM. The other will be responsible for costing projects and scrutinising budgets, developing strategy, and undertaking financial reporting.



Cater for the Individual's level of experience and autonomy.

Onboarding should be pitched at the right level and in line with the person's work style. For example, is the new hire a school leaver or graduate? Has the person had experience in a similar role? How much direction will they need vs. autonomy they'd prefer?

Mix it up with formal and informal activities.

While formal training is going to be a big part of any onboarding programme, it is important not to overwhelm staff with too much information too soon. Mix up the experiences so that the employee's first days are inspiring, not boring.

In addition to formal training, your plan should include:

- roundtable discussions.
- meetings with key people.
- on-the-job learning.
- one-on-one mentoring.
- buddy system.
- site visits.
- shadowing.
- corporate videos.
- performance planning.
- strategy workshops.

Resourcing and provisioning.

Determine all of the equipment this person is going to need to do their job. Your new hire will be productive a lot faster if they are fully provisioned right from the start with phones, computers, email accounts and the appropriate security and IT access.

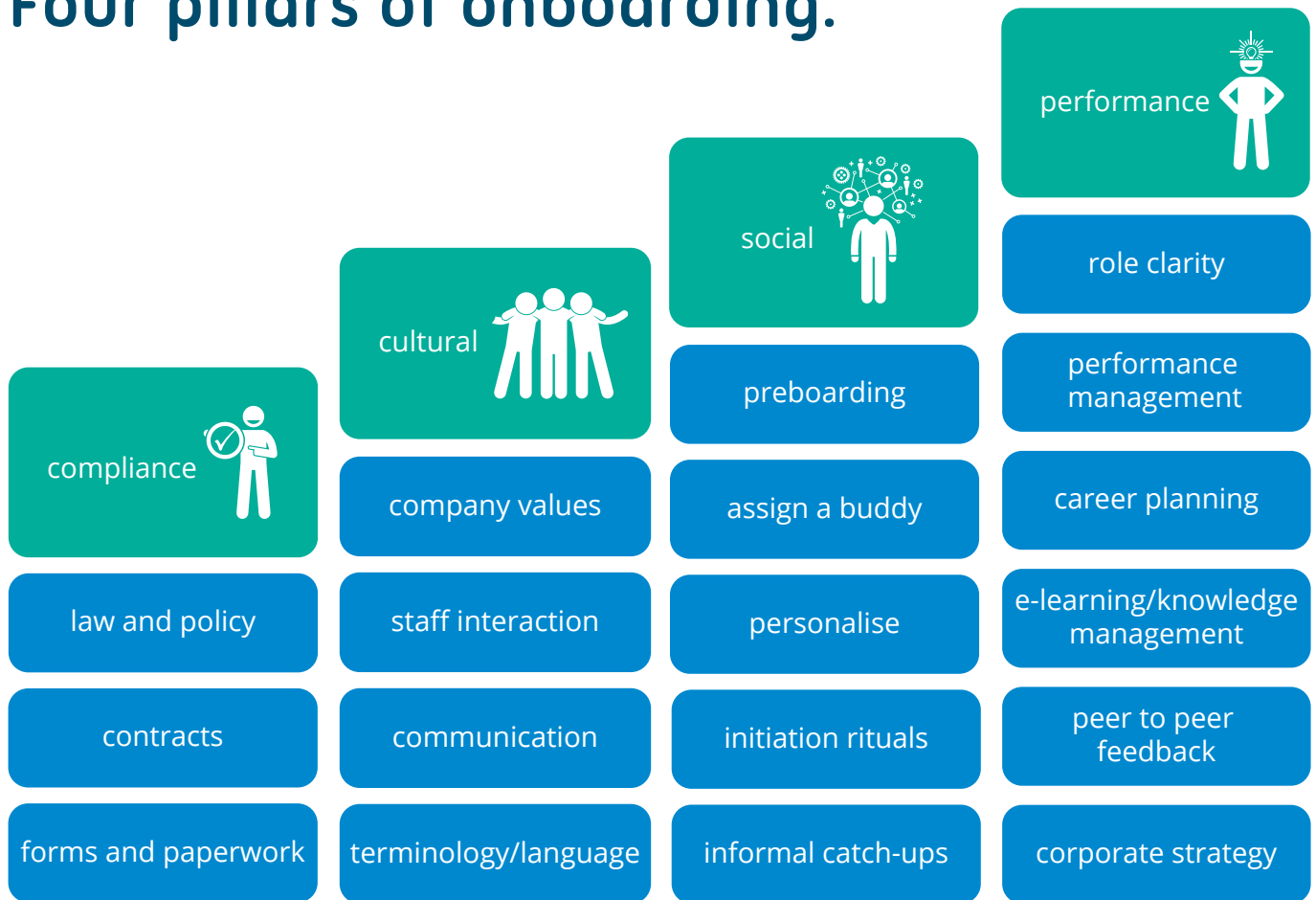
Plan to communicate.

