

Overcoming the Virtual Onboarding Disconnect

Many companies are still struggling with the challenges that come with virtually hiring and onboarding new employees.

Hiring managers who might normally “wing” the onboarding process or defer to HR, are discovering remote onboarding requires more structure and high-touch attention to integrate new hires into the company daily life, processes, and culture.

Here are seven ways to set everyone up for success:

1. Have Technology Ready Day 1

It seems obvious, but make sure laptops are shipped and network access is granted for your new hires before their start date. Factor in shipping with the start date or offer an onsite pickup option. Otherwise, you will be paying them to sit around twiddling their thumbs, or worse, delaying the assignment. Ideally, this means that all software tools – Zoom, Teams, Outlook, Slack etc. – are set up with downloads and logins ready to go on day one.



2. Plan Out First Week Activities



Virtual onboarding should never be a “one-and-done” video session or phone call. Set new hires up for success by creating a comprehensive list of objectives and procedures to enhance the experience. Don't wait until the day before (or even worse, day of) to share their first-week schedule. Cover where they need to be (even if it's a URL), what time they start and end each day, when to expect breaks, contact info, etc.

3. Explain Work Expectations

Discuss expectations of work hours, meeting times, and expected meeting preparation. Discuss any specific document formats, recommended methodologies, or communication processes.



4. Meet Your Buddy



Everyone has questions in their first few weeks. A peer or mentor (not the manager) is essential for showing new hires the ropes, answering questions, and providing a safe sounding board.

5. Showcase your Culture

Starting a new job virtually can be isolating. If your company has long-standing traditions that enrich the onboarding process, find ways to integrate them into your process. If your new people aren't sitting next to each other, joking around between meetings, you need to actively provide time to chat and get to know each other. Anything non-work related will do. Virtual happy hours or lunches, get-to-knoweach- other games, pets, family discussions – all work well to break the ice.



6. Keep in Touch



Whatever the frequency, new hires should receive messages, instructions, and guidance on a regular basis. At this stage, there is no such thing as overcommunicating. To avoid any room for confusion, provide clarity on what success looks like in their specific role.

7. Be Flexible

Mental and physical health have never been so important in the workforce. Nobody wants to sit in front of a computer by themselves all day long. And back-to-back-to-back meetings are exhausting. Require downtime and breaks for new hires and set boundaries for when they should be “on-call.”



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