



# THE IMPACT OF INTENTIONAL ONBOARDING

How does well-planned onboarding boost employee retention and engagement?



# ONBOARDING MATTERS.



Those first few hours and days on a new team create a tone and foundation that is hard to reconstruct after it's been set. **First impressions matter** and are worth careful crafting. But how do you get onboarding just right to inspire new employees from the get-go? That's one of the things we enjoy thinking about, as we marry strategic goals with what makes people fall in love with their organization.

At **Vision Wheel**, we believe that intentional onboarding is critical to a new employee's success and can make or break their chance to reach their potential. When it is designed strategically, new employees are integrated into their teams with their long-term tenure in mind. A seamless welcome decreases the chance of employee discouragement (even during a challenging learning curve) while increasing their feelings of organizational attachment early on in their employee lifecycle.

Basically, time spent onboarding new hires well, always pays off in their longer tenure and earlier productivity.

# Employees take eight months to reach peak productivity but the average onboarding program lasts just three months.

– Harvard Business Review

It's been said that "too many cooks spoil the broth"! Unfortunately, this is the sentiment that perfectly describes the majority of onboarding strategies. And with too many groups or individuals making strategic onboarding choices on their own, new hires end up with a very disjointed first impression. No one is choreographing the effort to fit the scattered pieces of day one, week one and month one into the bigger employee journey. This **disjointed** onboarding sequence can negatively impact the **employee experience** as new hires are all too aware of the (often not-so-subtle) inconsistencies that start to add up.

When onboarding falls short, the costs can be really high, from short-term productivity losses and disengagement to the long-term costs of replacing employees that leave. Then there's the impact employee turnover has on the rest of the team too! But when onboarding comes together in a unified experience for a new employee, the impact can be quite phenomenal – reversing downsides and revealing numerous upsides instead. In fact, intentional onboarding has the power to **sky-rocket** levels of employee engagement.

It costs  
33% of an  
employee's  
annual salary  
to replace  
them if they  
leave.

– Employee Benefit News

88% of  
organizations  
don't onboard  
well, resulting  
in 20% of new  
hires leaving  
in their first  
45 days.

– Gallup

# WHAT IS ONBOARDING?

At its core, onboarding is the **integration** of a new employee into an organization, so that they feel prepared and are accepted as part of the team. It's important to remember it involves both the employee and the new team they are joining. That said, remember that the process starts before an employee even has their first official day! There are several touchpoints leading up to day one that should be considered key parts of any comprehensive onboarding strategy.

'Onboarding' and 'orientation' are sometimes used interchangeably. Orientation fits into the onboarding plan with welcome sessions that help get everyone up to speed on the organization's policies, IT practices, HR procedures and other essentials – like how to get a company key card. Orientation usually lasts for a week or two – whereas the wider, holistic onboarding process should last up to a year, as employees need time to start truly performing depending on their role.

A successful, intentional onboarding strategy is **choreographed**, **considered** and **consistent**. It is owned by the right people who can see the whole process from end-to-end so that a new hire is onboarded by the organization **as a whole**.

The average onboarding time to performance is **6.2 months** for new hires.

– Forbes

Great onboarding happens when managers are **equipped** and **inspired** by their leadership team to oversee an amazing experience.



# THE ONBOARDING CHECKLIST: PRE-BOARDING



Be clear on who does what in your onboarding process!

- Reach out to your new hire with a warm welcome, sharing their start time, your location and an arrival contact – or a virtual welcome link
- Update current team members about the new people joining your team, sharing a bit about them, their start date and plans to meet them
- Get all practicalities ready to go: communicating the remote work protocols, allocating IT equipment, office key cards, etc.
- Prepare a personalized, fun and engaging **welcome kit** that sets the tone around how much you value your new team member

## WELCOME KIT CONTENT IDEAS

- A personalized welcome note signed by your department head or CEO
- A brochure or postcards that define your organizational values and culture
- Office supplies like a notebook, pen and whatever else they might need handy
- Some useful items with your organization's branding
- A fun and personal gift that showcases your culture well
- Box it all up in a way that shows you care (and courier it to them if they're remote!)