Be sure that you factor communication with HR staff, leaders, mentors, buddies, IT, security and so on into your plan. You want to make sure your newbie's onboarding experience runs like clockwork.



Step 2.

Four pillars of onboarding.



Compliance

This involves the most fundamental aspects of onboarding for a new employee. It includes legal and policy compliance training, as well as company paperwork to formalise the employment. A lot of the compliance aspects are the same from employee to employee and are ideal items to automate using technology. What's more, an automated system will enable you to reach out to new staff as soon as they have been offered the job. By 'preboarding' you can finalise contracts and sign staff up with payroll before they even arrive, meaning you can get them started more quickly on more fruitful activities.

Performance

Role clarity

How a new employee performs and how soon they start contributing to the business is affected by how well they understand the expectations of the job. By clearly setting out the role and responsibilities for the employee and agreeing on KPI's and milestones, you can build a foundation on which to meet regularly and discuss performance.

Performance management

It is important to introduce any formal performance management systems as early as possible, particularly in situations where performance needs to be monitored as part of the probation period. Regular meetings should be scheduled to ensure issues are raised and addressed in a timely way.

Career planning

It is never too early to talk over career goals with new staff. Too often, they are only covered during performance reviews, but people's experience, ideas, and lives are changing all the time. It is healthy to talk about what interests them. In fact, these conversations are key to tailoring onboarding experiences and can be useful information to feed into talent planning processes. The employee will also feel a greater sense of connection with you and the organisation when they see that you are interested in their future development and career progression.

Peer to peer feedback

Peer feedback may feel awkward at first for the uninitiated, so it is essential to ease new hires in. Talk about the benefits of sharing, sourcing and receiving feedback from the people you work with. Get them engaging in the process as soon as possible and watch their energy and enthusiasm skyrocket.

e-Learning and knowledge management tools

Providing new employees with on-demand access to onboarding materials and resources is a way to turbo-boost their learning and fast track their performance.

Join the dots to corporate strategy

Have senior managers educate your new hire about the company strategy as you did in the old days of induction. But when they are back in their chair, assist them to understand the part they have to play in achieving strategic objectives. Your new hire will find their work far more meaningful and their engagement levels will increase.

Social

Research shows that the sooner a new employee feels connected and accepted by their new colleagues the sooner they will begin to truly immerse themselves in their role. To kick start this connection, there are a few key things you can do.

Preboarding

The employment relationship begins at recruitment and can set the tone for the rest of their time with you. Reaching out and communicating with a new

employee before they even start can be a powerful way of solidifying the person's commitment to your company and helping them feel part of your team. Technology can really expand the opportunities for your new hire to connect with you and your team during the preboarding phase.

Assign a buddy

A buddy is someone who partners with a new employee in their first weeks of employment. While primarily there to offer advice and guidance regarding the day-to-day aspects, the buddy may also offer encouragement and knowledge, and help the new hire navigate some of the cultural aspects of the company. Most significantly, having a buddy takes a lot of confusion and anxiety out of those first days for your new hire.

Personalise

How would it feel to be greeted by name on your first day in the office? What if a new colleague asked you about the amazing project you ran in your previous job at XYZ company? Welcome messages and making sure other staff in the office know a new employee's name and a brief summary of their background before the person starts can jump start relationships and create a sense of connection. Once again, technology can help make this process easy.

Initiation rituals

Let's just clarify that we're not talking about rolling someone in glue and sticking feathers on them, or hanging them out of a window by their feet!! Initiation rituals should be positive gestures that signal an acceptance into the fold. For example, a construction firm might give new hires a red hard hat during their training so everyone knows that they are new to the company and they can welcome them to the team. Alternatively you might send your new hire a welcome gift or hold a morning tea for the whole office in their honour.

Informal catch ups

Morning teas, lunches or other social opportunities however shouldn't be limited to the first day. Inviting a new staff member for a coffee and taking the time to talk to them about how their first days and weeks with the company can give you valuable insights into how you can support them towards full productivity. Likewise, taking a new hire along with you to have lunch with colleagues can help open up new social and professional networks for them.

Culture

You can tell a lot about a corporate culture from strategic elements like vision, mission, values and purpose, it's business process and systems, as well as from policies and rules. However, what is most telling are the subtle things like: how co-workers prefer to communicate (whether through scheduled meetings, voicemail, e-mail, peer networks etc); whether there is a unique language and set of terminologies; how staff socialise and celebrate (for example lunch on Friday, or birthday celebrations); and how employees respond when a crisis hits (are others willing to pitch in and help out). This is where the use of buddies and mentors can be invaluable. By choosing trusted people to role model the right behaviours and guide your new staff member through the uncharted waters of your culture, you will be equipping your people for earlier success.

Step 3. Brand it, build commitment.

To get employees and stakeholders committed to the onboarding process, you need to do more than just invite them to attend a training program or event. You need to pull out all stops and convince everyone of the value of onboarding and what it has to offer. Branding is much more than adding a logo or tagline to your templates. It is about communicating an experience, a perception and an attitude towards onboarding initiatives through multiple channels targeted at specific stakeholders. (If you're not sure where to start, go and talk to your marketing team). Only by gaining the full commitment of all staff involved can you ensure a consistent and positive experience for all your new hires.



