



and 15 Tips to Retain Them

Part I

The Impact of Onboarding

Benefits of a Good First Impression

Every employee you ever hire will have a first day, and every single one of them will develop a first impression of their team, their work, and the company as a whole. This first impression is a determining factor when it comes to employee retention, satisfaction, engagement.

90% of employees decide whether to stay or quit in their first 6 months of a new job.

Onboarding is the key to retaining and engaging your talent. However, **only 12% of employees agree that their company onboarded well.**

That leaves some room for improvement, to say the least. Why is it worth it to rework and upgrade your onboarding program? Why bother investing in those vital first six months?



7 Onboarding Mistakes to Avoid

After seeing how impactful good onboarding can be, that begs the question: what does good onboarding look like? To answer this, let's first look at some signs of ineffective onboarding to see what NOT to do:

- Cut onboarding too short
- Lack of preparation before the first day
- Not providing necessary supplies or training
- Mismanaged expectations
- Lack of role clarity
- Lack of recognition
- Not giving them time to acclimate

MISTAKE #1

Cutting Onboarding Too Short

As stated at the start of this guide, 90% of employees decide whether to stay at their new jobs within the first six months. However, only 15% of organizations continue onboarding for that long!

Even good onboarding won't be effective if it only lasts for a new hire's first day or week. Employees will quickly feel unimportant, forgotten, and unprepared as they're left to flounder by themselves.



MISTAKE #2

Not Preparing for the First Day

Do employees know where to park or where to meet in your building? Is anyone around to welcome them? Do they get their ID badges and work email? Is their workspace ready for them?

First days are always full of nerves—if you don't put new hires at ease from the get go, onboarding will start on a sour note.

Employees need to know how to start contributing from day one. Do they need a computer with specific digital tools downloaded, safety equipment, or an ergonomic chair? If new hires need to wait for hours or days to get what they need to do their job, their first impression of the company will be one of unpreparedness or lack of support

MISTAKE #3

Not Providing the Necessary Supplies or Training

Relatedly, do you use specific software or platforms? If employees aren't trained on how to use them, chances are they're productivity will suffer.





MISTAKE #4

Mismanaging Expectations

Do employees know exactly what is expected of them and their work? Do they know exactly what benefits, salary, and perks they can expect? Just like when you meet someone you talked to on a dating app in-person for the first time, you want a new hire's expectations to match reality.

From the first time a potential employee comes in contact with your company all the way through the onboarding process, every communication and touchpoint needs to be honest and accurate to build trust. No exaggerating, embellishing, assuming, etc.

MISTAKE #5

Leaving Roles and Responsibilities Hazy

In order to build confidence, productivity, and engagement, employees need to know exactly what's expected of them and how they can succeed. Without this guiding light, employees will feel as though they're adrift on a storm-tossed ocean of overwhelming information.

A lack of role clarity is a huge roadblock to employee success because even if the person wants to exceed expectations, they won't know the first step to do so!

*** Pro Tip:** With Awardco, you can curate an onboarding catalog from millions of products through Amazon Business. All you have to do is award points to your new recruits on their first day, and they'll be able to get the things that will make their first few weeks even better. That saves you time and they get what they want!



MISTAKE #6

Withholding Recognition

Starting a new job is scary, and many people feel overwhelmed, overlooked, and afraid to share their thoughts and opinions. When new hire managers and peers don't recognize them from day one, those feelings are likely to fester.

You can recognize the fact that they were chosen from the pool of applicants, recognize their unique talents and personality, recognize their early wins (big and small) during their first few days, and recognize their thoughts and diverse perspectives.

MISTAKE #7

Expecting Too Much Too Fast

New employees take 12 months to feel fully confident in their roles and reach their performance potential. So one of the worst things you can do during onboarding is setting unreachable expectations.

Clarify their role, provide resources and training, and build a culture that encourages questions. Then, employees can learn and build confidence at their own pace without the fear of failing.

Part II

How to KEEP a New Hire

15 Onboarding Best Practices

In order to make each day of an employee's new journey effective, it's best to break onboarding down into four phases:

Pre-onboarding. The days leading up to an employee's first day.

