Onboarding & Training Talent

This course is designed to help firms develop a robust new hire onboarding process.
By the end of the course, you should be able to create your firm's own new hire onboarding process, including supporting documents, checklists, and templates.

Overview:

The initial 90 days of a new hire's tenure with your company is a critical time period. Your new employee's experience in the first 90 days directly affects their long-term retention, engagement, and performance. You've invested significant resources in hiring the best person for the job; to maximize your return on investment, you'll need to develop a strong onboarding process.

Having a thoughtful onboarding process:

- Makes your new hire feel welcome
- Ensures your new team member has the resources they need on Day One
- Makes it easy for the new hire to find the information they need
- Allows your new hire to add value quickly and reduce the time until they are at full productivity
- Ensures your new team member's engagement and long-term success

Being intentional about onboarding your new employee starts long before you make an offer to your top candidate. Every firm should have a standard onboarding process that can be customized and implemented as soon as the right candidate is found.

The high-level steps included in a strong talent onboarding process are:

- **Step 1:** Be in contact with the new team member before their first day.
- **Step 2:** Prepare for your new team member to have a successful first day and first few months.
- **Step 3:** Create – and follow-through on-- a detailed training plan covering the first six months of employment.
- **Step 4:** Make onboarding modifications for remote employees.
- **Step 5:** Gather feedback from the new team member to improve your process and help with retention.

If you're starting from scratch, creating a robust onboarding process can be a significant undertaking, so make sure to dedicate plenty of time when working through this course.

We've all heard the old adage: "You never get a second chance to make a first impression." This is as true with new employees as it is with your prospects and clients. Make it a point to deliver an excellent first impression, and you'll see the benefits for years to come.

Step 1: Welcome the new team member

Imagine for a moment you're an employee who has been with a firm for a long time; let's say five years or more. Something prompted you to explore your options, and you went through an interview process with a new firm. They've made an offer, you've accepted, and after the initial exuberance wears off, the panic sets in. You're leaving the place, the people, *everything you've known professionally* for the last several years, and jumping off a cliff into a pit of uncertainty. *Did I make a mistake? What if I'm unhappy at the new place? What if it's a bad fit, or the job isn't what I thought it was? What if the people or the company isn't as great as they seemed during the interview process?*

Then you happen to check your phone and see an email from your soon-to-be manager with the subject line, "Thrilled!" The short email says, *I just wanted to follow up let you know how excited we are that you will be joining our team. I know you're working with our talent coordinator to finalize your start date and other logistical information, but if you have any questions in the meantime, please don't hesitate to email, call, or text me on my cell at XXX-XXX-XXXX. Welcome to the team!*

In that moment, you know you made the right decision.

The period of time between accepting a job offer and getting settled in the new role can be pretty nerve-wracking for the new employee. You need to make sure you confirm that they made the right decision.

The first part of your onboarding process should be focused on making your new hire feel welcome and *confirming their decision*. Express excitement about them joining the team and the value you know they'll bring to the team and your clients.

Your onboarding process should include a number of different touchpoints that:

- Officially welcome them to the team
- Make them feel valued
- Help them prepare for their first day

At Carson, our onboarding checklist includes a number of specific activities that are focused on helping new team members feel they made the right decision. Download our ***Onboarding Checklist*** as a sample to use in creating your own onboarding process.

Some actions you might want to include are:

- Send a "New Team Member" email welcoming the new employee to the team, asking for a bio and picture to share with the team, and requesting their shirt size for a company shirt.

  Subject: Welcome to {Company Name}
  To: {New Hire}
  From: {Talent Coordinator/Operations Lead}

  Hi {New Hire First Name},
  We are really looking forward to having you join us {this month/next month}!

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We always like to send announcements to our team to introduce new hires before they start. Would you be able to send me a current bio in the format attached, as well as a picture? Anything you have used in the past would be fine.

Also, we have swag we give to new hires. What is your shirt size?
Closer to your start date, we will be reaching out about paperwork.
Feel free to let me know if you have any questions in the meantime!

Sincerely,
{Name}

- Personal email from the hiring manager or firm owner letting the new hire know how excited they are, including their contact information for any questions that come up.

Subject: Excited!
To: {New Hire}
From: {Hiring Manager/Firm Owner}

Hi {New Hire First Name},

{Talent Coordinator/Operations Lead Name} just let me know that you've verbally accepted our offer. I just wanted to send a quick note to let you know how excited I am that you'll be joining our team! Your background in {Insert Details} will be a huge strength to add to our team. I know you're working with {Talent Coordinator /Operations Lead Name} to finalize your start date and other details, but if you need anything, please don't hesitate to reach out to me at {Insert Phone Number}.

Sincerely,
{Name}

- Send flowers or a gift card to the new team member at their home address with a note: *Welcome to {Company Name!} We're so excited to have you join our team.*

- Send an email with first-day logistics to the new hire approximately one week before their start date. Include details about parking, when to arrive, where to go, and dress code.

Subject: First Day Details
To: {New Hire}
From: {Talent Coordinator/Operations Lead}

Hi {New Hire First Name},
We are looking forward to seeing you for your first day! Please plan on coming into the office at 8:30 am. Park in front of the building and use the front entrance, as you have before.

