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"Be Better...Do Better"

TIP SHEET #6

ONBOARDING

Refer to Summary of Resources
Tip Sheet #12 for a listing of
information sources.

diversity

An Employer Advantage

Alberta 

Tip Sheet 6: Onboarding

After the process of hiring a candidate, it's critical to have processes in place which ensure that the new candidate feels welcome and effectively onboarded into your workforce. This is particularly true for immigrants, who may need more guidance to familiarize themselves with the work systems and culture of your organization. For many new employees, their first days of experiences will be influencing their engagement and longevity with your organization. For you as the employer, the first days with a new employee provides the opportunity to welcome them and help them feel comfortable and a valuable member of the team. Onboarding should be a process that engages all staff in efforts to create a welcoming environment. This tip sheet will provide strategies to engage new hires in efforts to create a comfortable and welcoming environment.

1 What is onboarding?

- Onboarding is an ongoing extension of the orientation process; the intent is to build engagement and integration from the moment of hiring until the new hire is established in the organization.
- Is sometimes referred to as organizational socialization; onboarding is an important part of helping new employees understand their new position, job requirements, and company culture.
- Whereas orientation is typically takes only a day or two or up to a week, onboarding may take months to complete.



2 Onboarding leads to retention:

- Companies that invest in improving the onboarding experience are more likely to see key benefits such as increased engagement levels, reduced time to become proficient in job duties, and decreased turnover.
- Employee shortages and high turnover are amongst the biggest challenges that organization are currently facing. It is more important than ever to engage and retain employees from day one.
- A strong onboarding process can help accomplish retention, while also helping new hires and Newcomers adjust quicker to their new environments, consequently achieving higher productivity sooner.

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3 Make a good first impression:

- A Newcomer's first impression of your organization can often reflect on their future experiences and feelings towards their coworkers and the company.
- Make orientation fun, interesting, and simple. Create a friendly, comfortable, and productive experience.
- Don't overload the employee with too much paperwork on the first day.
- Introduce your new hire to your team and help establish a rapport.
- Give the employee space for their belongings.
- Refer to the **Orientation Tips Sheet** for a detailed description of the orientation process.

4 Consider the Four C's:

Although there is no clear consensus when considering what should be done to onboard a new employee, Dr. Talya Bauer from the SHRM identified The Four C's that a successful onboarding program must include. The Four C's stand for:

- **Compliance** implies teaching new hires the basic company policies.
- **Clarification** refers to ensuring that employees are aware of their responsibilities and how to fulfill their role correctly.
- **Culture** involves providing the formal and informal norms of the organization.
- **Connection** means relationships with colleagues and feeling like a part of the team.



5 Address safety issues in the order of importance:

- English could potentially be a second or third language for your new employees, and the health and safety orientation needs to be modeled accordingly.
- Make it simple but detailed, providing critical information first followed by less risky content, so the employee doesn't get overwhelmed.
- Design training models based on the use of visual aids.
- Employers could enlist employees, who are fluent in the Newcomers' language(s), to assist with explaining the most important concepts.

6 Health and Safety Standards:

Employers should comprehensively review all occupational health and safety standards and procedures, focusing on:

- **Use of required safety equipment:** Provide a detailed description of both personal and supplied safety equipment, tools, and machines that are needed for the position.
- **The right to refuse dangerous work:** Explain the right not to use any equipment or machinery that could harm them or another worker.
- **Reporting any health and safety violations:** Immediately report any safety concerns to the employer.
- **Onsite support:** Provide a specific person to report these incidents to.

Onboarding matters to small businesses.

**It boosts productivity
It helps you retain more employees.
It builds a positive culture.**

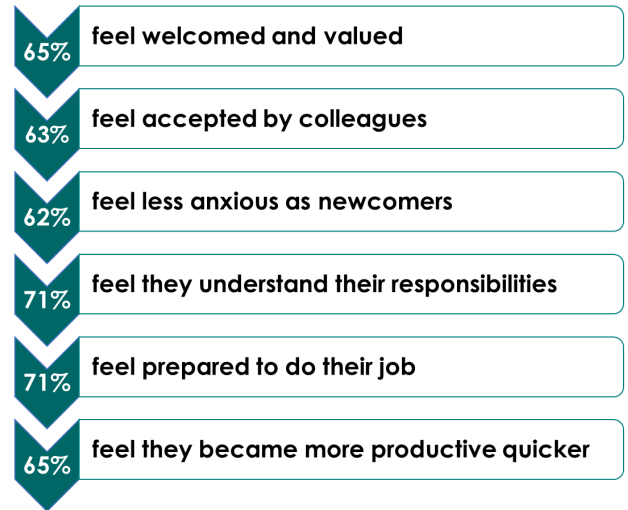
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7 Reporting workplace injuries:

- Your new hire Newcomers may be hesitant to report workplace injuries, particularly if they fear that doing so may jeopardize their jobs and financial security.
- Be aware of what is reinforced and recognized and could affect your employees' willingness to report. For example: "days free from workplace accidents". The Newcomer may interpret that statement as they may not want to be the person who resets the days without accidents.
- Check in regularly with the new hire as well as, colleagues and supervisors.
- Help your new employees to understand, access and navigate health care and other support systems, such as Alberta OHS (Alberta Occupational Health and Safety).



How do new hires feel about onboarding?