Orientation. A new hire's first week.

Training. A new hire's three months.

Continuing Support. A new hire's first six months and beyond.

Using these phases, let's break them even further down into the 10 onboarding strategies you need to not just give new hires a phenomenal first impression, but also to keep them impressed, engaged, and excited for future months and years.



Pre-onboarding

STRATEGY #1

Send New Hires Required Paperwork Before Their First Day

Instead of dedicating an employee's first day to a firehose of information and paperwork, send them payroll forms like Form W-4 and Form I-9 before they start. Also send them the employee handbook and encourage them to come with any questions or concerns prepared.

Many onboarding platforms automate this process and keep it secure for both parties. Because onboarding is so impactful, check out these platform options to see the best option for you to invest in.

By doing this, you can plan a first day that's full of fun activities, meeting new people, and learning about the company—not sitting at a desk filling out paperwork.



STRATEGY #2

Send New Hires a Personal Letter

A personalized, hand-written note is a great way to show new hires that the company is excited for them to start. A note from the employee's new manager or from an executive is a great way to build their excitement.

Take things a step further by including a small welcome gift with the note—survey new hires to learn their hobbies, favorite snacks, etc., and create a small gift basket that's personalized to them

STRATEGY #3

Prepare New Hires' Workspaces

Whether they're starting in an office, in a manufacturing facility, in a school, or anywhere else, make sure the new hire's workstation is prepared for their first day. Make sure they have a company email set up, passwords ready to go, and any necessary equipment prepared.

Put a special finishing touch by including balloons, some free swag, or another welcome gift. Customize this gift based on the job and the employee's preference (i.e., a notebook for an office worker, comfortable shoes for a nurse, etc.).



STRATEGY #4

Assign New Hires a Buddy

Talk with the new hire's manager to learn who on their team will work closely with the new hire and will have time to be a supportive friend, resource, and role model during their first few days.

An onboarding buddy makes the nerve-racking new job transition much easier.

STRATEGY #5

Announce the New Hire's Arrival to the Team and Manager

Announcing the new hire to the company is a great idea, but announcing them to their future team and manager is vital. Get a few details from the new hire, including their hobbies and a fun fact or two, that you can share. Include a photo to help employees recognize them.

This announcement should go hand-in-hand with reminding the team and manager to recognize the new hire, make them feel comfortable, and support them as they start their new position.

