First-Year Impressions are Everything

ENGAGEMENT AND RECOGNITION TIPS
FOR ONBOARDING AND BEYOND

HALO

Table of Contents

The first year of employment is crucial for increasing new hire retention

For some industries the average job tenure has dropped to as low as 2.2 years, and it continues to shrink. Younger millennial and post-millennial workers – the largest cohort in the workforce – aren't staying as long at their jobs. In addition, the pandemic has shifted the way we work, and the trend to work remotely or in a hybrid model continues to grow and present challenges for onboarding and socializing new employees.

How you treat and connect with your new hires within their first year matters now more than ever for retention and engagement. A successful first year can increase the chances of employees staying with the company beyond the average job tenure and get them acclimated to your culture and goals early on, setting everyone up for success.

What follows is a timeline of a typical first year of employment, highlighting the major engagement and recognition opportunities that every organization should be considering.

SHRM IDENTIFIED THE 4 "C'S" TO CREATING A SUCCESSFUL ONBOARDING PROGRAM:

Compliance is the lowest level and includes teaching employees basic legal and policy-related rules and regulations.

1

Clarification refers to ensuring that employees understand their new jobs and all related expectations.

2

Culture is a broad category that includes providing employees with a sense of organizational norms — both formal and informal.

3

Connection refers to the vital interpersonal relationships and information networks that new employees must establish.

4

DAY 0: PRE-BOARDING

DAY 0

Reaching out and preparing a new employee for their first day is a great way to show you care, and can help get them on board with your brand and culture quickly. There are many best-practice onboarding checklists (like those provided by SHRM) available online to help know where to start. Here are some more pre-boarding ideas:

- **Send a personalized "Welcome Kit" filled with branded swag ahead of first workday**
- **Have the hiring manager send an email message or make a phone call to check in**
- **Make sure their equipment and workstation has been set up and personalized**
- **Have them complete new hire paperwork online**

Best-in-class companies are **35%** more likely to begin onboarding before day one.
Source: Aberdeen Group

DAY 1

DAY 1: **THE FIRST DAY**

The employee's first day is your chance to welcome them to the organization in a memorable fashion. Be sure to personalize the experience and make the day special:

- **Greet them at the door or front desk in person**

- **Personally introduce them to coworkers and describe how they will work together**

- **Show them where the restrooms and other amenities are located**

- **Treat them to breakfast, lunch, or both**

- **Provide an onboarding mentor**

- **Introduce them to your organization's mission, vision, and core values**

- **Let everyone in the office know the employee is arriving to avoid awkward encounters**

- **Check in multiple times throughout the day, take five minutes at end of day to check progress**

- **Host a virtual meet and greet with the team**

- **Add them to all relevant communication channels**

47% of US workers don't know or are unsure of what their employers' core values are!

Source: Eagle Hill Consulting

Show appreciation on the first day!

- **Personalize pre-hire materials**
- **Introduce employee recognition programs with onboarding materials**
- **Give them company branded swag**
- **Send a welcome email**
- **Give a thank you note to the hiring manager/mentor**
- **Have the employee's team sign a welcome card**

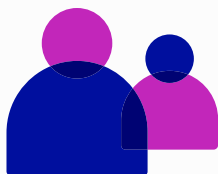**HALO**

DAYS 1-3

DAYS 1-3: SOCIALIZE

Plug the new hire into your organization's social networks within the first three days:
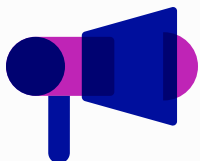
Announce new hires companywide and on social media channels

Send an email within the new employee's department introducing them and their job duties

Have manager **arrange a departmental lunch** to get to know team members in person, or schedule a virtual meet and greet

CEO/President should make an impromptu **personal introduction or send a welcome email**

DAY 7: ONE-WEEK CHECK IN

The new employee has taken in quite a lot over the first week, so be sure to schedule time to sit down and reconnect to ensure they are adjusting well. Make them feel comfortable by asking them if there is anything you can do to help. Take note of their concerns and continue at a reasonable pace.

THE MANAGER/EMPLOYEE RELATIONSHIP

According to Gallup, the direct managers are the number one reason employees quit and are capable of creating up to 70% variance in engagement levels. The new employee's direct manager should be establishing a strong relationship from the start by:

- **Remaining open and available for questions, concerns, and assistance**

- **Providing kind, compassionate, and fair treatment**

- **Encouraging progress by informally or formally recognizing their efforts as often as possible**

- **Helping the employee show appreciation to supportive colleagues**

DAY 30

DAY 30: FIRST MONTH -
BAILOUT PERIOD

One month is the most popular time for employees to "bail out" before they get too deep. Keep up good communication:

- **Meet with employee for informal 30-day check in**

- **Ensure the employee has received or signed up for necessary training**

- **Acknowledge employee for completing the first 30 days**

COMPANYWIDE EVENTS

Hosting an annual companywide event such as an end-of-year party or video conference are a few ways to engage employees with the organization's values and workplace vision within the first year. Go even further by offering gifts and prizes for attending! Better yet, formally recognize new hires with a fun award, certificate, etc. at the event!

