

# **7 BEST PRACTICES FOR ONBOARDING**

**EXPERT TIPS FROM**  
**HR UNPLUGGED**

# 7 Best Practices for Onboarding: Expert Tips From HR Unplugged



## HR Unplugged Onboarding Playlist

**EPISODE 17:**  
**5 Simple Metrics for Onboarding Success**

**EPISODE 19:**  
**How to Make Employee Onboarding a Top Priority**

**EPISODE 38:**  
**Losing New Hires? Your Onboarding Process Might Be the Problem**

Onboarding is a critical piece of the employee experience—maybe even the most important part of the employee journey! With the average tenure of US employees sitting at **just above 4 years**, HR leaders and teams are under tremendous pressure to maximize their investment in new hires and prevent costly turnover.

When new hires rate their onboarding experience as “exceptional,” they are **2.5x more likely** to consider their place of work “extremely satisfying.” The opposite is also true—when onboarding doesn’t go well, **only 1/3 of new hires** feel ready for their roles, creating unsatisfied employees who don’t ramp-up quickly.

**16% of the employees** who quit their jobs do so in the first week and 17% quit within the first month. A better onboarding process helps reduce unnecessary turnover.



Ready to upgrade your onboarding process with lessons learned from the experts? We’ve rounded up the top seven onboarding best practices we learned from HR Unplugged last year.

**Check out the podcast for even more learnings!**

# The Top 7 Onboarding Best Practices from HR Unplugged

## 1. Include Job-Specific Onboarding

Most companies **get corporate onboarding right**, spending less time on paperwork and more time introducing new hires to the company's mission, vision, and values. But the majority of companies fall behind in one key area: job-specific onboarding. When onboarding is limited to information about the business as a whole, new hires miss out on key training and details that help them get up to speed and provide value quickly.

Job-specific onboarding is really where the employee experience is solidified. **More than 20% of employees** who quit their jobs say they expected more effective training. For those who do have a positive onboarding experience, **80% continue to hold their organizations** in high regard.

Onboarding must go beyond HR, and that work rests on the shoulders of hiring managers.

**23% of employees** who quit their jobs say they wanted clear guidelines about their responsibilities. Job-specific onboarding is critical for new hire success.

**33% of new hires** say they want their manager or direct supervisor to be the one to show them the ropes at their new job.

### KEY QUESTIONS TO ASK ABOUT JOB-SPECIFIC ONBOARDING:

- Who inside the organization is responsible for job-specific onboarding?
- Are hiring managers getting the support they need from HR?
- Do hiring managers know what to do to deliver a high-quality onboarding process?
- How can you create a team of onboarders inside the business to do meaningful, role-specific training?

### Bonus tip #1

Onboarding should be longer than just the first week. Consider implementing an onboarding process spread out over new employees' first few weeks to give them a strong ramp-up period and acquaint them with your company culture.

## 2. Get Clear on What Success Looks Like for Each New Hire

The next step in ensuring a successful onboarding process is getting clear on what success looks like for each new hire. Developing a roadmap for the first weeks of employment can set new hires up to provide real value.

Encourage managers to create a plan and check-in schedule for the first 30, 60, and 90 days. The employee should be responsible for the next set of plans that might cover 6 months, 9 months, or the anniversary of their hire date. If HR, the new hire, and the hiring manager can agree what success looks like for these milestones, everyone is more likely to be successful.

If you're struggling to get clear on how quickly a new hire should ramp up or what their responsibilities should be once they start, it's time to look at the recruiting process and what was outlined in the job description. HR and hiring managers should be in lockstep from the beginning to find the right new hire for the team.

#### KEY QUESTIONS TO ASK ABOUT NEW-HIRE SUCCESS:

- What do you expect the new hire to accomplish in the first 30, 60, and 90 days?
- What tools or software will the new hire need to be successful?
- Who does the new hire need to meet to do their job successfully?
- What did you promise in the job posting, and how do you deliver on that?

#### Bonus tip #2

Build a better handoff between corporate onboarding and department onboarding. A good handoff should include:

- A scheduled meeting at the end of onboarding where the new hire meets and talks with their new manager (e.g., a lunch meeting or a 1:1)
- A clear set of expectations about what the new hire's responsibilities will be in their role
- A specific plan about what success looks like for the first 30, 60, and 90 days on the job

### 3. Survey New Hires on Job Satisfaction

It's clear that onboarding is important for your business, but if you don't know how to measure your process's success, HR leaders can be left feeling unsure if their onboarding programs are actually working.

Here's what we know:

- Happy employees are more productive (in fact, they're **12% more productive!**).
- When employees forge strong bonds with their peers at work, they're **more likely to feel happy at work.**
- Job satisfaction **improves employee retention** and it **boosts individual performance.**

To get clear information on how happy your employees are, collect anonymous survey data and open-ended feedback. You can do the same with new hires—surveying them about their onboarding experience and their readiness for the new job.

#### KEY QUESTIONS TO ASK NEW HIRES WITHIN THE FIRST 7–14 DAYS:

- Do you feel welcome?
- Are you proud to work at this company?
- What would you recommend we change about onboarding?
- Do you feel prepared for your new role?

#### KEY QUESTIONS TO ASK NEW HIRES WITHIN THE FIRST 30 DAYS:

- Do you feel comfortable using the systems or programs you need for your role?
- Do you feel the training you've received for your role has fully prepared you and set you up for success?
- Do you see yourself working in this role/at this company for the next 2 years?
- **On a rating scale:** I rarely think about looking for a new job at another company.
- **On a rating scale:** This company is motivating me to go beyond what I would in a similar role elsewhere.
- **On a rating scale:** I understand and align with the company's mission, vision, and values.
- **On a rating scale:** I understand how my role impacts the company's mission, vision, and values.



