Strategic Onboarding Training

Laying the Foundation for Forward-Thinking and High-Performing Teams

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eBOOK

Why is Onboarding Important?

Every organization needs to onboard new employees. For some, onboarding is just another series of boxes to check. But the most forward-thinking companies understand that it is a critical stage for their employees' future success. Not only does an organization get the employee up to speed on company benefits, policies, and practices, but the employee also gets a feel for the company culture. In their minds, they are quietly making decisions about their new place of employment: Is this a place where I will be engaged, or just "punching the clock"? Will my short- and long-term career goals be met working with this team?

While we can't know everything that goes on in a new employee's head, we do find solid evidence that a strong onboarding approach leads to strong retention rates. Paychex found that **80% of employees consider leaving a company soon after joining if they have a poor onboarding experience.**

About 70% of employees are more likely to stay 3+ years after a positive onboarding experience, according to SHRM. Their research also showed that effective **onboarding can improve employee retention and productivity by 52% to 60%.**

These studies make sense when one considers the psychological impact of effective onboarding. When management conveys clear expectations for the new hire's role and provides the proper training for success, new employees are more comfortable in the role. They achieve their peak performance sooner, and with more early "wins" under their belt, they are more likely to feel the organization is a good fit for them.

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Four Types of Training to Keep in Mind

As career experts have noted, organizations require various types of training, with the depth and scope of each type varying depending on the industry, organization, and sometimes employee experience.

Orientation

This interaction is typically a new employee's first experience with both the organization and their team. New hires learn important things like the organizational structure, company policies, and administrative procedures, and also review and complete required paperwork for the HR department.

1

Onboarding

While orientation does include the onboarding process, this training is focused on the employee's specific role. Getting plugged into software and platforms, understanding personal and departmental goals, and being introduced to technical aspects of the job take place during onboarding.

2

Soft Skills

With many jobs becoming dependent on, and sometimes eliminated by, technological and AI advancements, soft skills are increasingly important, as they cannot be automated. There are a wide variety of useful soft skills, but things like communication and time management are universal and can help boost individual, team, and company-wide performance.

3

Safety

One training category often seen as the most boring, but arguably the most important, is safety training. Every employee in any industry should receive safety training because you can never be too careful. From basic first aid and workplace evacuation plans to personal protective equipment (PPE) and working with hazardous materials, employers should always make safety a priority.

4

The Onboarding Challenge:
Appropriate Training

Ask yourself: what part of onboarding is likely to make the greatest impression on new hires? It's probably not going to be filling out paperwork or seeing where the break rooms are located, although those are important pieces of the puzzle.

No, the first meaningful interaction with any organization is its commitment to provide quality, and ongoing training throughout an employee's career. And that starts with a good onboarding experience.

Goals of Onboarding Training

Onboarding training sets the tone for the new hire's experience. Not only should training include HR compliance and policies and procedure topics but it should also fill in any skill gaps. Proper training will help them be successful in their new role. Onboarding training should at least accomplish one of the following goals:

Skills building: This training encompasses everything the new hire needs to successfully perform their job, including both soft and technical skills. This includes relevant skills such as time management training, as well as very specific training, like how to operate equipment or use a particular software program. Safety procedure training should also be included in skills training.

Knowledge building: The employer needs to share their knowledge. This includes what new hires need to know aside from the skills they'll need to perform their job. For example, HR compliance training, such as anti-harassment, is necessary to understand company policy.

Impression building: Remember, "You never get a second chance to make a first impression." The employee is trying to get a feel for their new company during their first pivotal weeks. They want to know what the company is all about, the culture, and who they can ask for guidance and help. They want to feel excited about their new role and they will take their cue from the onboarding experience.

Planning Steps:
Getting Started on Your Goals

- What's currently presented in your onboarding training?

- Is skills training included so they're well equipped to successfully perform their job? Is safety training provided?

- Is knowledge shared? And, is HR compliance training required?

- What impression is your onboarding program conveying to not only new hires but your entire company? Do you truly have a people-first learning culture?

- What onboarding goals are under-represented or lacking?

- How effective is your training in all areas of your company?

- Is your current training program meeting your company's short-and long-term goals? How are you measuring ROI?

Getting the Timing Right for Onboarding Training

Some successful employers realize onboarding can take up to a year depending upon the role. Many organizations adopt a 30/60/90-day model for onboarding plans. Others make a big deal about "day 1" training and orientation.

