How to Lose a New Hire in 10 Days

And Tips on How To Keep Them

Part I

How to Lose a New Hire

What not to do.

Onboarding new employees. It's unavoidable. Whether you do it well or poorly, every single person who comes through your company will have a first day. That first day can determine a lot about how an employee feels about their workplace. In fact, a negative onboarding experience is twice as likely to cause an employee to start looking for something else. Think about that—are you giving new employees a warm welcome or throwing them off a cliff without a parachute?

Successful employee onboarding can improve retention by 82%.

Only 12% of employees think their companies onboard well. That's...not great. It's safe to assume that no matter what your current process is you have room for improvement. There are big and small ways to improve, and we're here to help. We'll walk you through what not to do, then offer up some tips for a successful, and dare we say enjoyable, onboarding experience.

Mismanaged Expectations

"What we meant was…"

Have you ever ordered food and received the wrong thing? Not a great feeling. Especially when you ask for no onions and get onions…yuck. Now imagine that kind of thing happening at a place you're going to spend the majority of your week. You want your expectations to match reality.

Onboarding starts the second you come in contact with a potential employee. By making sure every communication and touchpoint is clear and accurate, you can start things off on the right foot from the get-go. However, if you have recruiters promising things that aren't true or managers miscommunicating to potential hires, you're going to end up with mismanaged expectations.

These miscommunications aren't always malicious. Some recruiters may not know how things work on specific teams. Some managers may overpromise without thinking about official company policies. On both sides, we're often on our "best behavior" during interviews, and we want to focus on how great the company is. However, make sure job descriptions and job listings are clear—and ensure that anything that might not be clear is addressed in interviews. Do they know before they onboard what they'll be expected to do? Do they know the job benefits and how they'll work? Do they have a basic schedule for their first day? Asking yourself these questions will help you manage expectations.

The estimated average replacement cost of a salaried employee is ½ to ¾ of their yearly salary. You don't want to lose them in the onboarding process.

Lack of Clarity

"Huh?"

Make everything as clear as possible. Without knowing at least a few responsibilities and how to accomplish them, employees will feel lost amidst the firehose of information on their first few days.

The saying goes, "A dull pencil is better than the sharpest mind." Even the smartest human is going to be overwhelmed by the amount of information they learn in the first week. Make sure you have an available employee handbook that clearly outlines policies and other office information. See page 14 for our First Week Cheat Sheet.

Not Providing the Necessary Supplies

"I think there might be one in a closet somewhere."

Have you ever started a job and not had a desk or a place to put your stuff? Sounds like the bare minimum requirement, but it happens. We've even heard of some companies sending a new recruit home for the day because of their lack of preparedness. They may enjoy the time off, but you're wasting a valuable shot at a first impression.

This might sound like a no-brainer, but it needs to be said: think ahead to what supplies they might need to do their job. Do they need a computer? Do they need specific programs on that computer? Can you set up their emails and logins for other programs they need before they get there so all they have to do is sign in and get to work?

Nothing increases frustration and decreases productivity like someone not having what they need to do their job. When in doubt, ask new employees during their first week if there's anything else they need. It's your job to help them do their work to the best of their ability, and you can do that by making sure they have what they need.

✱ *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!*

Lack of Recognition or Appreciation of Fresh Perspectives

"Who are you again?"

Recognize people from day one. Maybe they haven't done anything yet, but you can make their experience that much better if you remind them they were chosen over many other candidates. Remind them how excited you are to have them. Brag about them to their team and other teams. They'll feel better about their choice, and you'll feel better about them being there, too.

Recognize that new employees are bringing talents and energy that didn't exist at your company before. Because of their unique, new, and diverse perspective they'll add as much to your company as you let them. Give new hires the ability to audit current processes and offer improvements they think might be helpful. Not only does this improve your company, it gets buy-in from new employees. Consider how their background can fill in gaps you have on your team. Encourage anyone who is new to speak up in meetings. They may not be sure what to say at first as they get used to things, but establish that you want to hear their ideas and insights.

Expecting Immediate Know-How

"You'll figure it out."

Say you hired someone with 30 years of experience. Awesome, they must know everything, right? Wrong. Even if they are great at their job and come with an awesome skill set, they still don't know how things work at your company. People come in eager to work, but might be overly cautious about what they can and can't do.

Orientation and training are key. Poor training can lead to mismanaged expectations on both sides—and big feelings of anxiety. If someone isn't clear about what their role is, they won't know how to perform it.

The questions you could ask yourself about what they might not know are nearly endless. The key is to establish a culture where people feel comfortable asking questions without looking dumb. Make room for people to ask, "how do things work here?" without feeling insecure.