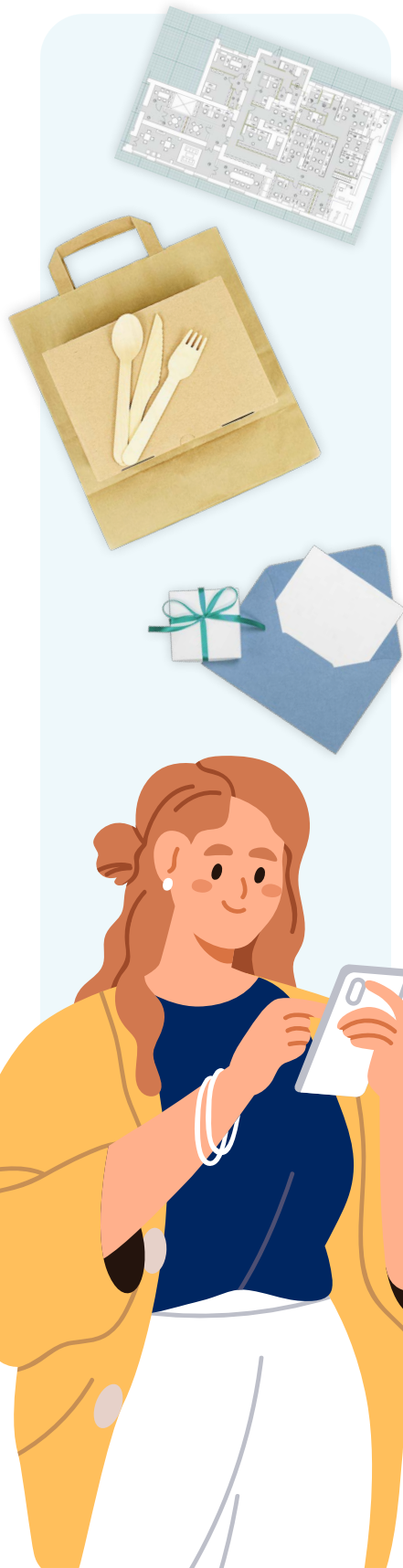


STRATEGY #6

Plan a Stellar First Day

The new hire has officially arrived. Make their first day special by focusing on both fun and learning. Here are some examples of first-day activities you should consider:

- Give them a packet of necessary resources such as an org chart, office map, and the employee handbook
- Hand out the aforementioned personalized gift
- Set up a breakfast or lunch for them
- Give them a tour of the workspace
- Introduce them to their team and their onboarding buddy
- Finish benefits and any other outstanding new hire documentation



STRATEGY #7

Set Up a 1:1 Between the New Hire and Their Manager

This should happen within the first two or three days—it's the perfect time for managers to get to know the new hire and share more about their responsibilities. These meetings should:

- Start building a relationship between employees and their direct managers
- Clarify new hires' roles, responsibilities, and beginning priorities
- Help new hires set goals for themselves
- Give managers a chance to learn about new hire's career plans and start a professional development strategy

STRATEGY #8**Set Clear Expectations**

In order for new hires to succeed, they have to know how to succeed. Provide them with a detailed job description and a comprehensive list of their current responsibilities. This way, they'll know from day one what's expected of them and how they can start contributing.

Another way to clarify information is by offering a clear support network. Who can new hires go to with questions regarding their work? Who can they go to regarding the employee handbook or benefits? Give them clear lines of communication so that they're never frustrated or confused.

A Gallup study shows that when expectations are unclear, employee engagement drops. Help your new hire instantly build confidence, start finding success, and get engaged from day one.

STRATEGY #9**Share the Company's Background**

Familiarize new hires with the organization they're a part of. What is the company's history? What does the organization stand for? What are the core values they want their employees to exemplify?

Be true to your culture during these first few days—well, be true to your culture at all times, but make a special effort for new hires. For instance, here at Awardco, where we're all about recognition, we recognize new hires!





Training

STRATEGY #10

Introduce Work Gradually

It's important to not dump everything the new hire could do on their laps on the first day. Over the first few weeks, gradually give them new tasks and responsibilities as they build their confidence and acclimate to their team's processes.

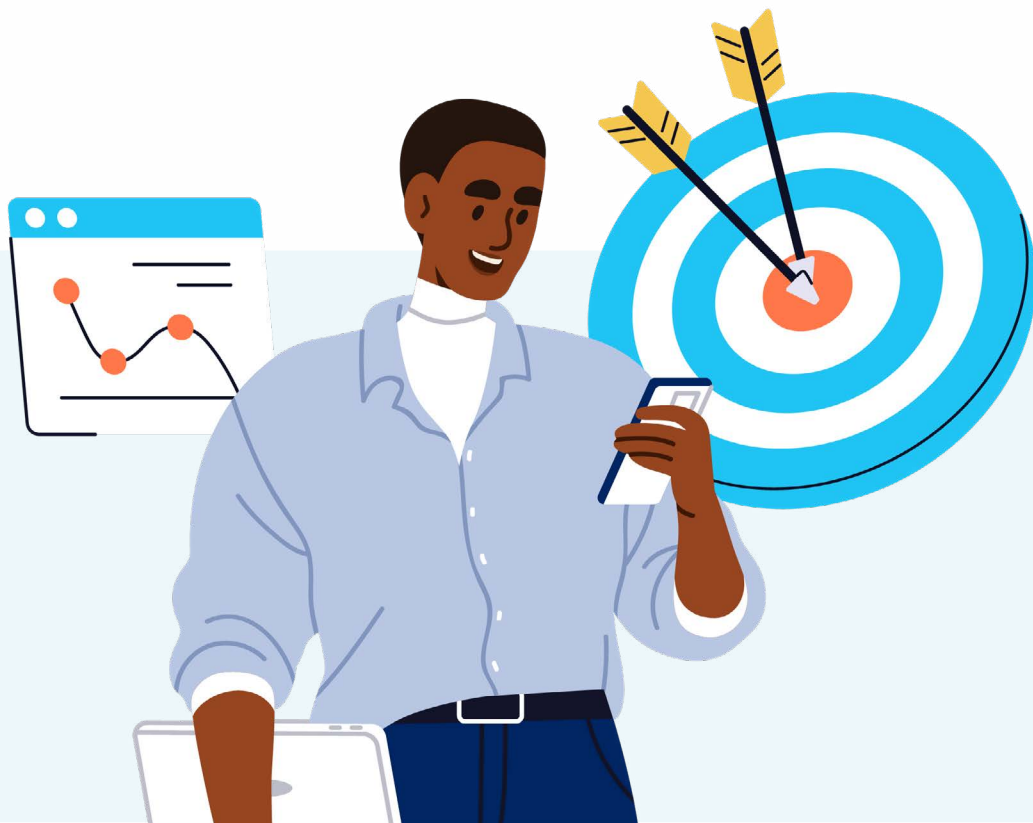
It takes an average of 12 months for new hires to feel fully confident in their new work, so make sure not to overwhelm them.