Source: 2018 TalentLMS Onboarding Survey – Image 1

8 Emotional safety:

- Emotional safety is also very important, and it is worthwhile educating all staff about the symptoms of PTSD.
- You and your team need to know what to look for in the way of possible symptoms.
- In the desire to help or perhaps protect your investment, be cautious not to overstretch yourselves or your staff and know when to refer the Newcomer to a professional.
- If you suspect that your employee suffers from PTSD, refer them to health care providers.

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9 Reasonable Accommodation:

- Many statutory holidays are based on Christian religious practices that don't account for growing diversity in Canada's workforce. An employee may seek accommodation based on religious grounds. Requests could be as simple as flexibility around scheduling breaks for prayer time or other religious needs. Requests could also involve prohibition from handling certain foods or wearing certain clothing.
- Regardless of the request, it is crucial to remember that it is just a request. You must balance against your operational and safety requirements, and explore possible solutions.
- Rather than viewing requests as a duty, employers can view them as an opportunity to:
 - increase the cultural awareness in their business;
 - help the organization integrate with the communities they serve;
 - demonstrate their commitment to their corporate values.



When receiving an accommodation request, managers should consider the following points:

- **Acquire necessary information:** The first step is to ask for details about the request. For example, when addressing a request for religious observances or prayer, work with the employee to obtain all relevant information in a timely way. Employees must be clear when explaining why they need an accommodation.
- **Consider possible options:** It is often less disruptive to consider making a minor change to an employee's current job. Examples could include changing shift schedules or allowing more frequent breaks. Employers are not required to create a new position to meet a duty to accommodate.
- **Include relevant parties:** If you operate in a certified environment, be sure to include your union representatives and keep your employee informed on the status of the request.
- **Timelines:** Ensure you complete your process in a timely manner. A timely response sends a very strong message to your entire team that you value all employees and are open and flexible. However, delays could be interpreted as reluctance to support them.

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10 Create a Buddy or Mentor Program:

- A mentor or buddy system is when an existing employee partners with a new hire during their first 2-3 months of employment. While primarily responsible for offering advice and guidance regarding day-to-day aspects of work, the mentor may also offer encouragement and provide resources, as they help introduce them to your company culture.
- By assigning a mentor, you create a known source for any new hire for things that may seem trivial to continually ask a supervisor about but are critical to feeling comfortable and being productive. This provides the new employee with a reliable, single point of contact with their basic work questions. This helps establish orientation as a process, rather than a single learning event.
- For smaller companies, size may prevent them from providing a formal "mentor". Instead, an office manager or receptionist, can have the responsibility to regularly check in and to ensure all their questions are being answered and any concerns being addressed. Ideally, mentorship would be available to everyone, but when starting a new program, you should start with a small, specific group and expand as you learn what works.



Key characteristics of a mentor should include:

- **Good communicator:** Encourage open communication. Must be comfortable and patient when interacting with Newcomers.
- **Role Model:** Should be a model employee exemplifying company values. Select individuals who are culturally sensitive, well respected, and patient.
- **Motivated:** Have a positive outlook on their work and use that perspective to help build confidence and loyalty in the new employee. The mentor leads by example.
- **Strong performer:** Help guide the new employee in many situations based on their experience and knowledge of the work environment.

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How to start a mentoring program:

- **Define your goals.** For example, a goal to foster inclusion and leadership will require a mentorship program structured differently than a goal to welcome all new hires or develop a more technical skill set.
- **Share goals with your team and make it clear the goals are a business priority.** There may be concerns about taking time in the workday to be a mentor. Reaffirm that mentoring is a priority and they will have the time, and resources to make the program a success.
- **Pair your mentors and mentees.** When creating matches, keep your goals (purpose) in mind, and ensure the mentor has the key characteristics described on page 6 of this document. **The employee should not be paired with a direct supervisor.**
- **Set expectations and create a standard format.** Empower pairs with clear direction on the relationship within the program. Setting standard expectations such as a biweekly meeting schedule or daily check-in.
- **Evaluate performance.** After the initial 3 months, collect data and provide an employee satisfaction survey to include things like feelings of inclusion and company confidence). Review with your team and make adjustments as needed.



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Be aware of new and different financial considerations:

- This is a new country with different currency, financial aid, medical and insurance coverage, and your employees may need assistance.
- Share in-house opportunities or local resources for financial literacy.
- Offer assistance with reading a pay stub, both new hires and new Canadians may benefit from the clarification.
- Make sure they are aware of other non-wage benefits such as RRSPs or medical benefits.



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Other considerations:

- Workplace expectations could include an overview of etiquette of using shared spaces, such as refilling the coffee canister when it's empty, taking breaks on the honour system, what "open-door policy" means, or how best to contribute ideas to a broader team.

Did you know?

Employees who say they had exceptional onboarding experiences are 2.6 times more likely to be extremely satisfied with their workplace

In fact, 70% of those with exceptional onboarding experiences say they have "the best possible job"

Investing more in communication and engagement during the onboarding process can improve the onboarding experience by 83%

This includes communicating goals, introducing team members to their colleagues, and offering to answer any questions

A quick check-in from a supervisor or manager can increase a candidate's willingness to create a positive relationship with the employer by 68%



For more tips and strategies to improve diversity in your workplace, check out our other Tip Sheets:

1. Job Descriptions
2. Recruitment and Job Sourcing
3. Assessing Skills and Competencies
4. Interviewing and Selection
5. Orientation
6. Onboarding
7. Creating a Welcoming and Inclusive Work Environment
8. Training and Development
9. Communication
10. Employee Retention
11. Common Terms and Definitions
12. Summary of Resources

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