DAY 60: **BUILDING MOMENTUM**

DAY 60

When an employee decides to stay past the one-month mark, they have overcome the first major engagement hurdle. Maintain the momentum into the second month by:

- **Holding informal regular check-ins on the employee's progress**
- **Providing timely, ongoing, and emotionally intelligent feedback**
- **Acknowledging the efforts of frontline managers in the employee's development**

30-60-90 DAY MILESTONES

The first three months are when new employees are the most overwhelmed – up to **22% of turnover** occurs within the **first 45 days** of employment! How they are treated by management in this time is extra important:

- **Ensure the employee is fitting in well with peers**
- **Recognize and/or reward their achievements**
- **Provide all the resources, tools, and training they need**
- **Follow up with hiring manager/mentor to ensure onboarding checklist is completed**

Manager satisfaction **increases by 20%** when their employees have formal onboarding training!

Sources: The Wynhurst Group; UrbanBound

DAY 90

DAY 90: FIRST THREE MONTHS – ASK ME ANYTHING

By three months enough time has passed for the new employee to develop opinions, but no concrete biases, so it is a great time to administer a survey about your onboarding experience. This will help you fine-tune the rapport you have between the new hire, as well as improve your onboarding experience going forward.

CONTINUALLY IMPROVE YOUR 90-DAY ONBOARDING EXPERIENCE

New hires who reported a poor onboarding experience were **8x more likely** to be disengaged in their work and **11x less likely** to recommend their employer as a good place to work after their first three months!

Sources: The Wynhurst Group; UrbanBound

DAYS 91-179

DAYS 91-179: ADJUSTMENT PERIOD

After finishing your onboarding and/or engagement survey, you can use the feedback to begin adjusting your efforts on a macro scale to better fit with the employee's personality and work style:

- **Have a conversation about work/life balance and try to meet the employee in the middle with their needs, if any**

- **Address any problems or barriers to job performance and have clear expectations laid out**

- **Adapt your feedback and praise to the employee's personality, paying attention to their public and personal preferences**

90% of employees decide whether to stay or go within the first six months!

Source: BambooHR

DAY 180

DAY 180: FIRST SIX MONTHS - END OF THE HONEYMOON

Six months marks the end of the "Honeymoon Period" identified by Gallup, the milestone after which employee engagement for new hires suffers the most. It's the first major moment of reflection where most employees decide to stay or go. Prepare yourself by:

- **Giving special recognition for reaching six-month milestone**

- **Continuing informal regular progress meetings**

- **Proactively creating opportunities for informal praise and engagement**

> It typically takes **eight months** for a newly hired employee to reach full productivity.
>
> **Source: Harvard Business Review**

DAYS 181-269

DAYS 181-269: THE SECOND WIND

By now the employee should be somewhat acclimated, but it will take a strong second push from management to ensure that they don't become stuck in a rut after the Honeymoon Period:

- **Ensure the employee is challenged enough with the work**
- **Ensure the employee has all the tools, resources, and training needed**
- **Keep up meaningful exposure and feedback from senior leaders**

DAY 270

DAY 270: FIRST NINE MONTHS - GOING FULL CIRCLE

The nine month mark is when engagement from the management side can begin to lag, as the employee becomes more and more acclimated. Keeping the momentum up as you reach the first-year service anniversary brings everything full circle, creating a more complete and memorable experience.

SHOW THEM A GREAT BOSS!

Nearly 50% of all of us have had to leave a job because of a bad boss. So get on the better side of history by being a great one:

Source: Gallup

- **Encourage daily recognition between colleagues**

- **Perform engaging acts like buying breakfast, coffee, etc.**

- **Break the routine occasionally by hosting an off-site or virtual event, such as happy hour, calling in a food truck, delivering a special treat, etc. if possible**

DAYS 271-365

DAYS 271-365: HOME STRETCH

The final three months are an excellent opportunity to double-check and polish the employee's experience:

- **Ensure employee is socializing well with team and address any personnel issues**

- **Keep up frequent positive feedback and reinforcement**

- **Continue to find opportunities for team events and celebrations**

ONE-YEAR SERVICE ANNIVERSARY

It's time to celebrate the employee's first year by having a work birthday!
Make it as special as their first day!

- **Notify the employee's direct manager ahead of time to prepare for the day**

- **Invite the employee's peers and colleagues to attend and/or participate**

- **Have managers send an email highlighting the employee's contributions**

- **Give employee a gift of choice or customized company swag**

- **Present them with a service award**

- **Give them a shout out on social media**

BUILD GENUINE LOYALTY

First introductions can be awkward, especially given the challenges of those working remotely, but the payoff for having a memorable first-year experience is worth it. Be conscious of the engagement struggles each new hire faces at any job during the first year, and be proactive about them. Providing some compassion, feedback, and timely recognition will have you building genuine loyalty in no time.

HALO

HALO.com