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An Onboarding Guide for IT Employers

Hello, my name is:

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What is Onboarding?

In the fast paced IT industry, making a good first impression when it comes to welcoming a new employee on-board can be crucial to getting them off on the right foot. The purpose of onboarding is to make employees feel connected and informed as quickly as possible. This is a process that should get underway before an employee starts, continue throughout their first three months and continue as long as needed beyond this.

As an employer, you will be able to evaluate technical skills and get an idea of cultural fit during the interview process. However, all this good work can be wasted if an employee is not given an onboarding plan. This makes good onboarding an essential platform for new starters. If done poorly, onboarding can lead to confusion and an unhappy employee, who may well leave before they really begin to add value. A successful onboarding strategy in the IT industry can help you retain top talent whilst decreasing staff turnover.

Before an Employee Starts

As part of onboarding, you can keep the candidate interested by moving through the hiring process quickly and smoothly. One of the main concerns for candidates during this process is that they don't know what it's like to work at your organisation day in, day out. Address this by clarifying their role before they start. Let them know how they will contribute to the organisation and how they'll fit into the big picture. You can even invite them into the office before their first day. Introduce them to their team and the people they need to know before they start, in order to familiarise them with the

environment.

Another way to ensure a new starter has a great onboarding experience is to take a more strategic approach. Put an onboarding plan together in advance, and learn from your previous onboarding efforts. Speak to current employees who have been onboarded and are now fully embedded with the company. Get their feedback on your processes. Based on this feedback you can decide which tactics were the most effective for current employees, and what might have been lacking in their experience. If necessary, switch it up and make changes to your onboarding plan to achieve better results for future employees. Some initiatives you could use in your onboarding process may include: mentoring, a buddy system, FAQ guides or a company handbook.

IT Equipment

IT is often a very hardware-heavy industry. That means that new employees will need all of the devices and tools they require to be in order on the day they start. If you offer a range of options for workstations, make sure the new starter communicated their choices before you set anything up; for example, Mac or Windows or a laptop versus a desktop. It might seem obvious, but ensuring that your new starter's workstation is set up, the necessary software is installed and all of their equipment is ready to use will go a long way to getting them off to a successful start. If you're using a cloud system such as Dropbox, making sure that new employees have access to all of the files they'll need access to avoids the risk of them not being able to find what they need; even if it can be a bit of an information overload at first.

Of course you will also need to provide any login or set-up details for emails, phones, as well as security access. Consider the impact if your new hire is left to chase various people around the office if various software isn't installed. Aside from the obvious productivity issues, your new starter could end up feeling alienated, and more of a hindrance than a contributor. By getting the basics right and ensuring that an employees workstation is ready for use, you strongly increase the chances that their first day will be a positive experience.

Week One

The first day is a crucial chance for you to interact with your new employee through training and orientation. Ensure that the basics are understood. Clarify job expectations once again, discussing the purpose of the position and who they will be reporting to. To keep a new employee engaged, put the initial focus on orientation and socialisation, meeting people and generally getting involved, and leave any non-essential paperwork until later.

For the rest of the week it's a good idea to arrange some fun activities for an employee. When it comes to the company tour, don't be afraid to stray from the norm and have a more social focus. Putting together a welcome package that might include some company branded merchandise is another way you can immediately make the employee feel more at home. In IT, it can be a good idea to include some tech-related items in the package, such as company branded flash drives, headphones or a keyboard, in order to set yourself apart from the t-shirt crowd (although t-shirts are a proven people-pleaser!).

Working in an unfriendly environment can take its toll on everyone involved, so welcoming a new employee into the fold effectively can have a significant impact on their future at the company. If an employee has already been introduced to their co-workers prior to starting, make sure to refresh their memory so that the new starter feels like part of the team. Pictures are a good way to remember names, and can also be worked into the onboarding process. At Pinterest, for instance, every new hire takes a group photo centered on a theme, which then goes into the company yearbook. Encouraging this social atmosphere can result in a much more positive environment, and make new employees feel more relaxed.

The Next 90 Days

After ensuring that a new starter has a great first day, following this experience through over time is key to getting the most out of their skills. Making sure that communication within the workplace is clear and open is the most important step in achieving this. Using upward and downward communication effectively will give new employees the support they need from others within the business. Socialisation, job instructions, and feedback are the key points to focus on when it comes to this. Continue to communicate what needs to be done and by when. Provide regular feedback through meetings and debriefs to keep the new starter up to speed.

Setting up a mentor for the employee can be a great way to help an employee settle in and socialise with new people.
Effective upward communication helps an employee to raise any concerns with their manager, whilst directing technical questions to their mentor or buddy. The key part of making these communications successful is to set up regular meeting times to get your new hire comfortable in talking to you, as well as talking about their performance.

The first three months for an employee is where a crucial part of their development and learning will take place. Creating a plan of measurable milestones that an employee can work towards as part of a Personal Development Plan is a key step in rounding out your onboarding process. Hold one-on-one meetings every few weeks to keep up contact and check progress, and arrange for a comprehensive three-month meeting to evaluate performance and plan the next steps.

Summary

When implemented well, onboarding can be the difference between a happy employee who can fulfil company expectations and a dissatisfied employee who'll look to leave much sooner than expected. Effective onboarding can have a significant impact on staff retention, as well as protecting and enhancing your employer brand. The IT industry and technology scene is constantly changing. If you are having difficulty onboarding technical talent and are in need of some guidance, download our Sourced Onboarding Checklist here, or get in touch with one of our specialist IT Recruitment Consultants.

Sourced Onboarding Checklist

Before an Employee Starts

- Clarify the employee's role, duties and expectations ☐
- Set up their workstation and access permissions ☐
- Get the new starter familiar with the company and team ☐

First Week

- Introduce them to a buddy/mentor ☐
- Give them an initial assignment ☐
- Meet at end of first week to discuss progress ☐

First 90 Days

- Put together a Personal Development Plan ☐
- Continue to check progress and milestones over time ☐
- Have a final meeting at the end of the 90 days to evaluate their performance ☐