International Onboarding at Eventbrite

A case study by Isabelle Bicaci
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When I joined Eventbrite a year and a half ago, we didn't have an onboarding process dedicated to international hires. Eventbrite is a large company of more than 500 people, but our international teams are much smaller—anywhere from two to forty—and onboarding used to vary widely office to office.

Some international hires would show up to their local office, be handed a laptop, do a session with IT, and then spend the day watching pre-recorded videos. Others would be given ad-hoc team-level onboarding. It wasn't an experience that aligned with company values or the onboarding at our SF headquarters. Looking back at the the three levels of onboarding—company, team, role—new hires at Eventbrite were being thrown in at the role level without an understanding of their place within the company at large.

One way we improved consistency was with new hire welcome letters. As luck would have it, one of the managers I worked with had already sent welcome letters at his previous job. I helped him build out the sections of a welcome letter template, making sure it set expectations and provided necessary information. It was then personalized for each new hire and emailed to them the week before they started. To the hire, it looked like the manager had spent a lot of time preparing a personal email. For the manager, it was a fast, easy way to bring a new team member up to speed.

Today, the local onboarding processes also include a series of phone calls with key departments at HQ. For instance, HR makes sure they fill out their paperwork correctly and understand their benefits. There are also calls to train the new hire on systems specific to their individual role. For remote hires, we work extra hard to anticipate their questions, since they can't just walk over to someone in the office and ask, "How do I use Salesforce?"

International hires also have a video call with our onboarding specialist here at headquarters. She goes through the same presentation that hires at HQ see on day one, which highlights our history, mission, vision, and important stats about the company. If possible, it's best to train someone at the remote office to give this presentation in person.

At Eventbrite, we onboard international hires on Tuesdays to account for time differences. It takes a lot for our IT team to get everything set up for a new hire, and if the time difference means the new hire starts at 3:00 a.m. in San Francisco, that's unnecessary stress for IT. By starting on Tuesday, we give the SF team a full day to get everything in order.

Some hires are also brought to our San Francisco headquarters for onboarding, often in the weeks or months following their local onboarding. When a remote hire comes to train at headquarters, we work with their manager to recommend relevant people they should meet.

We also make sure most of their lunches are scheduled and they have a local buddy. We even offer them a guide to the city if it's their first time visiting. Otherwise it could be intimidating to show up in a foreign country to an office where you don't know anyone.