10 WAYS AND 100 DAYS TO JUMP-START YOUR NEW EMPLOYEES

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What happens during an employee's first 100 days on the job predicts how successful he or she will be in that role from day 101 and onward. Turnover is highest during the first six months of employment, which can also be the most frustrating as new associates struggle to learn the ropes. When new employees hang in there for the short-term and are able to taste success early on, we find they are more engaged, productive, and able to contribute. Plus, they're likely to stay long-term.

So what can you do to set your newest team members up for long-term success? Start them out with a solid on-boarding strategy that capitalizes on their excitement for their new opportunity, and reduces the risk that they'll become another early-tenure turnover statistic. Try out these 10 strategies for managers to ensure every associate gets a strong start.

1. UNCOVER TURNOVER TRIGGERS

What do your newest hires find appealing about their new jobs? And conversely, what aspects will send them looking for employment elsewhere? You sized up your candidate to determine fit for the role while hiring, but many positions have some latitude for tailoring. Starting a dialogue, understanding expectations—and making accommodations—help drive engagement, and secure it for the long term.

2. REVEAL YOUR "SECRETS"

Don't keep your employees guessing as to what makes you happy. Do you want frequent updates and involvement in projects? Or would you rather your new hire run with a project and check in only when needed? Sharing your preferences not only gets a better result for you, it also prevents a new hire from becoming frustrated when forced to figure it out alone. Understanding your expectations is not something to leave to chance, especially if there's a chance that they won't figure it out before they leave.

3. CLUE THEM IN TO CULTURE

Organizations do an excellent job of providing information about formal culture through things like employee handbooks and orientation. But every organization has an informal culture—a personality that has to be accounted for in order for employees to be successful. This covers everything from knowing a shortcut to beat evening traffic, to understanding the CEO's hot buttons before a critical meeting. A lot of organizations drive this through mentoring or networking, matching a new hire with a high-performing incumbent, or jumpstarting relationships with peers who can fill them in.

Managers should foster the right relationships, because you don't want your best new hire taking performance advice from your least effective team member.

4. SHARE YOUR SELECTION PERSPECTIVE

Why not discuss results from the hiring process with the new hire? We learn so much about people in interviews, and all too often that gold mine of information languishes in a filing cabinet. Sharing why an individual was selected for the job (or, we should add, promoted into the job, if the new hire was an internal candidate) is a morale booster. And when growth areas were uncovered during selection, this discussion is a positive way to kick start development while inspiring confidence.

5. DEFINE THE FIRST 100 DAYS

Development plans often span a year, but for a new hire, a three-month plan is a springboard to engagement. It helps pinpoint what to focus on during a period that's wrought with ambiguity. And it gives your new hire a target to aim for, harnessing the new hire's energy during a time when they're highly engaged and primed to learn.

6. GET A QUICK WIN

What can you offer your new hire that's sure to make him or her successful? Facilitating an initial win is a confidence booster. It's our theory that early career success predicts long-term career success. We know engagement is highest the day a person walks through the door to start the new job, and declines (one hopes just slightly) as the novelty wanes. A quick win boosts engagement, sustaining those important initial highs and combating future lows.

7. DON'T BE A STRANGER

New hires need a connection to their managers, especially early on. It provides opportunities for validation, coaching, and advice. Regular meetings foster this connection, while regularly canceling them undermines it.

8. HAVE AN OPEN DOOR POLICY

There's no one-size-fits-all strategy to onboarding. Some jobs—and some personalities—require a more hands-on approach than others. So how can you tell? The more complexity a role entails, the more involvement required. New hires need to know where to get necessary information, and how they fit into the interdependent web of information exchange that's necessary to get work done. There's almost always a steep learning curve, and access to teachers, coaches, mentors, and managers keeps a new hire from getting overwhelmed.

9. ENCOURAGE REQUESTS FOR HELP

Your new hire wants to impress you. Sometimes this leads the new hire to struggle with a problem that has an easy answer—if only he or she had questioned it. There are a lot of reasons why people won't ask for help, but one reason why they will: they know it's okay.

10. PROMPT NETWORK BUILDING

For information-driven organizations, knowing where to get information and who can help is one of the most important skills to have. You don't know what you don't know, so they say, and that's true here. Effective networks can't be built by chance. Managers should purposely forge connections that give people "roots," and multiple avenues to advice and assistance. Try weaving the formation of a network into the initial plan through meetings with key players.

These are 10 strategies we use at DDI, and foster in our clients' organizations. Time and again, we reap the benefits. New hires get up to speed more quickly because they have the information they need, or know where to get it. They're more engaged in their work, with their teams, and even with their bosses. And they stay. They stay because they have the skills, they stay because they have the will. We hope these tips help your newest hire become, someday, your oldest one.

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