### Bonus tip #3

Surveying new hires is a great way to understand how successful your onboarding process is. But don't forget to survey hiring managers to round out your data collection. Use a hiring manager survey to find out if new hires are adding value as expected and are prepared for their job (i.e., Did you hire the right person, and is the onboarding process working?).

#### TWO KEY QUESTIONS FOR HIRING MANAGER SURVEYS:

- Would you enthusiastically rehire this person for the role?
- Do you feel like this person is at, above, or below the qualifications for the job

## 4. Track Time to Productivity

Time to productivity (TTP) measures how long it takes a new employee to become fully integrated with their team and to be fully functional in their role. Onboarding should help accelerate this process so you are delivering new hires that are ready to hit the ground running.

#### USUALLY, MEASURING TTP INVOLVES A COMBINATION OF TWO KEY THINGS:

- Objective benchmarks—a clear outline of what success looks like
- Subjective assessments—how well your new hire is doing

Sales roles offer an easy example. You might expect a new sales rep to hit their monthly goals and work independently within their first three months on the job.

#### IF YOU'RE JUST STARTING TO MEASURE TTP, CONSIDER THESE METRICS:

- Quota
- Number of projects or tasks completed
- Goals accomplished

Don't forget to include a subjective assessment from the hiring manager (and possibly from other peers on the team).

Gallup found that many businesses **misunderstand the purpose of onboarding**. Most companies treat onboarding as a one-time orientation instead of as a strategic process to get employees up to speed and integrated into their roles, teams, and the organization.

## 5. Measure Voluntary and Involuntary Turnover

As your company grows, it's critical to track turnover rates to see what's working for employees and what's not. **More than 50% of organizations** agree—strong onboarding directly improves employee retention.

If you see a spike in voluntary turnover, you should take that as a sign of trouble. It's possible you have a recruiting problem. Consider asking: are you hiring candidates who are unqualified for your needs or are a poor culture fit?

#### KEY METRICS TO REVIEW IF YOU SEE AN UPTICK IN VOLUNTARY TURNOVER:

- Employee satisfaction
- Employee engagement
- Employee morale

**52% of employees** who voluntarily leave their jobs say their manager could have done something to prevent them from leaving. Watch for key signs that employees are unhappy (survey results, attendance, performance issues, low scores on onboarding effectiveness, etc.).

## 6. Provide Performance Management for Managers

It might be hard to see the connection between performance management and onboarding upon first glance, but for organizations that are committed to reducing turnover and improving the new-hire experience, it's critical to review the turnover rate for each manager. If you find that the rate is high for a specific manager, that's a red flag that needs immediate attention.

Plenty of research proves that **employees leave poor managers**. Because of this, an employee's relationship with their manager is critical to their satisfaction with your business and engagement with your mission. By spending time identifying and improving manager performance issues, you should see a direct ROI in lower turnover and higher performance from the team.

Consider analyzing your strongest managers to see what they're doing right. Identify what's working and what you can replicate, and train other managers on those best practices.

### KEY AREAS TO TRACK FOR MANAGER PERFORMANCE:

- Turnover rate
- Employee satisfaction on the team
- Productivity
- Employee engagement on the team
- Rate of advancement

### Bonus tip #4

Many employees rely on work as their community.

- **87% of employees** hope to make a friend at work.
- **86% of employees** appreciate support from an onboarding buddy.

One way to help new hires create close bonds with coworkers is including introductions during the onboarding process to people they will work with cross functionally. Consider including this as part of the first few days or in the handoff process with the hiring manager.





## 7. Implement Other Best Practices for Onboarding Success

Consider these final three ideas to enhance the success of your onboarding process:

### ASSIGN A MENTOR TO EVERY NEW HIRE.

- **17% of employees** who quit their jobs say that a friendly smile or helpful coworkers could have persuaded them to stay in their jobs.
- **56% of new hires** say having an onboarding buddy or mentor is one of the most important factors in getting them up to speed and helping them contribute to their new team.

### PRIORITIZE A STRONG RELATIONSHIP WITH IT.

- Ensure a smooth first day on the job for new hires by building a better relationship between HR and IT. Computers and other equipment should be prepped and ready to avoid any hiccups for new hires on the first day.
- Survey new hires as they get comfortable on the job to find out what other tools or hardware they need to be successful and efficient. Allocate resources and coordinate with IT to deliver those tools so your employees can be more productive.

### BUILD A SPECIFIC ONBOARDING PROCESS FOR REMOTE EMPLOYEES.

Ask yourself the following questions about onboarding remote employees:

- Do you have a remote onboarding plan as well as an in-person onboarding plan?
  - Is it a hybrid plan?
  - How are they different?
- Think through how remote employees start their new job. If flying new hires out to meet their team in-office is in the budget, consider adding this to your onboarding process. For others, get clear on what communication tools are important (what channels they need to be added to) and facilitate introductions to make the onboarding process easier for everyone.

Learn more about onboarding and other HR topics by listening to **HR Unplugged**.



# Smarter Outsourcing. Scalable Technology. Better Business.

ArenaCX is the global marketplace platform where companies build, sustain, and scale their CX operations.

[Schedule A Meeting](#)

[See How It Works](#)