While it's good to have a scheduled road map for onboarding, why count days from the start of work? Why not prepare new hires before they even come into the office?

Successful companies already do this. One study by Aberdeen Group found that **83% of the highest-performing organizations began onboarding before the new hire's first day.** This allows employees time to absorb a lot of the material they will need to know on day 1, freeing up that time for more personal introductions, mentoring, and brief team meetings.

What Can Companies Cover Before Day 1?

Here are some ideas:

Share a taste of the culture.

Share a video greeting welcoming new hires to the company. Capture video of other employees talking about feeling about their work, coworkers, and the company.

Present your organization's mission and values.

Having a clear, succinct statement of your company's mission and values can help set the tone for your new employees. It's always wise to share your company's mission statement during the job interview process. Not only does it emphasize the company's commitment to your mission but also helps the prospect determine if they would be a good fit.

Prep new hires on your benefit options.

Provide benefits information, such as 401(k) plan and benefit options, so they can review and discuss any questions on day 1. This speeds up the benefits discussion, allowing more time for training and meeting co-workers.

Start the compliance conversation.

Many HR compliance topics are handled by taking a required course that reviews important compliance information. With an appropriate learning management system, you can assign compliance courses, track viewings, and even administer online quizzes to ensure understanding..

Planning Steps:
What You Can Cover Before Day 1

Make a list of what your company can share prior to the new hires' first day.

- Is there anything else you could cover? Any additional safety or HR compliance topics? More specifics about the company's mission, vision, and values? If so, add this detail to your list.

- Once your list is completed, put the tasks in order based upon what the new hires will need to learn first.

- Consider the following when setting priorities:

  - What topics are most important
  - How to present the information
  - How to confirm they have read or viewed the material

Helpful Tip: Create a "countdown to day 1" calendar that outlines what materials new hires need prior to their start date.

Why Use Video for Onboarding Training?

Whether or not you have committed to the idea of pre-day 1 training, there are good reasons why you will want to consider using online video for your onboarding training. These fall into four broad categories:

Accessibility: In-person onboarding conversations may get delayed when other pressing priorities arise. Having online videos available 24/7 means new hires can watch their training videos as required, on day 1, day 10, day 100…or even before day 1. This works well for important benefits conversations they may need to have with their family. They can rewatch the videos at home, in the evening, or on the weekend.

Consistency: Unfortunately, people can be rushed or distracted during onboarding conversations. This applies both to the new hire and the onboarding manager or HR leader. And those who continually onboard new hires can easily get bored of the same ol' same ol' and attempt to change things up only to inadvertently leave out important details. There have been cases where an enthusiastic HR leader has tried to change things up to keep these presentations interesting, but also inadvertently changed the message.

Video is ideal for content that must be delivered exactly the same way, every time. It guarantees an appropriate tone is conveyed, the correct language is used, and important details are covered.

Efficiency: Employees can watch their onboarding videos, take notes, and immediately obtain their information. This saves time for the HR team (which has to repeat these meetings and conversations over and over). It also saves time as it eliminates everyone sitting through conversations that do not apply to them. If anyone has questions, they can be answered one on one rather than take valuable time away from the group. Videos can provide the foundation, and the HR leader can provide the personalized details. Videos make a lasting impression, showing new hires that the company values their onboarding.

Connection: Some believe using videos and technology for onboarding is less personal than a meeting making it harder to achieve a connection with the new hires. Video offers an alternative through a blended approach. New hires can view the video at their convenience wherever and whenever they choose, and then can have a more personal 1-on-1 conversation with the onboarding leader, if need be.

Videos make a lasting impression. New hires will feel valued knowing their employer took time to effectively onboard them.

Planning Steps:
Using Video for Onboarding Training

- Do you onboard new hires in group meetings at your organization?

- How much 1-on-1 time do new hires receive with the HR onboarding leader?

- Would you free up valuable time if training videos replaced onboarding meetings?

Thoughts to ponder... It may be time for your organization to take specific actions toward gathering the content needed to create a video library.

Off-the-Shelf Onboarding

While some onboarding content will be unique to your organization, not all will be. In fact, much of it will reflect best practices in your industry and the business world at large. They are, in a sense, universal.

Take safety training videos, for example. HSI has a video course in our library that is specifically about fire extinguisher operation. There's nothing "custom" about it—after all, fire extinguishers work the same from company to company. The same goes for many HR compliance topics and skills training.

Imagine the time it takes to create custom content for all those possible topics!