Part II

How to KEEP a New Hire

What To do.

Here's what the first ten days at a company could look like:

BEFORE Day 1: Think ahead.

Make sure you set expectations that will be met. Are you or your recruiters making promises that aren't true? It's going to be a shock to the system on an employee's first day if they learn the work from home, PTO policies, or benefits are not what they were previously told they would be.

Get them excited about possibilities. Most people like to look forward to something. Get your new employees excited about their future at the company. Spend extra time with them in the beginning helping them catch the vision of your company and all the possibilities for them to contribute and grow.

Think about onboarding BEFORE they get there. Do they need equipment you have to order? Do they have a place to sit or put their stuff? Is everyone else on the team aware of how the new person will be fitting in?

Set up their benefits as soon as possible. Make sure you have all the paperwork or digital accounts you need to get their benefits in place as soon as possible. Answer any questions they have—especially if you have younger employees that may have not had benefits through their employer before.

Email them before their first day. Share an itinerary ahead of time of what their first day & week will look like. Send them any paperwork they need to fill out (like the paperwork we talked about above!). Give them clear directions to the office if they haven't already been there.

Onboard employees together when possible. If you can, schedule new employees to start on the same day. It's nice to not be the only new kid on the block, and there's less pressure when you're introduced with other people.

Make accommodations. Ask, without asking for personal details, if there are any accommodations they need. Do they work better in a quiet corner, or in the middle of it all? If they prefer quiet but you don't have space, can you offer them noise cancelling headphones? Do they have any allergies so you can remove anything that might trigger them? The best work environment yields the best work.

Go above and beyond if you can. Make sure you offer not only the necessities, but the luxuries as well. Give them nice pens (you know, something that doesn't come in a pack of 100), a standing desk if they want one, a comfortable chair, etc. If they're on their feet a lot, can you offer shoes, or a stipend to get themselves comfortable shoes? The simple things can go a long way to say, "We're happy you're here working for us, and we're here to make it as easy as possible for you."

OOH! NICE!

NOW THAT'S A WORKSTATION!

THINK OF ALL THE PRODUCTIVITY!

#ORGANIZED

Day 1: Here we go!

Reel them in. If in rom-coms they can manage to go from hating each other to falling in love in just 90 minutes, you can do something similar—if you maximize the first day. Make sure they know (in the chaos of a first day) that you're glad they're there (a first day recognition works great for this!), and that you will make every effort to accommodate their needs.

Greet them with enthusiasm. You should provide your new hires with the warmest welcome possible. Have someone there to meet them when they show up. Decorate their desk with balloons and the supplies they need. You could ask if they have a favorite color or candy and incorporate those into their onboarding experience so they know you took the time to cater their first day specifically to them.

Pro tip: *If you're onboarding remotely, consider sending them a Bonus Box with Awardco. Make custom packages of treats, company swag, office supplies, and gift cards to celebrate their first day.*

Show them how their role makes a difference. Maybe you're hiring someone to come up with company strategy, or maybe you're hiring someone to scoop ice cream.
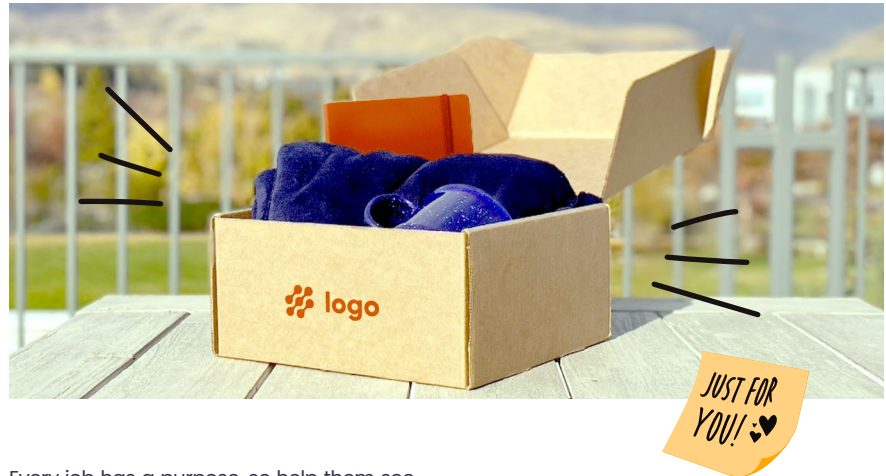
Every job has a purpose, so help them see how they're making a difference, even if it might not be their dream job. Help them see that they can stay inspired even when they're dealing with difficult customers or cleaning up messes (figurative or literal).

