

ONBOARDING BEST PRACTICES TO ENGAGE EMPLOYEES FROM DAY ONE



ONBOARDING, BAKED TO PERFECTION

More than just a warm welcome, a great onboarding experience is a strategic recipe for employee success. It connects new hires to your company culture, sets clear expectations, and builds the foundation for long-term performance and retention.

Research shows that nearly two-thirds of employees are likely to leave a new job within their first year after a poor onboarding experience. Only 12% of employees feel their employer gets onboarding right.

For People & Culture (P&C) teams, the challenge is finding the sweet spot between consistency and personalization — ensuring every new hire feels valued and supported while keeping the admin load manageable.

With a thoughtful, structured onboarding plan, you can reduce churn, spark early engagement, and serve up a work experience worth reserving a seat for. Ready to dig in?



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“A successful onboarding program is one that’s **consistent, personal, and embedded in culture.** The first 90 days shouldn’t just be about what you do — it should show new hires **who you are.**”

- **Carlos Osuna Jr.,**
Associate manager, Organizational Learning Design at DoorDash

SETTING THE TABLE FOR CONNECTION & RETENTION

Onboarding isn't just another process — it's an invitation to belong. It sets the tone for how employees feel, perform, and grow within your organization. And like any great meal, the experience matters just as much as the ingredients.

Think of onboarding like hosting an unforgettable dinner party. Success lies in creating an atmosphere that's warm, tailored, and deeply engaging — one where every guest feels seen, supported, and eager to return.

HOTTIP

Begin with clarity. A structured first day shows that you're prepared, and it helps new employees know what to expect.

WELCOME WITH INTENTION

First impressions matter. Setting a warm and intentional tone from the start communicates that each new hire is valued.

A thoughtful welcome — whether it's a personalized email, clear first-day agenda, or even a [lunch voucher](#) — lays the groundwork for psychological safety and early trust.



PERSONALIZE THE EXPERIENCE

Generic onboarding is forgettable; personalized onboarding is impactful.

Tailoring the experience to a new hire's role, goals, and learning preferences fosters engagement and boosts confidence. It's about showing that you've thought about them as a person and want them to succeed.



CULTURAL INTEGRATION

Beyond tasks and tools, onboarding is a chance to connect people to your company's values, rituals, and community.

Thoughtful onboarding gives new hires real ways to engage, whether through [team building activities](#), [social clubs](#), or shared traditions.

CELEBRATE MILESTONES

Recognition keeps momentum alive. Celebrating early wins reinforces that progress is noticed and appreciated — and it makes the experience feel complete.

From public shoutouts to [sweet rewards](#), small, intentional gestures can have the biggest impact.

SET CLEAR EXPECTATIONS

Great service starts with knowing exactly what you're ordering. Articulating responsibilities, performance expectations, and development opportunities at the onset helps new hires dig in with purpose and direction.

Without clarity, even the most enthusiastic employees can feel lost.

HOTTIP

A strong culture is best served with authentic connection — invite them to share a meal early and often.



THE ONBOARDING RECIPE FOR LASTING ENGAGEMENT

Standout onboarding is all about thoughtful preparation. That way, new hires feel confident, welcomed, and ready to contribute from Day One.

PRE-BOARDING:

Offer accepted → Day 1

It's time to set your new hire up for a confident, smooth start before they walk through the door (physically or virtually).. Pre-boarding helps ease first-day nerves, positively reinforces their decision to join, and helps them feel prepared and engaged before the formal onboarding begins.



WHAT'S IN THE PREP BOX

- A personalized “here’s what to expect” email with their first-day schedule
- IT gear, account access, and office entry details
- A starter pack of essentials: employee handbook, benefits overview, and org chart
- A quick-start guide: key websites, setup how-tos, passwords, office Wi-Fi, and more
- An intro to their onboarding buddy or mentor
- A first-day team lunch, pre-scheduled with DoorDash for Business

WEEKS 1-4:

Welcome & orientation

This phase is all about helping your new hire feel grounded, informed, and ready to dig in.

In weeks 1-4, focus on laying a strong emotional and operational foundation to build trust, establish clarity, and spark early connections.