According to a series of studies by the Association for Talent Development it would take 43 to 141 hours to create 1 hour of online material, or over 6 months to create a one- week program.

Do you have that kind of time?

Using off-the-shelf video courses allows both you and the L&D team to focus on creating more company-specific training.

Off-The-Shelf Content for Onboarding

Here are a few more examples of areas where off-the-shelf training videos makes sense during onboarding.

Company Culture: While your company culture is obviously unique, navigating a new company culture requires skills that are universal. Training around working with inclusive teams would be helpful. Courses on emotional intelligence and unconscious bias can also help new hires adjust more quickly.
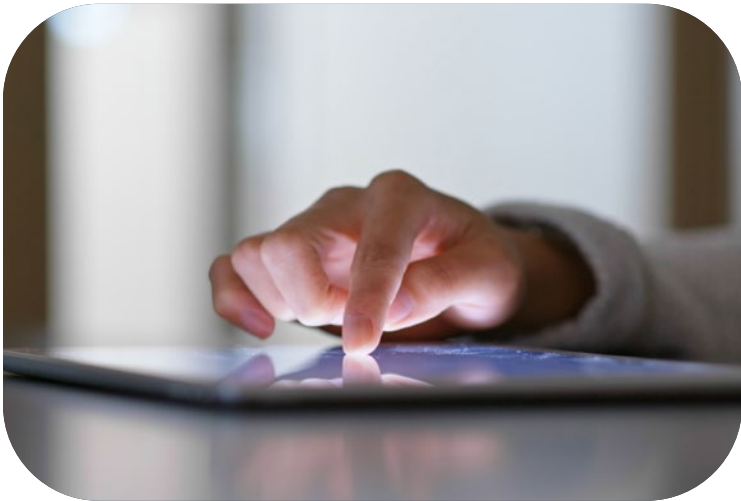
HR Compliance: It's critical to create a work environment that's safe, productive, and ethical. HR compliance training should be accessible 24/7! HSI's off-the-shelf anti-harassment and anti-discrimination video courses are examples of on demand courses that should be at your fingertips when needed.

Cybersecurity: The best way to protect your organization from modern cybersecurity threats like malware, phishing, ransomware, and identity theft is to train your employees from the outset, using the most up-to- date content. Here, off-the-shelf cybersecurity training videos can support this critical need.

Soft Skills: Since employees start with different abilities, soft skills training can improve how employees approach their jobs and work with each other. Communication, problem solving, and time management are all examples of soft skills that employees may need help with to succeed in their new roles. Having a strong set of soft skills can help any employee achieve career success, reach business goals and enjoy the process along the way.

Using off-the-shelf video courses allows both you and the L&D team to focus on creating more company-specific training.

Planning Steps:
Off-the-Shelf for Onboarding Training

Are you ready to look for vendors that have an appropriate off-the-shelf library for your needs?

Before you proceed with that shopping step, you need to consider:

- How many topics do I need now?

- How many additional topics will I need in the future as we evolve into a true learning culture?

- To what degree do I need content that is fresh and up to date?

- Should the videos include a live presenter?

- Are the videos created in a microlearning format?

The Blended-Learning Approach

They can now spend that newly found time actually improving the onboarding experience. For example, they can now:

- Schedule more 1-on-1 time with new hires
- Focus on answering questions instead of giving presentations
- Help employees interpret difficult information
- Streamline benefits discussions
- Ensure HR compliance faster
- Transition training time to mentoring/ shadowing time

Blended learning is "a formal education program in which a student learns at least in part through delivery of content and instruction via digital and online media with some element of student control over time, place, path, or pace."

The idea is that computer-mediated instruction is added to, or combined with, more personal face-to-face instruction. This allows learners to have more control over the learning situation, choosing the time and/or place (for example, remote versus office or training location); their path (what they learn); and their pace (the rate at which they absorb content).

Now, with definition in hand, we can see the broader picture. New employees can learn a good deal from video content, made accessible to them online. This training can begin even before day 1 and cover both topics unique to the organization and topics that are a little more universal. Because the employee is completing part of their onboarding training on their own, it frees up the onboarding managers' and HR professionals' time.

Planning Steps:
The Blended-Learning Approach

There is little reason to be concerned about transitioning to a blended-learning environment. Still, there might be some people who resist the idea of blended learning.

- Take a moment to think about which stakeholders will need to get on board with a new format.

  - Trainers will need to be comfortable adjusting live presentations to more active and engaging discussions based on material presented online.