Recognize them from day one. Acknowledge what they're bringing to your team. If you were part of the interviewing process and know their strengths, share some of those with the rest of the team. You hired them for a reason, let them and everyone else know it.

Match them with a mentor or "buddy." Managers are often busy, not around, or, let's face it, intimidating. Especially in the beginning. Give new hires

someone else they can talk to, and to whom they can ask the many questions that come with a new job. Consider pairing them with someone on their team that they'll be working with often. Involve teammates in the training process for new hires to facilitate the "first day buddy."

Get them a team jersey. Help them suit up in company swag, like a t-shirt or water bottle, from day one. That way they'll feel like an immediate part of the team.

Don't squash their excitement. Your new employee will invigorate your workforce with new blood. Not literally, but new people who happen to have blood will definitely invigorate your work. New employees may be concerned about fitting in, but continue to encourage them to bring their unique perspective and talents. Appreciate and celebrate new perspectives, encourage them to speak up and to audit your current processes so you can make them better.

＊*Pro Tip: With Awardco you can set up an online store where they can choose their own colors and sizes. You don't have to guess what their preferences are—and it can be shipped right to their door.*

The first few days: Easy does it.

Introduce them to people across the company. Help new employees meet key leaders and top performers. This will get them excited about the possibilities at the company. It means a lot to hear the company story from people who have been there for a long time. Introduce them to people on other teams too so they feel integrated with the entire company.

Help new employees learn names. Make them a cheat sheet with people's names and faces. Provide a map with the names of conference rooms. No one likes feeling lost, so orient them as well as you can to the people and places of their new workplace.

Schedule a team lunch or meet-and-greet. This should be strictly a social engagement—you don't have to talk about work. Have everyone introduce themselves. All the better if food is involved. Food is the great equalizer, just double check they don't have allergies.

Ease them in. Don't expect new employees to be at the same level as your tenured employees, and let them know that. If you can, give a timeline for how long it
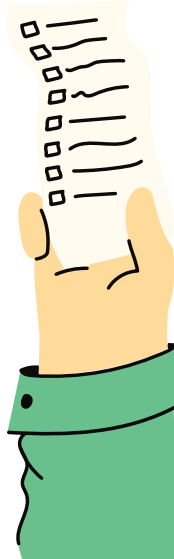
generally takes people to get the hang of things. They're learning so much the first week it can feel extra exhausting in multiple ways, so don't pile on too much.

Give a simple but fulfilling task to start with. Everyone wants to feel like they're contributing, even when they don't quite know what they're doing. Give them a project that they can do while still learning, but that doesn't feel like busywork. Teach them one thing, give them the resources, and set them up to be able to see something through from start to finish. Start with something simple so they can feel successful when they finish it—but not so simple that they feel overqualified.
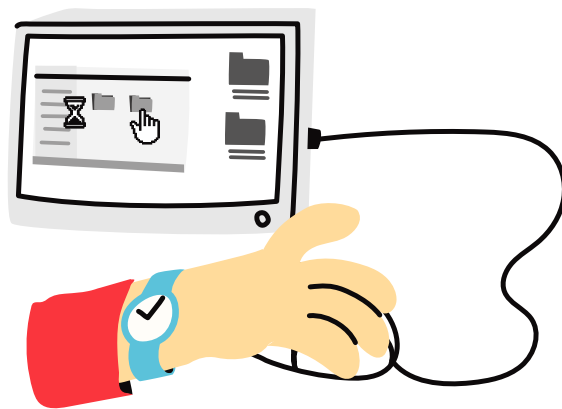
Let them audit your processes. There's no better time to get fresh eyes on some of your processes or projects than a new hire. You can get their outside opinion, before they become an inside opinion. New hires want to feel like they're contributing and making a difference, and you get valuable feedback. That's a win-win.

Teach them your company's mission and values. Whether they're an hourly employee or about to head up an entire department, you need new hires to catch the vision of your company. Show them how other employees have exemplified your company values and how your new hires can best work towards the universal vision. In short, help them see how their work is meaningful and it will mean more to them.

Recognize them. The more recognition, the better. Recognizing your employee often in their first few days will do at least two things: establish that your workplace is a place where people recognize each other often, and make your new employee feel welcome. We may be biased because recognition is our thing, but we also know it works.

