

Here's What Companies Are Doing Wrong When Hiring and Ways to Fix It

When you hire a new employee, usually a few weeks pass before that person's first day at the office. Then, on day one, the newbie gets a crash course. It can be a bit of a chaotic nightmare for both the employee and the employer.

A point person or two might be responsible for making introductions, setting them up with their desk, computer and login information and getting them squared away with the necessary paperwork. (Bonus points if they make a corny joke about how much fun filling out all the forms will be.)

If this is how your company onboards employees, you're already doing it wrong, even before that first day, according to Brad Goldoor, Chief People Officer at Phenom People, a platform that connects job seekers with companies recruiting talent. That's because you've neglected a crucial stage of the onboarding process: preboarding.

Preboarding is the interaction a company has with its new hires "from the time the offer letter has been signed until their first day," says Goldoor. "That could be anywhere from two to six weeks, depending on the company." This might include sending the employee welcome notes or videos, information about benefits transfers or even getting that pesky onboarding paper out of the way remotely.



These early touchpoints are crucial today, given the low unemployment rate and high competition for talent, Goldoor explains. A staggering 50 percent of all employees who resign from their jobs will receive a counteroffer, so it's important that the pull of a new opportunity is enough to silence any second-guessing or "counter that counter," as Goldoor puts it.

Getting new hires excited and invested in their new roles as early as possible, he contends, is a way to boost loyalty in a world where one-fifth of employees quit a new job within 45 days.

"It's a first impression of the company," Goldoor says. "That time period is critical to get them engaged and ramped and rolling so that they're contributing as quickly as possible."

Phenom People has measured the effectiveness of preboarding firsthand and can speak to what's at stake if companies bypass this step. Phenom People checks third-party sites Glassdoor and Comparably for crowdsourced data based on its employees' reviews in the aggregate. (About 35 percent of its employees submit anonymous feedback via these sites.) From this information, Goldoor says Phenom People has found a direct correlation between preboarding and retention. The company also estimates that preboarding saves

three weeks of each new hire's on-the-job time, because so much paperwork and education happens prior to day one.

For those looking to improve their own preboarding processes, here are some tips from Goldoor.

1. Educate them.

There might be some publicly available information about your company available online, but the preboarding period is your opportunity to help shape the narrative and save new hires the hassle of tracking down that information themselves. You might consider sending press releases or other existing content that provides an overview of your company's mission and recent accomplishments.



Phenom People sends videos to its new hires to get them up to speed on company values, products and more. A company looking to replicate this strategy might create new videos for each candidate, for a personalized touch, or, if that isn't sustainable in a larger organization, create materials that are more standardized.

"Time those every several days so that there's constant communication and education," Goldoor says of the frequency with which you should send them. Plus, that way, you avoid dumping everything on the new hire at once.

2. Answer burning questions.

When someone is in the process of switching jobs, they're likely busy tying up loose ends at their old gig, preparing for the new one, traveling or tending to personal matters if they have any time off between the two, getting benefits transfers figured out and more. It can be a hectic time, but preboarding can streamline some of the tasks on a new hires to-do list.

To help the transition go more smoothly, Goldoor advises that along with traditional onboarding paperwork, sending information to the candidate about what they can expect when transferring their 401(k) over to the new company, what the insurance coverage will entail and more. He even suggests sending over a list of restaurants or recommended lunch spots near their new office, anticipating all of the odds and ends the new hire is likely scrambling to figure out.

3. Make sure it's more of a help than a burden.

What you don't want to do is give your new hire a daunting homework assignment during an already stressful transition period, Goldoor warns. The goal of preboarding should be to get

them excited about their new gig, not to make them feel like they have to start their new job before their old one wraps.

That's why, with any educational materials, Goldoor says it's best to "keep it pretty high-level" and not "go too deep on technical aspects."

Instead, give them some insights into the tools and systems they'll be using on the job, or what a day in the life of someone in their position looks like or the work cadence they can expect on their team.

When you personalize these materials by department, for instance, a way to make reviewing them less of a chore and more of a means of generating excitement for the new role is to "start educating them on what their department goals might look like," Goldoor says, "and specifically how they'll contribute to them, so that they can start to get a sense of what their contribution will be when they get here." You might also let them know what certifications are available within the company or department or what tools they'll be working with.

4. Make some personalized gestures.

The information above might be helpful, but a personal touch can make a new hire feel like part of the team before they ever arrive at their desk.



"We send a physical letter welcoming them to the company signed by the co-founders or the CEO," Goldoor says of Phenom People's approach. "We also send everyone a packet of the business cards of all of the members on their team, and they all write a handwritten note on their business card."

Phenom People also sends company swag ahead of time, including a T-shirt to be worn on day one (which sends the signal that it's the person's first day), plus personalized gifts, which may include the new hire's college team pride or favorite candy. (Manhattan-based company Updater told *Entrepreneur* last summer that it does something similar, sending a survey to new hires to learn about their likes and dislikes, then assembling a first-day care package.)

Finally, Phenom People reaches out to each new hire's emergency contact (specified on the paperwork they've completed during preboarding), asking the contact to capture and send a quick video welcoming their son, daughter, parent, partner, friend, neighbor, etc. to their new job. Phenom People plays the unedited video for the new hire during their first day.

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