  - Onboarding managers will need to learn how to assign online material, as well as how to track views and completions.

  - Workflows for HR compliance will need to change.

- All of these changes will be a good thing—but like any change, people will resist and want to do things "the old way."

  - How are you going to get buy-in?
  - How will you present the advantages of blended learning for the new hire onboarding experience?

Measuring the Impact of Onboarding Training

Resistance to change will happen not only when a new system is put in place. It can also happen later—for example, when budgeting discussions come up and leadership begins asking questions about ROI.

Which means that there will need to be proof of the impact and effectiveness of the new onboarding training. How can that be measured?

Raw Content Views: One of the advantages to using online training content is that you can monitor who accesses it, when, and for how long. If both views and viewing time go up, it will prove that new employees are that much more engaged with the new system.
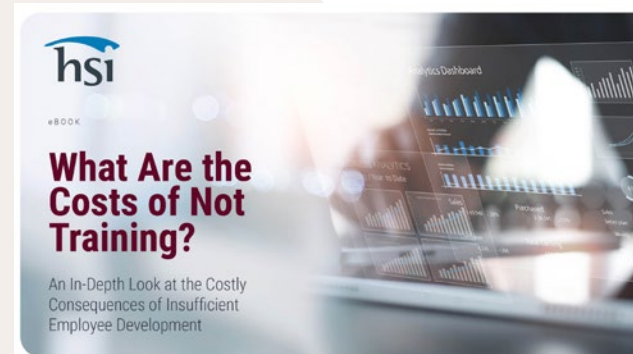
Surveys: Simple surveys asking about the onboarding experience can create plenty of good data showing a better employee experience. You don't necessarily need a separate survey, though. A few questions added to a 360 survey can be a great way to get data.

Employee Reviews: A lot of vendors talk about "time to productivity," which is the total time it takes for a new employee to reach their peak productivity in a company. While it's true that this is an important metric, it is notoriously hard to capture. After all, how do we know when an employee is truly at their peak? The people who can give you the best feel for this are the managers who are already reviewing employee performance. Leverage their insights by asking them how quickly employees are getting up to speed and whether they have noticed a difference in that rate over time.

Retention Rate: A lot of turnover points to an onboarding problem, either inadequate training, poor benefits explanations, or simply bad first impressions of the company culture. If the turnover rate dips and retention rises, your new onboarding program is taking care of these issues. (Also be wary of too high a retention rate, as your organization might be hanging on to new employees who are not a great fit.)

To learn more, read our eBook, [What Are The Costs of Not Training?](#)

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What Are the Costs of Not Training?

An In-Depth Look at the Costly Consequences of Insufficient Employee Development

Planning Steps:
Measuring the Impact of Your Onboarding Training

- Don't forget to include the appropriate metrics when planning any changes to your onboarding process.

- Think about how you will measure and prove success. Then, work this into the onboarding process from the start.

Instead of looking at the return on training dollars, **another option is to consider the biggest losses that come with not training—or not training effectively.**

In Summary

Onboarding is more than just a procedural step in hiring—it's a strategic investment in your organization's success. Effective onboarding ensures new employees feel valued, prepared, and aligned with company goals from the start.

By prioritizing comprehensive training, fostering a sense of belonging, and addressing skills gaps early, organizations set the stage for higher retention, improved productivity, and a stronger overall workforce.

Bonus!: Remote Onboarding Checklist

It's critical to make new remote workers feel connected to the organization. To help in creating a culture that supports employees' overall well-being as well as their performance and allows them to feel connected from afar, here's HSI's Remote Onboarding Checklist which highlights additional tips aside from those mentioned in HSI's blog, 7 Tips to Successful Onboarding [+ Remote Onboarding Advice].

The Offer Letter – Onboarding Officially Begins!

1

The offer letter should include these key details:

- Flexible schedule option or fixed working hours
  - What time of day they must log in

- On-site requirements
  - State if required to attend on-site meetings or events

- Vacation, holiday, and sick day policies

- Workspace and equipment expectations
  - Be clear on who provides computer, internet service, desk, chair, and office supplies

Life Before The New Hire's Start

2

- Those who interviewed the new hire should send a welcome email stating why they are excited to have them on the team and what value they will bring.

- Mail a welcome package to the new hire's home with company swag, such as a company-branded t-shirt, coffee mug, and notebook.

- Rather than sending welcome emails consider including handwritten letters in the welcome package.

- Send their computer, monitor, and other hardware they'll need along with detailed set-up instructions. Request they set up their computer before their first day.