# The onboarding checklist:

## DAY ONE

Whether your new hire is in-person or joining a remote team, check off as many of these best practices as you can, and adapt as you go.

- Welcome your new hire!
- Show them their desk
- Introduce them to the team
- Do a walk-through tour of your space
- Give them their welcome kit
- Host a welcome coffee or lunch with your full team
- Plan for a senior staff member to introduce themselves
- Give them a good sense of what week one will look like
- Introduce them to their buddies

### START-UP BUDDY IDEAS

Go above and beyond by giving your new hire several buddies for separate areas or expertise based on your team's gifts and personalities! It's a great way to integrate your new hire – all while stretching your team members and growing their leadership experience. Try these buddies out for size:

- HR buddy: ready to point your new employee to the right page for payroll, policy documents, and help out with all those new office questions
- Business buddy: the day-to-day point person for questions about the new employee's tasks (someone who overlaps with them in their own role)
- Tech buddy: the tech whizz on the team who's able to answer quick questions on day-to-day applications or to guide through the IT process as needed

# The onboarding checklist:

## WEEK ONE

- Daily casual check-ins
- Schedule regular one-to-one meetings with goal setting and progress
- Continue all things orientation and training
- Host an end-of-week team social for the team to solidify new connections
- Introduce the organization's **vision, purpose** and **how** your employee **fits** in

96% of employees feel that one-to-one time with their direct manager is a vital part of a great onboarding experience

– LinkedIn

### VISION AND PURPOSE INTEGRATION IDEAS

Arguably one of the most important questions to answer (in full) during week one is the ever-so-deep question: “why am I really here?”. No, this isn’t about the basics of their tasks with the organization, this is about casting a vision around where the organization is going and exactly how they fit into that vision. Doing this well means that you’ve completed the broader strategic exercises around defining your:

- Job Purposing
- Employer Branding
- Employee Experience
- Internal Campaigns

What to know more? Check out our Vision Wheel Papers on all of these topics at [visionwheel.ca](http://visionwheel.ca).

# The onboarding checklist: **BEYOND**

- Continue checking in regularly – you’ll be surprised how much seems obvious to you that actually takes longer to grasp when everything is new
- Schedule weekly meetings, setting expectations for the coming weeks, reassessing goals and giving space for questions and feedback
- Send an employee onboarding survey to keep honing your organization’s onboarding process (this is often done at the three-month mark)
- Keep those **meaningful, memorable moments** coming, continuing to shape a fabulous employee experience and organizational culture at every step

## TAKE-HOME WORK MOMENTS

You know those moments at work that are so genius, you can’t wait to share them with your people at home? We’re all for creating many more of those. Yes, it takes thought, consideration and a good dose of innovation, but these moments make all the difference in long-term engagement that keeps people glued to your team. Think about what those moments look in an employee’s lifecycle – and make them happen.

# WHAT IS THE IMPACT OF INTENTIONAL ONBOARDING?



Companies experience 54% higher productivity from new employees when they have standardized onboarding

– Harpelund

Organizations with extended onboarding programs experience 34% greater hire proficiency

– Harvard Business Review

Organizations with a standardized onboarding program see a 50% increase in retention

– UrbanBound

And the benefits of higher productivity, engagement, proficiency and retention multiply from there, filtering through an organization from the inside out. Employees that come through a well-considered onboarding process are equipped and empowered to do their work at their best. First impressions done right really do make a lasting impact.

At [Vision Wheel](#), we've discovered there are few things as foundational to overhauling an organization's employee experience as renovating and reshaping onboarding processes with a holistic and imaginative approach. We love seeing the transformation that results from taking this journey well.

As we bring intentional onboarding strategies to the financial, telecom, government, education, consulting and philanthropic sectors, you'll benefit from sharing in the growing list of best practices we're collecting. And we guarantee you're going to be amazed at how far smart onboarding will take you.

How could an [intentional onboarding strategy](#) transform your organization?

**START YOUR JOURNEY OF DISCOVERY TODAY.**





# VISIONWHEEL

Vision Wheel is an internal communications agency specialized in one-of-a-kind employee experiences, result-defining employee education and long-lasting employee engagement.

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