Onboarding With A Purpose:

The Complete Guide To Improving Retention In The First 90 Days Of Employment

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Why A Sound & Structured Onboarding Process Is Critical For New Hire Success

Organizations spend approximately $3,500-$5,000 to replace each lost employee, while also risking the quality of resident care and compromising staff satisfaction due to being short-staffed. There's no other way to say it — turnover is a huge problem.

As the industry continues to struggle with the growing workforce shortage, high turnover and increased competition for talent, revamping the onboarding process to hook employees from day one is more critical now than ever.

According to Amy Hirsh Robinson, principal of workforce consulting firm The Interchange Group in Los Angeles, "Onboarding is a magic moment when new employees decide to stay engaged or become disengaged. It offers an imprinting window when you can make an impression that stays with new employees for the duration of their careers."[i]

However, many organizations use antiquated onboarding processes that fail to set up employees for a successful tenure. The simple fact is, organizations can't underestimate the importance of a sound and strategic onboarding process. You only have one shot at creating a great first impression with a new hire and need to get it right from the very beginning.

"We're all competing for the same talent. When an individual walks in the front door, they need to be treated like royalty. Remember, they are a customer, so this is critical," explains Shelley Szarek-Skodny, CEO, Century Oak Care Center.

In this guide, you will learn modern, employee-centric onboarding practices and the benefits of creating a

structured system for onboarding to successfully manage and engage new hires during their first 90 days.

When Does Onboarding Actually Start?

Onboarding should start long before the employee walks through the door on their first day. Every experience a candidate has with your organization is part of the onboarding process, so HR should make sure applications are simple, respond to candidates quickly and inform them every step of the way during the hiring process. Doing so is crucial for kickstarting employee engagement and building loyalty to your organization.

What Are The Benefits Of A Structured Onboarding Process?

Companies with a standard onboarding process reported nearly 50% more productivity from new hires, according to the Society for Human Resource Management. Increased productivity from a structured onboarding program will pay even more dividends down the line, as nearly 58% of new hires remain with their organization after three years.[i] And,

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> "I like to say we sell at the grocery store over the heads of lettuce. People want to know where their peers are working and why they work there. So, your best sales people are actually your employees."
>
> –Shelley Szarek-Skodny, CEO, Century Oak Care Center

those high retention numbers tend to have a trickledown effect. Not only will satisfied employees stay with the same organization for an extended period of time, but they may also share their positive experiences with their friends and professional network; likely bringing in even more hires.

an organization's ability to create a stable environment for quality care and service. The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) recognize this and have indicated that they will eventually report a community's turnover and retention rates on Nursing Home Compare. Once public this information will be used by hospital discharge planners, families and prospective residents when deciding which community is best suited to provide positive outcomes and quality service.

What Is The Cost Of Not Onboarding?

The biggest cost associated with an unstructured onboarding process is high turnover rates, and this translates into direct financial losses. Since the cost of re-hiring is roughly $3,500-$5,000 per employee, losses add up when turnover takes place regularly within the first 90 days.

Even more costly is the impact to care high turnover can have. High turnover creates vicious cycle that cripples

How Much Are You Spending On Employee Turnover?

It's probably more than you think. Use our Cost Of Turnover Calculator to learn how much you're spending.

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The 4 Pillars Of A Successful Onboarding Program

Organizations should focus on these core areas when building a strategic onboarding plan.

Communication

Keep new hires up to speed throughout the process. Be sure you are communicating with them using their preferred method. For example, most millennials prefer texting to talking on the phone. During the interview, ask how they would like to be contacted.

"Texting and emailing is what it's all about. The workforce out there wants quick quick quick, what are you going to do for me next," says Kristy Kerek, Human Resources Director, Embassy Healthcare.

Once they start, make sure your new hire knows exactly what is expected of him or her and how their performance will be measured. Give them the resources they need to be a high performer in their new role, both as an individual and as a team member.

Resources

Give your new hires the resources they need to be successful — the necessary paperwork, a mentor or a buddy, as well as a comprehensive tour of the community.