Step 4. Transform with technology.

A flexible and well designed, automated onboarding system will open up a world of opportunity to streamline your paperwork and integrate your onboarding

processes. Most importantly, automating routine aspects of the programme will free up your leaders and HR staff to invest time in productivity boosting activities. A great system will allow you to track individual and team performance and provide reliable data and insights into how you can continue to improve the process over time.

Step 5. Measure your success.

Your greatest resource for determining the success of your onboarding program is the new hires themselves. In addition to having regular check-ins with the new team member to discuss how they are progressing, many employers also survey participants at critical junctures eg: the 30 or 60 day mark. Collecting reliable feedback like this will give you an accurate picture of what is working well and what isn't.

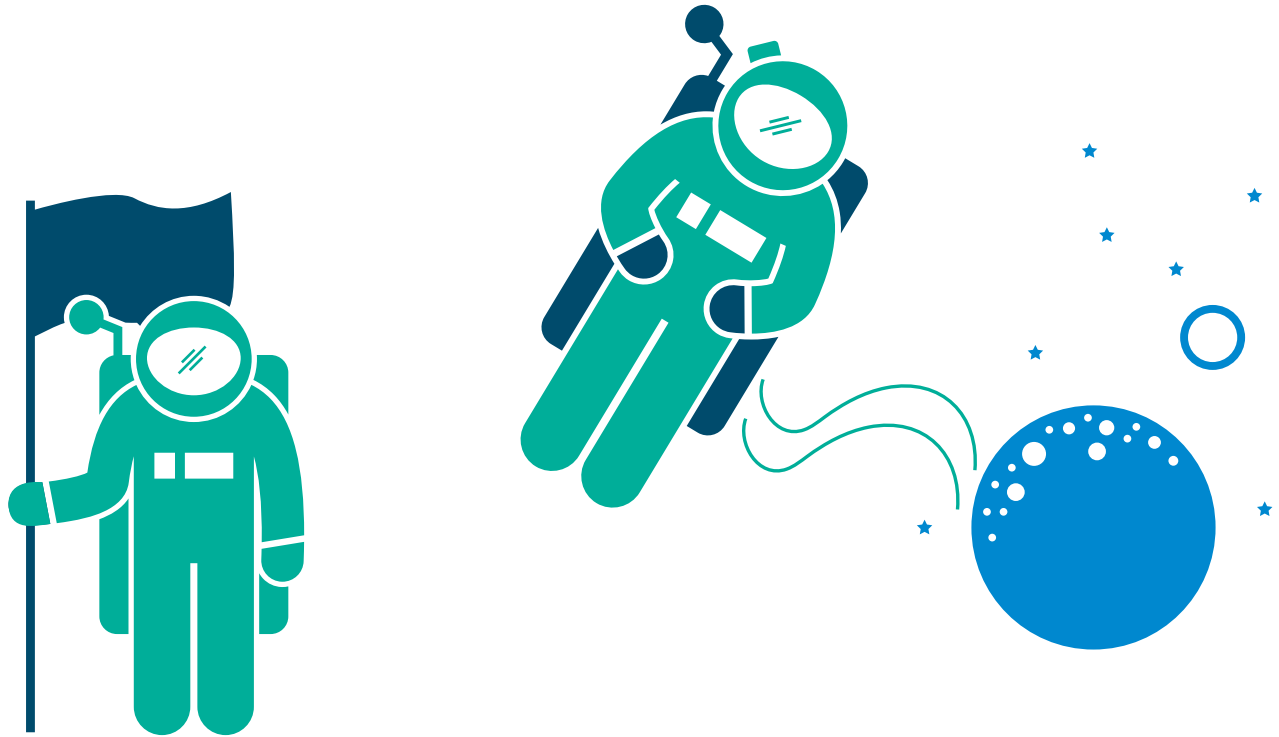


Review and refine the plan regularly

As you get to know your new staff member and begin to understand their skills, experience, strengths, weaknesses and preferences, you may need to organise further training or even change the content of their onboarding programme. Your plan should be flexible enough to adapt to their needs.

Impact on turnover and retention

Once you have rolled out your onboarding programme, take a look at the difference it is making to the turnover of your staff - particularly in the first 12 months. You should notice your retention rate increasing and the number of new hires requiring onboarding dropping.



**Now lets rerun that first day of work.
This time with a great onboarding process...**

You arrive at the office and the receptionist greets you by name and takes you to meet your manager. There is no paperwork to fill in - that has already been taken care of in preboarding. After some one-on-one time with your manager discussing your onboarding plan, you are taken to see your desk which you notice is fully equipped with a telephone, laptop, company iPhone, and business cards. Your manager then introduces you to your buddy who takes you for a coffee at the cafeteria before showing you around the building. Your buddy then introduces you to staff you met in the company's online social network who are working on a new app which will change the way....

Houston, we have lift off!
So, how do you feel now?



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