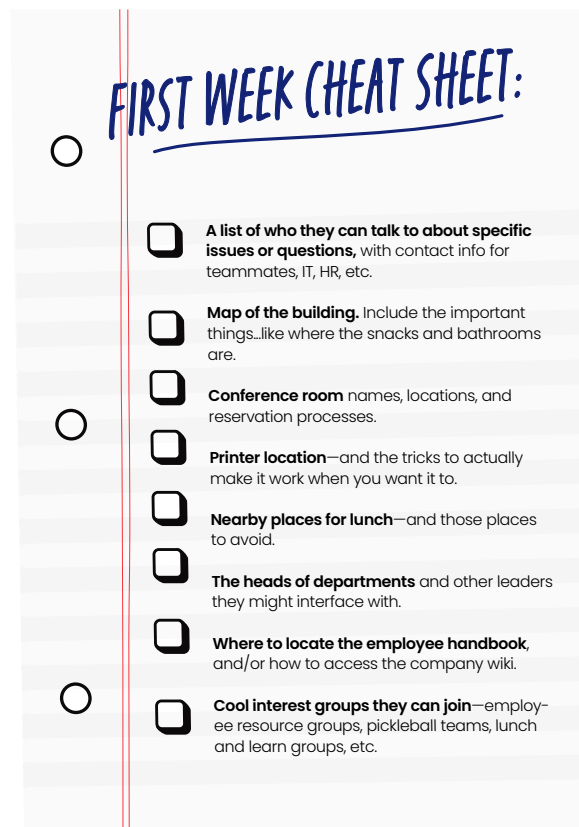*Focus on honesty, sincerity, organization, training, and recognition.*

End of the first week: Are you still with us?

Review processes and programs. There's a good chance some of the information fell through the cracks as they try to process everything they learned in just a handful of days.

Check in and ask how it's going. Are they happy? Is anything not going as they hoped it would?

Recognize something they've done. Hopefully you assigned them a manageable task like we mentioned above. Recognize the hard work and the contributions they're already making. Once they get a taste for recognition they'll want to keep it up.

Here is our recommended cheat sheet, but of course you should tailor it to your company.

FIRST WEEK CHEAT SHEET:

- [ ] **A list of who they can talk to about specific issues or questions,** with contact info for teammates, IT, HR, etc.
- [ ] **Map of the building.** Include the important things…like where the snacks and bathrooms are.
- [ ] **Conference room** names, locations, and reservation processes.
- [ ] **Printer location**—and the tricks to actually make it work when you want it to.
- [ ] **Nearby places for lunch**—and those places to avoid.
- [ ] **The heads of departments** and other leaders they might interface with.
- [ ] **Where to locate the employee handbook,** and/or how to access the company wiki.
- [ ] **Cool interest groups they can join**—employee resource groups, pickleball teams, lunch and learn groups, etc.

Day 10 and beyond: Now we're picking up steam.

Spend a year onboarding new hires… or more. There really isn't an end to onboarding when you look at it as nurturing your employees. Don't forget about them after they move past the "new employee" stage. They need to know you recognize and appreciate their continued efforts.

Keep answering questions. Not every question will come up in the first week. It might not be until a couple months in that they need to learn how to use the printer or how to do a certain project. The longer a person is in a company the more they might feel like it's "too late" to ask questions, so make sure you're available to answer questions as they come up.

Continue one-on-one meetings. Regularly scheduled check-ins allow for an opportunity for questions, continued training, and feedback. Most employees want regular feedback and input from their managers so they can know they're on the right track and have opportunities to discuss any issues or concerns.

Make sure they're recognized regularly in the first year. We have a simple formula to keep up with consistent recognition. Consider setting up reminders to recognize them on day 1, day 10, day 30, on their birthday, and of course, on their work anniversary. This ensures people are recognized regularly throughout their first year. You can break it down more and think about recognizing after the first three months, or, dare we say, even monthly! *Gasp!*

We're not saying to recognize someone just to recognize them, but we do believe that everyone deserves to be recognized and celebrated. Setting reminders can help with this.

WHEN TO RECOGNIZE:

- Day One
- First week
- Second week
- Day 30
- Three month mark
- Six month mark
- Birthday
- Work anniversary
- Whenever they do something awesome
- Holidays
- Constantly

So, now that you've kept them...

Congrats! You had a successful onboarding, and you made it through the first ten days without losing your new hires. Now all you have to do is continue to nurture, train, and appreciate them. When in doubt when it comes to onboarding, focus on honesty, sincerity, and recognition.

If you need some assistance, Awardco will help you stay organized & sharp, and will help you recognize simply, powerfully, and regularly as you onboard your new employees. No matter how you decide to implement recognition in your onboarding processes, remember this key: all you have to do is try. The effort you put in to show you care will be appreciated by your new employees, and will lead to a long, helpful, and mutually beneficial relationship together. And that's an idea we can all get behind, even if it takes longer than a 90 min rom-com might!

Keep that new hire fire with powerful, impactful, simple, and automated onboarding with Awardco.

Learn More

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