- Share an itinerary for their first week or even first month.

First-Day Warm Welcome!

3

- Start the day with friendly video calls with familiar faces of those they met during the interview process. Place this first on the itinerary as this will make them not only feel comfortable and welcome but connected, too. It's critical for the employee to feel they know and can trust their team. This is a deal-breaker.

- Share a virtual tour of the corporate office.

- Explain the company policies and procedures including:

  - If reporting working hours is required

  - If tracking key performance indicators is expected

  - Preferred communication method

    - Introduction to the company's communication tools, such as Microsoft Teams

    - Video meeting etiquette

    - Where to locate company resources

The "Get Acquainted Period" - The First Few Weeks and Months

- Accelerate their learning by sharing cultural knowledge about how the organization works so they can be productive and feel connected sooner.

- Consider a weekly email nurture campaign that shares culture insights and tips.

- Provide a list of day-to-day tasks and goals. This helps the new hire wrap their head around their new role. A list of expectations for their first 30 to 90 days helps them settle in and keeps them and their managers accountable. Monday.com is a great project management tool to keep remote workers communicating and on task.

- Immerse employees in urgent projects or initiatives that involve problem-solving.

- Be sure to be accessible to answer any questions they may have.

- Ask several teammates to schedule a virtual coffee meetup with the new employee. Managers, work buddies, mentors, and team members should get to know the employees on a personal level. Building relationships of trust facilitates a greater comfort level for virtual employees.

- Encourage small talk before the beginning of virtual meetings.

- Create channels via Teams or Slack for outside-of-work content, such as recipes, book clubs, or sharing pet photos. This helps employees to connect based on hobbies and interests and expand their internal network.

- The key is to keep them engaged. Check in frequently either through casual video chats or email, or IM them daily. This allows them to stay connected and feel a part of the everyday flow of things.

- Recognize employees for doing a good job. Recognition can help employees feel seen and part of the team. And it solidifies the employee's purpose and confirms their goals and values are aligned with the organization. A reward program makes it easy for leaders to boost engagement and promote a sense of belonging. This recognition might be a financial incentive for outstanding performance or a kudos session at scheduled team meetings.

- Allow remote workers time to unwind, since they don't have water cooler conversations.

- Provide ongoing training specifically for remote workers over topics like:
  - Remote Collaboration
  - Assertive Communications
  - DISC Training
  - Time Management
  - Project Management
  - Virtual Leadership
  - Team Building
  - Ergonomics
  - Maintaining Mental Health

Life After the First 60 Days

- Share the company's onboarding checklist with new hires to make sure all items were addressed to their satisfaction.

- Send an employee onboarding satisfaction survey requesting anonymous feedback on all aspects of their onboarding experience.

- Take their responses seriously and incorporate them into the onboarding program, if possible.

- Work together to create an action plan for the next 60 days to include training, goals, and other support to help them with their continuing success. Remote workers need to be provided with upskilling opportunities so they can grow in their careers.

- Maintain an open-door policy. Even though most employees feel well integrated and comfortable after the first 60 days, communicate that HR and their manager's "doors" are always open for questions and clarifications on anything that may arise.

Celebrate Their One-Year Work Anniversary!

- Celebrate their success by making it through the learning curve and adding value! Recognize this success with either a monetary or symbolic gift. Be sure to stress their contributions and reinforce the value they add to their team and company.

- Share success stories from clients or cross-functional teams who collaborated on an important project. New hires will continue to grow in their career when they can see the difference they make.

Further Reading

[7 Tips to Successful Onboarding [+ Remote Onboarding Advice]](#)

[A Guide to Creating an Employee Training and Development Program](#)

[How to Buy eLearning Content for Your LMS (And Not Regret It Later)](#)

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HSI is your single-source partner for EHS, Compliance, and Professional Development solutions. HSI provides integrated e-learning content, training solutions, and cloud-based software designed to enable your business to improve safety, operations, and employee development. Across all industries, HSI helps safety managers, and technical employees, human resources, first responders, and operational leaders train and develop their workforce, keep workers safe, and meet regulatory and operational compliance requirements. HSI's focus is on training, software, and services for safety and compliance, workforce development, industrial skills, and emergency care.

HSI is a unique partner that offers a suite of cloud-based software solutions including learning management, safety management, chemical SDS management, and more, integrated with content and training so businesses can not only monitor and manage multiple workflows in one system, but train employees via one partner.

For more information, visit **hsi.com**