EMPLOYEE ONBOARDING GUIDE

Organisations within the housing and homelessness sector grapple with challenges in staff recruitment and retention. Turnover strains budgets and jeopardises both service quality and the wellbeing of the remaining staff.

Research has identified factors like unclear job roles and insufficient supervisory support as key drivers behind staff departures.[1] Conversely, initiatives such as comprehensive training, efficient systems and processes, mentorship programs, and role clarity have demonstrated notable improvements in staff wellbeing and retention rates.

To help address this challenge, organisations should adopt strategic approach to employee onboarding, which plays a crucial role in attracting and retaining staff within the sector. Research suggests that strong onboarding improves retention by 82%[2] and has an overall favourable impact on employee wellbeing. The following information can help organisations to consider and implement strategic and effective onboarding programs to better support and retain employees.

Difference between induction and onboarding

Induction is a short-term process aimed at familiarising new employees with basic organisational information.

Onboarding is a more comprehensive, long-term process focused on integrating employees into the organisation and preparing them for success in their roles. A successful induction process contributes to the overall effectiveness of the onboarding process.

Benefits of a strategic onboarding process

Strategic onboarding offers short and long-term benefits, including increased employee engagement, retention, productivity, job satisfaction, alignment to organisational culture, and improved collaboration among team members.

Key principles of good onboarding processes

A smooth and successful onboarding process can help new employees feel welcome, valued, and prepared to do their best work. Key principles for effective onboarding programs include:

1) **Wellbeing**
   Employee well-being should be central to any onboarding process and should remain a priority at all times through the onboarding journey. Establishing open communication, integration to teams and culture, scheduling feedback sessions, and encouraging

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[1] Lenzi, M., et al., *Factors Associated with Providers' Work Engagement and Burnout in Homeless Services: A Cross-national Study.* Am J Community Psychol, 2021. **67**(1-2): p. 220-236.

[2] https://b2b-assets.glassdoor.com/the-true-cost-of-a-bad-hire.pdf

participation in training and development opportunities are crucial steps. By prioritising the holistic health and happiness of new hires from the start, organisations lay the foundation for a supportive and fulfilling employee experience.

2) Compliance

Compliance involves the essential steps that new employees must complete upon joining, such as paperwork, IT processes, benefits enrolment, and provisioning tasks like providing computers, phones, and workspace. Streamlining these processes is vital, freeing up time to focus on creating a memorable and welcoming onboarding experience.

3) Clarity

Clarity refers to how well new employees understand their roles and performance expectations. Beyond a clear position description, it's beneficial for new employees to quickly understand their role within the broader functions of the organisation, encompassing knowledge of policies and procedures.

4) Inclusion

Inclusion and connection are pivotal for enhanced engagement. When new employees feel accepted, recognised, and valued, they are more likely to fully engage with their coworkers, ask questions, and embrace new challenges. Addressing any feelings of isolation on their first day is crucial, as a positive initial experience sets the tone for their entire onboarding journey.

5) Culture

Onboarding plays a key role in forming, maintaining, and evolving organisational culture. It is an opportunity to convey the significance of the organisation's mission, vision, and values to new employees. Integrating cultural elements into the onboarding process ensures that individuals align with the organisational ethos and fosters a sense of unity and purpose.

6) Support

Providing ongoing support is fundamental to onboarding success. Regular communication channels, including check-ins from line managers, and informal support from colleagues, contribute to clarity, inclusion, and a positive organisational culture. Establishing a robust support system helps new employees navigate challenges and feel empowered in their roles.

Employee onboarding guidelines

Onboarding is a long-term process focused on integrating employees into the organisation and preparing them for success in their roles. Successful employee onboarding programs begin before the employee's first day and continue into the first several months in the organisation.

The following guides the onboarding journey from pre-employment preparations through the initial months, fostering a smooth integration of new employees into the organisation.

Before the new employee's first day, it's essential to reach out and ensure they have the support they need for a smooth transition. Taking this step can help to build rapport, ease nerves, and set the stage for a productive start.

On their first day, extending a warm welcome is crucial. When introducing a new employee to team members and key colleagues, consider what a warm introduction could look like within your organisation. Conducting a tour of the space and offering assistance with paperwork helps them feel supported from the outset.

During the first week, focus on providing clarity and fostering inclusion. Consider assigning a mentor or buddy to help the new employee navigate their role and the organisation. Clarifying their responsibilities and setting goals, along with introducing them to key team members, lays a solid foundation for their integration. Scheduling regular check-ins will signal to the employee that they will continue to be supported.

In the second week, concentrate on integrating the new employee into the organisational culture. When speaking to the organisation's mission, vision, and values, discuss with the new employee the contribution they can make through their role. Encourage participation in team activities, or consider organising a team gathering to deepen a sense of belonging.

Continuously support the new employee by fostering open communication channels for questions and concerns. Regular feedback sessions help address any issues and guide their development. Encouraging their passion, ideas, and involvement in projects enhances their engagement and contribution.

After 30 days, assess the onboarding progress through a dedicated meeting and offer any necessary support to assist. Gathering feedback from the new employee is also an opportunity to helps refine onboarding strategies more broadly.

Beyond the initial period, focus on continued integration and growth. Provide ongoing opportunities for skill development, continue to foster connections with colleagues, and support their career development journey. This sustained effort ensures the new employee's long-term success and contribution to the organisation.

Getting started

Effective employee onboarding should foster a sense of belonging, clarity, and support from the very first interaction and throughout the employee's journey within the organisation. By adopting a thorough onboarding program, organisations can significantly enhance employee engagement, retention, and workplace culture. Consider using a comprehensive onboarding checklist to help guide a thorough and successful onboarding program.