Consider putting together a helpful list of resources for specific requests and questions. Also, there are a lot of acronyms and unique terminology used in post-acute healthcare. If someone is new to the profession, provide them with a list of terms they should know.

Have you considered text message recruiting? With the average person checking their phone 150 times per dayii, this is a great way to modernize your community and quickly connect with applicants.ii

Technology/Processes

When onboarding your employees, it's important to consider all of the technology and processes they need to do their job.

When it comes to technology, especially new technology, it times take to become comfortable with it. Try not to overwhelm your employees, but instead slowly integrate it into their job. It may take a few tries for new employees to learn how to use software, particularly given the amount of information they have to remember in the first few weeks. Make sure it's clear that their mentor is there to answer any questions along the way.

Don't forget to gather feedback throughout the onboarding process. You can use this information to refine and enhance your onboarding programs to improve them in the future.

Culture

Company culture is extremely important in the onboarding process since it's the first taste of the fun and rewarding aspect that comes with working at your community. Highlight the benefits and perks your community offers to get your new hire excited to come into work each day.

Make introductions every chance you get and be sure to save some time for your new hire and their assigned mentor to connect.

Since your mission, vision and values are directly tied to your culture, designate some time to go over what those are and how the employees at your community live them every day. Explain how your new hire's role fits into your mission and how he or she can be an active contributor to build engagement and a sense of purpose right off the bat.

Employee Engagement Tactics To Implement In The First 90 Days

Pre-Hire Candidate Communications

Before your candidate begins their new job with you, make sure that you're communicating and engaging them. Once an offer has been made and an employee accepts, you want them to know how excited you are to bring them onboard. Whether it's through call, text or email, share your gratitude and remind them to reach out with any questions.

Stay Interviews

Conduct 15 to 20-minute chats with employees to ask what they like about working at your community, what could be improved and what would cause them to leave. This will help alleviate turnover within the first 90 days as it gives you time to address employee concerns.

"We're a big fan of stay interviews because we want to learn why someone would leave before they leave and we want to get to know every associate," says Tommy Comer, Chief Human Resource Officer, Commonwealth Senior Living. "They're a way to personalize things and engage someone in a dialogue with their direct supervisor to find out what's important to that person and where there are potential sore spots. We like to ask questions like, 'how do you want to be recognized when you do a great job?' and 'what are those reasons you could leave?'"

Use the answers you receive to make changes and improve processes at your organization. Comer recommends conducting regular stay interviews with an employee after they've been with your organization for about a month.

Financial Wellness Apps

Providers can get an instant leg up on competitors by showing their employees – especially the newer ones – that they care about their wellbeing... even outside of work.

Also, new hires may have experienced a gap in income and might need access to earnings as soon as possible -- before the first pay day. Offering access to earned wages between paychecks and other financial perks is a great way to promote financial wellness. When employees feel more financially secure, they're less stressed, perform better and drive the success of your organization.

On-The-Go Schedule Access

Today's workforce wants everything at their fingertips. Give them mobile access to their schedule – including the ability to set scheduling preferences, swap shifts and pick up open shifts. 24/7 access to schedules means employees always know when they work and holds them accountable to their schedule. And, setting clear expectations with your employees at the start puts them on a path to becoming high performers.

Work-Life Balance

Many employees have other jobs and obligations outside of working at your community. As a best practice, work with your employees to create schedules that meet their needs and the needs of your organization. Many providers have even begun implementing shorter shifts or adjusted start and finish times for employees who have more than one job in order to provide flexibility and ensure proper coverage.

Perks, Rewards & Recognition

79% of today's workers would prefer perks over a pay raise. [iii] Making sure your employees feel recognized in the first 90 days boosts engagement and performance.

> "Giving employees a say in their schedule and when and where they work is huge for employee engagement, as is providing equal access and opportunity to pick up open shifts."
> —Lisa Fordyce, EVP of OnShift & Former Senior Housing Operations Executive

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To fairly and equitably reward and recognize employees, use a points-based system that ties in key indicators of performance like on-time punches, picking up shifts and not calling off for a period of time.

