Employee Onboarding Programs: The Key to New Hire Retention

Why Effective Employee Onboarding Programs are Important...

It takes a lot of time and money to bring a new employee onboard. Beyond the costs and effort to attract, recruit and select high-calibre talent, additional money and time is invested in employee orientation, training and integration of new hires. Given the significant investment, it’s easy to see the frustration when a new employee leaves the company before they are fully up to speed in the job.

The Hidden Costs of New Hire Turnover

When recent hires leave the company, they take their skills and experience with them and create discontinuity felt at many levels in the workplace. Aside from direct costs to re-staff positions and train replacements, there are hidden costs of diminished morale and productivity of those employees left behind.

Certain sectors requiring high-demand professionals and uniquely skilled workers are severely impacted by the challenges of replacing such specialized knowledge. When employees are lured away by competitors, loss of market position or reduced profitability may also result. Enhancing new hire and employee orientation activities — the onboarding practices of your organization is a fundamental opportunity to secure higher retention of new employees.

How do Employee Onboarding Programs Enhance New Employee Retention?

Many organizations conduct employee orientation, but these programs often fall short of what new employees truly need. Onboarding goes beyond the basics, integrating information, relationship building and training that lasts for the duration of the employee’s first full business cycle. An employee onboarding program that supports the employee through this critical phase of the employment relationship can cement a new hire’s sense of belonging and commitment to the job, team and company.

Onboarding is only a beginning, but this critical step in the employment process sets the stage for success. Research shows that an investment in onboarding results in stronger work relationships, dramatic reductions in turnover of new hires, and employees getting “up to speed” much faster.
Designing Employee Onboarding Programs: Review your Current Process

Begin by mapping out your current employee orientation process and asking what your impression would be if you participated in the same process.

- Would you feel sure about your role and job priorities?
- Would you know what your company and team are trying to achieve?
- Would you know where or how to get the information you need?
- Would you be confident in the decisions you are making?
- Would you be able to act quickly to solve issues?
- Would you feel like you belong?

If you find yourself answering no to these questions, consider redesigning your process.

What Should We Include in Our Employee Onboarding Programs?

Begin by addressing some critical elements of effective onboarding:

- Helping the new recruit to build internal and external relationships
- Communicating the organization’s vision, goals, culture and values
- Ensuring the new employee understands key business processes, policies and procedures
- Explaining short and longer-term performance expectations
- Providing regular feedback on progress, job performance and results
- Training leaders to orient, integrate and provide ongoing support to new hires

Ensure that everyone involved is trained to carry out their part of the process. Since the new employee’s direct manager or supervisor will carry out many onboarding activities, include them in designing the process. You may also wish to include senior leaders, long-term employees and those who train and mentor new hires.

The Lasting Value of Employee Onboarding Programs

Effective onboarding programs result in employees who feel valued, informed, connected and committed — the essential employee attitudes for a lasting, successful relationship with a new employer.

The Training Source has developed a comprehensive guide ("coming soon") to lead you step by step in designing employee onboarding programs for your organization.
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