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5 Best Practices for Onboarding and Training Remote Workers

Maintaining a productive and connected workforce in 2020 has been a challenge for organizations and their business leaders. A primary reason for this struggle stems from the fact that the workforce is so much more distributed than ever before. Many of us are, for the first time, attempting to overcome the complexities of onboarding new hires that are fully remote.

New hires are just that: new. They do not know your processes yet, they're unfamiliar with corporate policies, they don't know who is responsible for what and who to go to when they need something. For someone just starting that can be quite intimidating. For someone without physical proximity to colleagues, it can be even more difficult.

While many organizations already had remote hiring onboarding programs, some may still lack cohesive direction. Some focus on legal and security policies, not actual role based specific trainings; others require new employees to jump back and forth between HR and other corporate systems to complete a task; still others are ambiguous in terms of progress tracking and due dates. That needs to be addressed and rectified to ensure new employee success and satisfaction.

Why is onboarding so monumentally important? Did you know, **according to Forbes**, that replacing a "quitter" can cost anywhere from $3k to over $18k? Moreover, up to 20% of new hires quit within the first 45 days! Let's dive into some key best practices that can help improve your onboarding program and get your employees productive faster.

1. Shift Your Perspective

Take a step back and look at your overall onboarding process from the eyes of the end users. Often, hiring managers and HR focus on where they need their new employees to be in terms of role proficiency and familiarity with the organization. While you should have that goal in mind, it's also important to understand onboarding has a lot of moving parts. It is prudent to understand what the process is and develop a vision for what it should be. Maintaining focus on creating the best experience to your new hires will benefit everyone in the long run.

2. Create an Onboarding Step Plan

One of the best ways to make onboarding and training easy for remote workers is to provide a transparent and digestible overview of the entire process, from start to finish. First, look at the end goal (an energized, knowledgeable new hire who understands the business and their role in it) and reverse engineer what needs to be done and in what order. Make sure that the plan is personalized to the role and any other important criteria (e.g. location, department, etc.). The more personal the experience, the quicker and easier it becomes. Solicit information from other members of your team regarding the technologies they're using, where they store content, resources and information, along with anything else that would be important for a new hire to know. Deliver that information digitally in the clearest way possible.

3. Develop a Curated Resource and News Center

If you already have a resource and news center for your employees, great! To take it to the next level, personalize it to each individual employee and watch their productivity and engagement increase. New hires need resources and news specific to them. Information overload is real; and for someone who doesn't have a grasp on the lay of the land yet, it can be really difficult to determine what's for them and what's not. Set up a center that offers relevant content and news specific to where they are in the onboarding or training process. Make it specific to them and their role, not for a general tenured employee. Taking this approach will ensure they know where to find what they need, helping them be productive, faster.
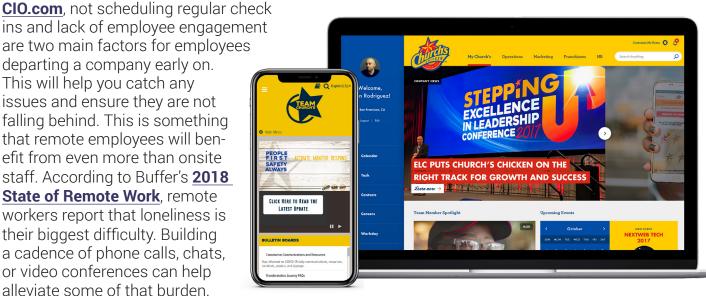
4. Build an Onboarding Team

New hires will need direction, guidance, and support from multiple people within your organization. This is especially true for remote employees who might work in different timezones than their immediate peers. Do NOT try to do this alone, because it truly takes a village. Whether you are in HR or the hiring manager, work together to figure out who should be on those teams. It's helpful to identify a primary contact in finance, HR, and in each new hire's respective business unit. Bill Peterson, a senior sales training executive at Litmus, suggests assigning new hires an onboarding "buddy" and a team mentor. He defines the buddy as someone who is onboarding at the same time and can be co-responsible for their fellow new hire's step plan. The mentor is someone on the new hire's team who they could go to for anything related to their work world. The main point being, make sure your new employees are supported and have the guidance they need. Again, this is to get them more productive, faster.

5. Set Check in Points

You have your new hire step plan, your content and news center, and you have your onboarding team, what's next? Set up check ins to see if your new employee(s) is progressing as needed. **According to CIO.com**, not scheduling regular check ins and lack of employee engagement are two main factors for employees departing a company early on. This will help you catch any issues and ensure they are not falling behind. This is something that remote employees will benefit from even more than onsite staff. According to Buffer's **2018 State of Remote Work**, remote workers report that loneliness is their biggest difficulty. Building a cadence of phone calls, chats, or video conferences can help alleviate some of that burden.

Where technology can support your plan:

With an Employee Experience Platform like Akumina, you can bring your new strategy to life. You'll have the ability you to create a digital front door that is personalized to each new hire and communicate everything that will be relevant to them in the next 30, 60, and/or 90 days. This can include all the content, information, resources, and news that is important to them during this time (including direct access to their onboarding team), without any unnecessary digital distractions in a centralized, single pane of glass dashboard.

Beyond that, you can develop and deliver a step plan for any role or hire that includes a tailored-to-the-individual digital checklist of required tasks and trainings. Moreover, with the Akumina solution, you can set check in points accompanied by direct alerts to an onboarding/training team based on either a specific date or completion of tasks. Relevant content pertaining to where they are in their onboarding can be automatically delivered along with anything else needed to continue their progression. This will allow you to report on the progress of an employee and determine if they are on track or if any intervention is needed, ultimately helping your employees meet their goals and producing for the company, faster.

While your digital workplace may not entirely replace your physical workplace, it can go a long way toward helping your remote staff feel comfortable, supported, and ready for success throughout the entirety of their employment.

Ready to learn more? Schedule your demo today!

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Akumina is the employee experience platform that empowers global enterprises to quickly create personalized digital experiences that help every employee in every role work smarter, not harder. By offering a customizable, brandable and multilingual platform that seamlessly integrates with leading enterprise cloud applications, Akumina delivers a contextual, collaborative and engaging workplace experience to every user on any device. Akumina's customers include the Whole Foods Market, GlaxoSmithKline, Vodafone, the Boston Red Sox and the Department of Defense. To learn more visit www.akumina.com and follow us on LinkedIn, Facebook, and Twitter.