STRATEGY #11

Recognize New Hires' Wins, Big and Small

During the first few days, weeks, and months, new hires won't know exactly what constitutes success. In order to both help them know what they're aiming for and make them feel awesome, recognize them frequently.

An employee recognition platform can make this easy—managers can quickly recognize their direct reports at any time, and HR teams can even automate milestone recognitions from the company. So new hires can get a "Thank you for the hard work you've put in over your first 3 months" message, or something similar.



Continued Support

STRATEGY #12

Help New Hires Set Goals

After new hires feel a little more comfortable with their work and role, make sure their managers sit down with them to talk about their career goals and growth opportunities in the company.

Considering 76% of employees want more opportunities to expand their careers, and 86% of employees would quit their jobs for new ones that offer more growth, it's never too early to start planning an upward trajectory.

STRATEGY #13

Let Them Audit (and Improve) Your Processes

As new hires dive into the workflow, they may come up with ideas to improve the way your team or company does things. Be open to their thoughts! Often, new talent will bring new ideas that the existing people in your organization haven't thought of because they're used to how things are done.

By being open to their thoughts and ideas, you show that you trust them and value their opinions.

STRATEGY #14

Establish Regular Check-Ins

Even after months at a new job, employees will probably run into questions or challenges—that's why regular check-ins with their managers or other leaders are important. These can be weekly, monthly, or even quarterly.

The key is to ask how they're feeling at the company, how they like their job, and if they have any questions or concerns. Make sure to listen to them and provide any extra training or support they need..



STRATEGY #15

Get Onboarding Feedback

Once new hires have learned the ropes, it's time to ask them about their experience to see where you can improve. Ask questions like:

- ☒ Did you feel seen and supported?
- ☐ Did you get enough training?
- ☐ Were you confident in starting to contribute right away?
- ☐ Were your job expectations clear?
- ☐ Did you feel welcomed by your team?
- ☐ Did you have a friend you could trust?

Based on the feedback you get, update your strategy and processes to fill in any gaps so that your next batch of new hires has an even better time.

Your onboarding program should really take the first year of an employee's tenure. As you can see by the above 15 tips, the longer they stay, the less steps you need to worry about.

Part III

Retain Your New Hires Longer

So you've made it past the first 10 days and have kept your new hires around—congrats! With this guide, you have everything you need to nurture, support, and strengthen them for the next 10 days, 10 months, or 10 years.

Keep the new hire enthusiasm and excitement going strong with things like recognition, rewards, support, trust, and development opportunities. You'll not only retain your talent, but also build culture champions who love working for you.

Supercharge the End-to-End Employee Experience

Awardco improves employee engagement, retention, and productivity

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