LEARNIFIER

The onboarding guide

– 7 steps to increase productivity and make new hires happier

One of the biggest and most expensive team-building challenges that seem to top the list again and again is: to find and recruit the right people – and retain them. However, giving the new hires a proper introduction to their new workplace – the actual onboarding – is just as critical to the success of a fast-growing company.

First impressions are important. For both employee and employer. The way new hires are introduced to the organization, colleagues, and their responsibilities are not only vital for productivity, it has a big impact on their engagement. Research shows that 33 percent of new hires decide already within the first work week whether or not they will stay long term with the company.

But the challenge is much bigger than designing a great onboarding.

Many companies are under pressure, and especially HR departments. Why? Because the employee life cycles are getting dramatically shorter. We are seeing a trend of millennial job-hopping.

Onboarding needs to become more efficient and smarter. That doesn't mean that the whole process should be digital though. We believe in a blended solution. Most important is that you meet your new hires in a convenient, engaging and efficient way.

This guide is for you who want tips on how.

Mattias Borg
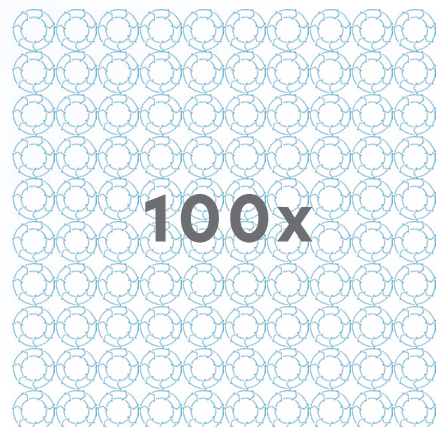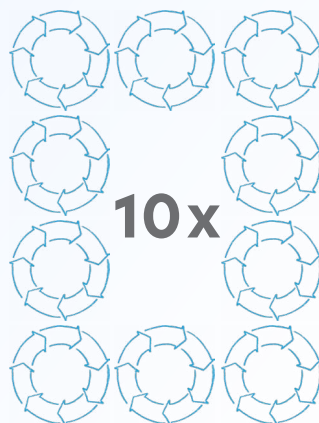CEO and Co-Founder, Learnifier

Here is the big challenge:

Stays 2,8 years

Stays 10+ years

Is your company prepared?
How often and fast can you onboard?

Apple employees stay in the company 20 months on average. Google has an average employee tenure of 12 months. Overall we see a **higher employee turnover** and shorter employee life cycles.

Is this a tendency in the US only? No, we are seeing this in Nordic and European companies as well.
The question is: **How are you and your company preparing for this?**

Attract me

Wish me farewell

Get me started

Recognition

Employee lifecycle

Development

Engage & motivate me

Manage performance

10x

100x

Employees who complete a structured onboarding program reach

full productivity **34%** faster

than those who are not offered any onboarding.

Source: **Global Recruiting**

Unlocking the secrets to increasing employee productivity

A well-structured onboarding will shorten the time from recruitment to first measurable result by one-third. Here is how to create a successful onboarding.

According to research done by the international research network Global Recruiting, **effective onboarding will help new hires perform 11 percent better**. Additionally, they reach full productivity 34 percent faster than those who are not offered any onboarding.

These are numbers that Howard Farfel, CEO of the American Consulting and Training Group The Ken Blanchard Companies recognizes:

– Our onboarding program is 12 weeks long and aims to shorten the time from recruitment to revenue generation by 66 percent. We work with as many different training methods as possible in order to keep up the engagement and energy during this 12 week period, he explains.

In spite of these positive results, studies show that many organizations simply don't offer their new hires a proper onboarding. Instead many seem to rely on self-learning.

Many sales people get a short product introduction – and are expected to sell and perform outstandingly, on their own.

– But this approach seldomly works. It is of vital importance to support new hires. We have seen serveral examples within the real estate industry where many tend to overestimate young employees' ability to *'just start swimming after being thrown in the deep end of the pool'*, says Lars-Johan Åge, researcher in Business Administration at Handelshögskolan in Stockholm and Author of the book "The Art of Doing Business".

Here are 7 tips for a successful onboarding!

1 Preboarding: Stay connected between the interview and Day 1

Many companies miss the opportunity to use the period of downtime between the interview and the first day at work. Here is chance to maintain the excitement established during the hiring process and eliminate any second guessing. Secondly, it's not only comforting but also beneficial to all that the new hire already knows the basic information about the company, its mission, objectives, values – and the different teams and colleagues.

Once the contract has been signed, it's a great idea to send a letter or an email to the new hire with checklists, names and pictures of colleagues, an overview of the company structure, a brief introduction of the workplace, its culture and work routines. This makes new hires better prepared for their first working day. You also avoid information overload which is so common during the first days or weeks. Knowing basic information about new colleagues actually reduce nervousness before job start. In addition, it reinforces the initial enthusiasm and creates commitment.

83% of the highest performing organizations (in a study) began onboarding prior to the new hire's first day on the job.

Source: **Global Recruiting**

2 Be generous with the details

Starting a new job is a bit like dating – first impressions matter. Therefore, before the new hire steps through the door be sure to inform everybody in the team and make it everybody's responsibility to make the new colleague feel welcome. Aim to have a work desk ready, a laptop/computer ready, software installed etc. Make sure a few colleagues are dedicated to show the new hire around and guide him/her to lunch places, inform about informal routines, etc.