Career Development

A career path should be discussed in the beginning stages of an onboarding process, and regular meetings should be set up to discuss progress. Use these meetings to discuss goals and any training or educational sessions they want to attend. By laying out a clear direction for an employee's career path within the first 90 days, it lessens the likelihood of them turning over and gives them a sense of purpose.

"It's becoming more apparent that the earlier you do this when someone comes on board, the more powerful it is," says Tommy Comer, Chief Human Resources Office at Commonwealth Senior Living. "And it's becoming non-negotiable. Our millennial generation expects to grow.

A Secret To Successful Onboarding: Structured Onboarding Surveys

Frequent surveying is an excellent tool to pinpoint smaller issues that could become larger ones and eventually lead to turnover.

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When it comes to employee surveys, there are a few things to keep in mind. First, employees want to be heard – they have ideas, thoughts and suggestions and want to share them with their employers. Second, employers need a systematic way to capture, aggregate and analyze employee feedback. Finally, asking employees for their feedback is a great way to show that you care about you care about employees and can help improve the onboarding process in the future.

Types of Surveys To Consider When Onboarding

New Hire Surveys

As organizations onboard their employees, they should gather feedback from new hires by conducting regular surveys. This will help organization's measure the effectiveness of their onboarding program and address any issues. Start at the end of their first or second week and then on a regular basis as the new hire reaches certain tenure milestones like the 30-, 45-, 60- and 90-day mark. These could include asking new employees to rate the following, "I feel welcome at your community," "I have been introduced to my supervisor" or "I believe I am prepared to perform my job duties."

Quarterly Surveys

As employees move out of their onboarding cycle, it's important to continue surveying to gather feedback as they move into a tenured role. Consider focusing the surveys on areas that can lead to high turnover, such as communication, cooperation and supervisor support. The more employers begin to learn about their employees, the better they will be able to change programs to help increase satisfaction and decrease employee turnover.

> **"Having the right technology in place should be a top priority for organizations. But even more important, you have to make sure your company is adopting it and utilizing it to the fullest. That's when tech can be a real differentiator."**
> –Lisa Fordyce, EVP of OnShift & Former Senior Housing Operations Executive

Quick Pulse Surveys

In order to make improvements, you have to understand the challenges that you face – today. Waiting for an annual survey just doesn't cut it. A pulse survey is designed to quickly gather feedback about one particular area. It can be as simple as how the employee felt about their workday and will help to give you insight into how your employees feel at their community.

Technology: An Onboarding & Employee Retention Game-Changer

Organizations lagging behind in technology may experience higher turnover because today's workers expectations have changed. The right technology can truly be a game changer, especially when it comes to offering employees work-life balance, rewarding high performance and cultivating stronger employee-manager relationships.

How OnShift Can Help

With high employee turnover and fierce competition for talent in senior care, the best way to thrive is by creating a workplace where employees want to work. By fostering communication, work-life balance and employee recognition, OnShift helps providers attract and engage employees, while reducing turnover up to 33%.

> » **Boost staff satisfaction and productivity** with an automated points-based rewards system that tracks and incentivizes employee behaviors

> » **Monitor staff satisfaction and take action** on employee feedback from fast and easy pulse surveys
> » **Promote work-life balance** and best-fit schedules with OnShift's mobile app that puts everything employees need at their fingertips
> » **Help employees when they need it most** by providing access to earned wages between paychecks, so they avoid costly payday loans or high interest options.

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Human Capital Management Software Purpose-Built For Senior Care

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i   Don't Underestimate the Importance of Good Onboarding, Society of Human Resource Management, 2017.
ii Is Text Messaging The New Email for Recruiters?, Recruiting.com.
iii 4 in 5 Employees Want Benefits or Perks More Than a Payraise, Glassdoor Employment Confidence Survey (Q3 2015), Glassdoor, 2015.

About OnShift, Inc.

OnShift's next-generation human capital management platform fundamentally transforms the relationship between healthcare organizations and their employees. Our innovative approach to recruitment, hiring, workforce management and engagement fosters a culture where people want to work. That's why thousands of healthcare organizations rely on OnShift's integrated suite of software and services to dramatically reduce turnover rates, decrease costs and improve the quality and continuity of care. For more information, visit **www.onshift.com**.