

10 Onboarding Activities to Kickstart New Hire Success



After months of screening resumes, interviewing candidates, and negotiating an offer, you're just getting the employer-employee relationship started—and your new hire's success depends on what happens next.

According to [research by BambooHR](#), an overwhelming majority of people who had a highly effective onboarding experience feel:

- Very engaged in their work (89%)
- That they have strong clarity about their role (87%)

These positive feelings can add up to long term retention. The employees we surveyed were **18x more likely to feel committed** to their organization and over **29x more likely to feel satisfied** with their jobs, compared to employees who had a subpar onboarding experience.

But welcoming new hires isn't as easy as it seems. In fact, nearly [60% of companies](#) want to upgrade their onboarding programs.

» **Learn More:** [Expert Tips for Upgrading Your Onboarding Process](#)

Onboarding becomes even more complex when it applies to the ever-growing cohort of remote workers—a population that [tripled from 2019 to 2021](#). How can you help new people feel connected, engaged, and committed when they may never meet their coworkers in person?

To help, we gathered onboarding insights from our HR experts and beyond. Read on to discover ten onboarding activities that'll make every new employee feel right at home.

1. Complete Paperwork and Share Important Information Before the First Day

You don't want to bog down a new employee's first day on the job. Instead of spending hours manually filling out paperwork, we recommend automating these steps with employee self-onboarding software.

For example, BambooHR's onboarding technology allows you to gather electronic signatures for all the necessary employment paperwork, like I-9s and W-4s.

With their paperwork out of the way, new hires don't have to wait until the first day to get up to speed on things like:

- Company policies
- The employee handbook
- Getting to know their manager and teammates

2. Take Time for Introductions and Ice Breakers

First impressions matter—so if you want new hires to feel welcomed and included, start their first day with a team meeting, in person or virtually.

Technology can help you create those connections even when teams are dispersed across locations. For example, you can help teams get to know their new members with a virtual ice breaker:

- **Team Trivia:** Have everyone submit a strange or unusual fact about themselves, and the team has to guess who is connected to each fact (use a polling app like [Kahoot!](#)).
- **New Hire Questionnaire:** Invite the new hire to fill out a get-to-know-you questionnaire with questions about their hobbies, interests, and even favorite treats.

It's especially important that employees get to know their managers better than they would in the hiring interviews.

3. Pair New Hires with an Onboarding Buddy

Workplace friendships and positive team relationships can be a huge boon for employee engagement and retention. In addition to giving your new hire a brief introduction to the team, assign them a partner or buddy to help them get those friendships started early.

An [onboarding buddy also helps new hires](#) build crucial connections not just to the people but to the organization as well, including:

- Giving new hires an insider's understanding of the culture and structure of the organization
- Increasing time to productivity—by up to 97% for new hires who met with their onboarding buddy more than eight times in their first 90 days
- Helping new hires feel more satisfied with their new job
- Providing more support from the new hire's manager and broader team

4. Send Company Swag

There are all sorts of options out there for branded swag: Coffee mugs, t-shirts, hats, the list goes on and on. Whether you choose a small gift or something more elaborate, it should be relevant and meaningful to the people receiving *and* also further the onboarding experience. (After all, most people don't want yet another ill-fitting t-shirt with an awkwardly large logo.)

To make the right choice, think about the message you're sending. Does this gift help new hires feel better connected and welcomed to the company? Does it help them understand and feel integrated in the company culture?

For example, at BambooHR, we send every new hire a copy of [Crucial Conversations](#), a book used by nearly half the Forbes Global 2000. As new hires adjust to life at BambooHR, we rely on the book's core concepts to approach difficult conversations. It's a helpful, actionable introduction to our values and culture.

5. Invite New Hires to Lunch

Help new hires build connections by treating them to a company-paid lunch with their immediate team, other employees in their department, or collaborators across the organization. For those who [work remotely or with a hybrid schedule](#), you can easily send them a gift card and arrange for a video chat over takeout.

To help ease the possible awkwardness of a virtual lunch, here's another onboarding idea to consider: a trivia game! Like the ice breakers we mentioned earlier, creating a brief trivia game can help warm up the conversation and give new hires another opportunity to get to know the company history, culture, and more.

Keep in mind: Onboarding programs should last well beyond the first day or even the first month, for that matter—we've found that [longer and slower onboarding drive better results](#).

6. Stock Up on Their Favorite Snacks

A powerful way to show new employees they matter is in the seemingly small details. So even if it might seem trivial, making sure you have a bag of honey-roasted peanuts or a king-size Twix ready is an easy way to show you're paying attention.

With this simple gesture, you're making new hires feel instantly comfortable, especially if they're a remote employee who won't be able to partake in all your in-office perks.

7. Announce New Hires on Social Media

Posting about new hires on social media is your chance to throw some virtual confetti, put your new people in the spotlight, and [earn brownie points with future candidates](#) to boot. It shows everyone that you value your new hires and you're proud to have them join your organization (Just make sure to always get your new hires' permission to share their picture and name on social media.)

It's also a good idea to invite new hires to post their own announcement. To make this easier, provide new hires with a ready-made social graphic they can post without having to craft a whole message themselves.

8. Offer In-Person Training for New Remote Employees

If your [remote employees](#) live far away—and your budget allows it—consider bringing new hires to your headquarters for in-person training during their initial onboarding period. Even if remote employees won't be on location, an in-person meeting will nurture their sense of belonging, allow them to meet coworkers, and get “feel” for the office culture. For virtual onboarding, we recommend:

- Making sure all team meetings include a video call link
- Encouraging employees to keep project management software up to date
- Giving all employees access to instant messaging software (such as Teams or Slack)

Following some (or all!) of these best practices will help you build an inclusive onboarding program and an inclusive company culture.

» **Learn More:** [How to Build and Manage Remote Teams](#)

9. Help Remote Employees Set Up Their Home Office

Just as you'd set up a cubicle or desk for an on-site employee, it's important to make sure new remote employees have all the equipment they need on day one.

Since remote workers won't come to a physical office, you'll need to send them a company laptop. As an added perk, you can restock their office supplies with items like:

- Branded notebooks or other paper goods
- A stipend or reimbursement for home office supplies furniture
- A stipend for internet access
- Gift cards for coffee shops or home food delivery services

10. Ask for Feedback With an Onboarding Survey

How do you make sure your onboarding program gives new hires the best experience? Ask them about it—then use their feedback to refine your onboarding process.

When [evaluating feedback](#), look for trends and compare your goals to your employees' experience. This will help you determine where you need to adjust the process to make it even more effective.

As new hires complete their onboarding process, ask questions about:

- **Company Mission, Values, and Culture:** How motivated, excited, or engaged do they feel about your company's purpose? This will help you gauge how well you introduce and help new hires connect to what your company is about.
- **Engagement With Onboarding Activities:** How useful were the activities? Did each activity meet its goal? This will help you understand not only how enjoyable the various onboarding activities are but also their effectiveness in integrating new hires.
- **Team Integration:** Do new employees know who to go to for help or questions about their job? To what extent do they feel like they're a part of their team? How well do they feel prepared to contribute fully in their position? This helps you keep individual managers and mentors accountable for their part in making new team members feel welcome.
- **Overall Satisfaction:** How do new employees feel about their decision to accept the job after going through the various onboarding experiences? Would they recommend your company as a place to work? Keeping track of employee satisfaction is an important measure for how successful your onboarding process is (and also for how you're doing overall as a company).