CORE INGREDIENTS

- HR and IT orientation sessions to cover the essentials
- An in-person office tour or virtual walkthrough
- Clarify expectations around their role, goals, team dynamics, and what success looks like
- Regular 1:1s with managers — weekly or bi-weekly — using trust-building prompts like:

“Where can I clear blockers for you?”

“What are your roses and thorns this week?”

“Is the information you need easy to find and access?”

- A list of internal stakeholders, with encouragement to set up intro chats within the first week
- A [team lunch](#), coffee, or [sober happy hour](#), provided through DoorDash for Business.



WEEKS 5-8:

Goals & integration

Time to turn up the heat — your new hire is set to start contributing real flavor to the team in this phase.

These weeks focus on active participation and deeper engagement. It's the timeframe when new hires move from observing to owning, and take on meaningful work, apply what they've learned, and integrate into team rhythms and culture.

MENU HIGHLIGHTS

- Set 30 day goals in weeks 1-4 and review in weeks 5-8
- Assign or check in on a meaningful first project or deliverable
- Encourage active participation in team meetings and brainstorm
- Keep buddy or mentor check-ins in the background for ongoing support
- Host a mid-onboarding lunch or [social hour](#) to bring everyone back to the table



WEEKS 9-12:

Feedback & growth

How's everything tasting? Like any memorable experience, the best way to improve is to gather feedback before the check arrives.

Weeks 9-12 are all about reflection, refinement, and paving the way for long-term success.

MAKE THEM A REPEAT DINER

- Schedule a 90-day performance review to reflect on wins, challenges, and next steps
- Gather feedback from all angles — manager, peers, and onboarding buddy — for a full scope perspective
- Host a “What’s Next?” conversation with their manager to discuss growth paths and development opportunities
- Collaborate to identify growth paths and opportunities: explore relevant workshops, [lunch & learns](#), or certification programs that align with their goals and interests
- Send a brief onboarding survey — feedback is the secret ingredient for continuous improvement.

Include a mix of open-ended questions to uncover what’s resonating and where there’s room to refine, like:
 - “What’s been the most helpful part of your onboarding so far?”
 - “Is there anything that feels unclear or missing?”
 - “What would you change or improve about your first few weeks?”
- Celebrate their 90-day milestone with a small gift, DoorDash gift card, and/or public shoutout



FEEDING GROWTH BEYOND 90 DAYS

Onboarding is the first course in a longer employee experience that flourishes through consistent support, shared purpose, and meaningful opportunities to grow.

The most effective teams keep the momentum with ongoing conversations and intentional, collaborative development. They turn new hires into confident contributors and engaged culture carriers by staying connected and continuing to invest in growth.

By breaking the process into manageable phases and layering in intention, personalization, and community, you're not just welcoming someone to the team — you're laying the foundation for lasting engagement and success.

HERE'S HOW TO KEEP THE TABLE SET

- ✓ Schedule monthly check-ins with a direct team member other than their manager, like casual coffee chats with a side of support.
- ✓ Check in regularly on their learning and development journey. Revisit goals, reflect on progress, and explore new opportunities together.
- ✓ Encourage involvement in employee resource groups (ERGs) to foster cross-team
- ✓ Keep traditions alive — weekly rituals, social events, and public praise or shoutouts help the culture stick



DOORDASH FOR BUSINESS IS YOUR ONBOARDING PARTNER

From first-day lunches to 90-day celebrations, DoorDash for Business helps bring teams together — one meal, one moment, one milestone at a time.

Whether your team is remote, in-person, or somewhere in between, our flexible food solutions help drive (and sustain) employee engagement.

SIGN UP FOR DOORDASH FOR BUSINESS

HERE'S WHAT WE'RE SERVING:



Catering

Feed the whole team with large-format trays or individually packaged meals



Meal Credits

Offer flexible meal budgets your team can use anywhere,



Vouchers

Send one-time meal vouchers for team events, onboarding surprises, or client meetings.



Gift Cards

Celebrate wins or milestones with a scheduled treat — no occasion too small.