Many really appreciate that you take the new hire on an introduction tour in the company. This opens up for small talk conversations that many find hard to initiate on their own. If you are the hiring manager it is valuable to be present and visible. Don't underestimate the value and appreciation of showing up now and then at the new hire's desk, ask how things are going, and build trust through showing up as a supportive and caring role model.

3 Make a structured onboarding plan

When you have clear strategic plan for how to onboard new employees as soon as they have signed the contract you've set yourself up for success. Then you're capable of offering a quick, effective, and complete introduction. Let's keep in mind the statistics: Employees who complete a structured onboarding program reach full productivity 34 percent faster than those who are not offered any onboarding.

New employees who went through a structured onboarding program were **58%** more likely to remain in the organization after three years.

Source: **Global Recruiting**

Furthermore, since it takes between 8 to 12 months for a new employee to become as productive as her/his colleagues you would want to make a long-term onboarding plan. Make sure you raise the bar over time. Between contract signing and day 1 you could focus on introducing work tools, the team, and informal job routines. That way, day 1 and the time forward can be spent training the new employee to perform, run her/his projects and manage customers/partners/teams early on.

4 Set crystal clear goals

According to studies (USA), many employees leave their job because goals and responsibilities are unclear to them. Being crystal clear is essential in order for the new hire to understand her/his role at the company and what is expected of her/him.

The best way to avoid this unclarity is to – before day 1 – start communicating to your new hire what exact requirements, expectations and goals you set for him or her – and how these are relating to the company's overall goals and visions. The goals can be adapted and adjusted retrospectively. But transparency and clarity around them are crucial if you want to convert the new hire's initial enthusiasm into engagement and early eagerness to contribute to the company's success.

RECRUITING

Job posting & application · Interviews · Team introduction · Offer stage · **Sign the contract**

PREBOARDING

Welcome email · Forms & policies · Equipment & tools · Communication channels · **Day one**

ONBOARDING

Welcome session · Meet your mentor · Training & goal-setting · Integration & check-ins

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This is especially important for Generation Y (Millennials) which happen to make up the largest part of the labor market by 2025. For sure you both have a mutual interest in job satisfaction and high commitment. And the only way to achieve that is by creating a corporate culture that gives a clear picture of the decision-making processes and how your new hires can contribute in a meaningful way.

5 Create space for social time

It's a bit of a cliché… however, still valid and worth mentioning: Coffee breaks are moments where the best ideas appear, the greatest knowledge transfers happen, and the most important relationships are created in a workplace. Don't underestimate the value of these informal get-togethers. Instead take advantage of this by creating plenty of room for new employees to spend time with their new colleagues. Not only the first day, but during the first weeks.

Therefore, try to automate and minimize the administrative work as much as possible, and create an onboarding design that allows plenty of coffee breaks where the new employee can deepen new relationships on their own. The safer and more inclusive the employee feels with his new colleagues the faster he or she will be able to start acting independently towards customers and external players.

6 Follow up on performance and give feedback

Studies show that attention and appreciation from the manager is what contributes the most when it comes to motivating and engaging employees. Needless to say, your structured onboarding should include continuous follow-up and feedback on how new employees perform.

– Most managers believe that it is enough to chit-chat at regular intervals and ask the employee how he or she feels at the new job. This is just a follow-up on well-being. Most don't do a deviation report and have no activity plan. It is extremely important to have a structured plan when recruiting, above all, sales people and to follow up on how they perform – and stop hoping that "it resolves itself" if they underperform, says Göran Vernersson at Säljcoachen, and adds:

– The best way to get a sales person to thrive in a workplace is to help them sell. It strengthens their self-esteem and contribute to the feeling that "someone cares about what I do".

7 Leverage digital technology

Start using digital tools where you see the chance to automate the process. It will save you a lot of time when you can operate from an integrated platform that gathers all onboarding content. Not only is it more convenient for the new employee to take part (from anywhere, with any device) – it also makes it easier for you to follow up on how the implementation of the program as well as the progress of the participants.

Think about presenting the content in an intuitive and easily accessible way, so that new employees quickly see the benefit of the tool. A tool full of concrete tips that inspire and motivate is easier to embrace and it is appreciated not the least by the younger generation. Keep in mind that it is important to present information in different ways, not just through text but through videos that provide concrete tips, methods and insights.

Involve your organization and optimize step by step

While much of the onboarding content lies within HR there are tons of information, knowledge, and responsibilities owned by other parts of the organization. Make sure that the new employee get to meet people from different parts of the organization, not just the department that recruited her or him. Describe the organization by letting future colleagues, leaders, and the CEO present themselves and their main tasks through for instance a simple video filmed with the mobile.

As the organization and ways of working change over time, make it your task to upgrade your onboarding continuously. A good onboarding tool makes it easy to edit video and other types of content as well as to restructure the content flow.

The most important thing to remember is this: Start now and start with what you have – like relevant pdf files from the intranet, questionnaires, content from the website, e-learning courses etc.

Work in iterations and test what works. Then optimize and add to the onboarding program over time. Remember that new employees appreciate this type of initiative and adding a few elements to an onboarding program can make a big difference.

Learnifier is the leading learning platform in the Nordics

We believe in making training easy, engaging and efficient to achieve business outcomes.

Hundreds of companies and organizations use Learnifier to quickly and easily share knowledge, onboard and train their employees. Since 2012, we have helped over 320 companies digitize their learning experiences for modern-day challenges.

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