Effective Inductions

Induction is a process of welcoming and settling a new staff member into your company. It should start once your job offer has been accepted, and usually focuses on the first 90 days of employment, but can last up to a year.

Research shows that there is a direct correlation between how well a new person was inducted and how long they stay in a job. It also helps new recruits get up to speed quickly and start adding value as soon as possible.

All new people, regardless of skill and experience should have a planned induction. Senior hires are often the most expensive in recruitment terms, hard to find, and costly to train, so retention is important. A positive start to the first few weeks can help prevent new people feeling they might have made a mistake in their choice of role or company. The goal is to help them feel settled and productive.

Generally, induction focuses on three core things:

What you need the person to know, eg:	Who they need to know, eg:	How you want them to feel, eg:
• Industry information - Key players/competitors - Relevant associations • Company - Strategy - Policies and procedures - Where to find things (eg, toilets, photocopier) • Division/team - Where the division fits in the big picture - Business plan - Objectives - Reporting requirements - Regular meetings • Role - Where the role fits in the big picture - Key performance indicators - How performance will be measured and monitored • Local environment, eg - Nearest banks, Post Office - Where to eat locally - Best places to park	• Leadership team • Who they report to • Team members • Buddy • Key relationships • External contacts • Others	• Welcome and that their arrival is expected – people know who they are • Prepared for, eg, desk set up, business cards ready, etc • That they have made a good career choice • That it's OK to ask questions or for help • Part of a great team and company • Excited and motivated about what lies ahead

There is usually time between signing the contract and starting on the job. The longer this gap, the more important it is to keep in touch with your colleague to ensure motivation about accepting the role stays high.

How should the first 90 days be structured?

Before you start imparting information, check the basic preparation has been done. A desk is ready and set up with stationery and business cards, payroll details loaded, etc. The best way to ensure the preparation is done is to develop a standard checklist.

It's best to put together an induction timetable before they start, so your new colleague can see how their first weeks and next few months will be structured. They can see the regular contact and support provided until they are fully operational.

Bearing in mind it is difficult to absorb too much information in one go, especially when feeling nervous, it is important to prioritise and stagger the transfer of information. By prioritising the information your new person can absorb the critical things first and build on that knowledge in the coming weeks and months. Regularly checking in to see how things are going will help you to spot any issues and deal with them.

People learn in different ways. Research shows this varies for each of us and is largely dependent on the task.

- Visual – learn best by being shown or reading
- Auditory – learn best by listening/talking through the details/issues
- Kinesthetic – learn best by practice

It may be helpful to ask your colleague how they like to learn when doing specific tasks. Varying the approach is usually the best way to have a positive experience and keep your new colleague engaged. Encourage note taking so they can refer back in the coming weeks and months.

What's a buddy?

Some companies organise a buddy or support person for their new starters. This is usually a person in a similar role or of a similar grade that can help with general familiarisation and provide friendly support. Sometimes people avoid asking questions to the person they report to for fear of appearing silly. A buddy may be less daunting, and can ensure small issues or questions don't derail your new person. First time buddies may need some training in their role requirements (ie, what to tell/show the person, how often to contact them, etc). Being a Buddy can be very rewarding and may also help with the development of leadership skills.

Key performance indicators

It's a good idea to put KPIs in the job description (see 'Resources' for a template).

Ensure you make time to define, document, discuss, and clarify expectations for your new colleague:

- What are the expectations in the first month?
- What are the expectations in the second and third months?
- What do you expect in the first year?

Key Performance Indicator **(12 months)**	**Key Output**	**Measurement Criteria**
Grow sales across the business whilst maintaining margin	*Showroom* – Increase foot traffic, develop and focus team, evaluate product lines and merchandising, increase conversion and average spend. *Key Accounts* – examine product buying history, establish relationships, establish buying potential, develop regular calling pattern. *New business* – Use agreed strategy to set targets for new business development in all sectors and reflect in sales team calling cycles.	• Achieve budgeted sales by 31 March 20XX in line with projected 15% growth on previous year's forecast

Regular communication

Ongoing communication is a key ingredient for an effective induction. A simple question like, "How are you finding things?" is a great way to start a discussion with your new starter. It's important to take the time to stop and really listen to their answer so you can assess the answer properly. It's hard for people to be too transparent when they are new. A lot may be riding on this new role for them, so a considered and empathetic approach is more likely to help you find out about any issues or concerns.

What are they saying?

What aren't they telling you?

How does their voice sound – energised, scared, or flat?

How do they look - bright and enthused, or worried and unhappy?

When dealing with concerns, it's best to consider your options as soon as possible. Some things do go away by themselves but, in plenty of cases, a kind word, an introduction, or inclusion in something, be it lunch or a meeting, can make all the difference to your new person. Leaving issues for too long can mean you are too late. Experience tells us that if someone has had a bad experience or felt miserable early on and wants to leave it can be very difficult to change their mind.

By staying close to your new colleague, you should be able to iron out any issues much more easily than you may if you allow things to escalate. Other questions like "Is there anything you need that we haven't provided?", "What would be of help to you at the moment?", can give you some insight into how you can be effective at supporting their success.

Keep learning

Once your new recruit is settled in and one of the team, it's a good idea to ask them for their feedback on how you can make the induction process even better. They might offer you some valuable insights, or ideas you hadn't thought of.