We will give you a key card for access to the building that you can use going forward. We will also have lunch provided on your first day. As mentioned on the phone, we have a "dress for your day" policy. On your first day you won't be in any client meetings, so dark jeans and a professional shirt would be appropriate.

Just a reminder, we will need you to bring in employment verification documents.
Let me know if you have any questions, and we will see you soon!

Sincerely,
{Name}

- Various other calls and emails to touch base on licensing details, questions, etc.

The first step to getting off on the right foot with your new employee may seem simple – and it is! It may be so simple that it's easy to overlook – but making your new team member feel welcome is a critical part of their first impression of your company as an employer, so don't skip it. Next, let's move on to the second piece of the onboarding puzzle – preparation.

Step 2: Prepare for a successful start

Content 2: Thoroughly preparing for a new hire has a huge impact on their overall engagement and how quickly they are able to add value to the organization. Nothing is more of a let-down than showing up for your first day at a new job and finding that you don't have basic essentials like a desk, computer, or notepad and pens. Alternatively, nothing reinforces your excitement like walking in to a fully-equipped workstation complete with a welcome card, company swag, and an agenda for your first week!

Preparing for your new hire can be broken down into three high-level categories: Technology, Workspace, and Training & Integration.

Technology is a huge component of your business, so it's important that your new hire has the hardware, software, and credentials needed on their first day. Create a "new hire technology checklist" that you can share with your IT support so that they know exactly what needs to be set up. Common items on this checklist include:

- Computer (laptop or desktop) that is fully set-up with programs installed
- Docking station for laptops
- Webcam
- Dual monitors
- Phone with direct line and extension
- Headset for phone
- Keyboard & mouse
- Network and printer connectivity
- Email address and calendar
- Logins for CRM and other role-specific technology systems

COACH TIP: You might consider having a master checklist for all possible hardware, software, and programs requiring credentials used in your firm; the hiring manager can then simply mark which items are needed for their new hire so nothing is missed.

You'll next need to prepare your new hire's workspace. Whether the workspace is an office or a cubicle, make sure it is ready when your new hire shows up for their first day. You'll want to add these common workspace setup items to your new hire preparation checklist:

- Computer, phone, and other technology items
- Calendar
- Company brochure
- Value proposition documents
- Informational documents about the company and their role
- Company swag like a shirt, mug, water bottle, and pens
- Note pad, pens, highlighter, post-it notes, stapler, tape, paper clips, binder clips, push pins
- Kleenex
- Trash can
- Chair
- Welcome card signed by team
- Chamber of commerce packet (if new to town)
- First week agenda

COACH TIP: The workspace you create is your new hire's new "home away from home." Just like you would "stage" a house to make it cozy and inviting before putting it on the market, do the same for your new hire's desk so that they get a good feeling about the space on their first day. Make sure it's clean, well-lit, stocked with supplies, and welcoming with flowers, cookies, or other small tokens.

The final area of preparation surrounds training and team integration. While both actually take place after the new hire has started, there is preparation needed to ensure both are successful. This section includes everything from informing the team about your new hire to organizing the materials needed for an effective training program. The goal is to make sure your new employee is welcomed by the team and has a clear plan for what their first 100 days with your company will look like. You'll want to include these types of items on your onboarding checklist:

- Add new hire to the office seating layout and phone/email directory
- Send "New Hire Announcement" email to all employees
- Create 100 Day Plan
- Create new hire first-week agenda
- Select and prepare the "Onboarding Buddy"
- Collect and update onboarding and training materials

There are two items here worth expanding upon: the 100 Day Plan and the Onboarding Buddy.

The 100 Day Plan is, in our view, an absolute necessity for a successful onboarding. This document lays out the new employee's path for training and provides tangible projects and responsibilities the new hire can accomplish. The amount of time a manager takes to create the plan and map out expectations before the new team member starts pays off tenfold. On day one the new hire can look at their plan and know exactly what their manager expects from them, how to go about training, and what tasks they can start working on. We'll cover more about this document in our next lesson, but for now you can download our ***100-Day Plan template*** and customize it for your office.

The onboarding buddy is someone the manager selects to help get the new hire started on the right foot. Their role is to act as a guide and friend, answering questions, checking in, helping them integrate into the team, and generally feel welcome. Use the sample found in our Email Templates resource to send instructions to selected onboarding buddies.

Download the ***HR/Team Member Onboarding Checklist***, ***Manager Onboarding Checklist***, and ***New Hire Technology Request*** for sample checklists you can use in creating your own.

Step 3: Create and execute a detailed training plan

The phrase "Hire hard, manage easy" carries over from our recruiting course: Train hard, manage easy.

The final piece of a successful onboarding process requires both preparation and execution: training the new employee. Prior to the new hire starting, the manager should create a detailed training plan covering the first six months of employment.

There are three resources that are important in your training process: the New Employee Guide, the onboarding checklist, and additional training and orientation materials.

New Employee Guide

The 100 Day Plan, mentioned in the last lesson, is included in the New Employee Guide. The guide covers a number of important things your new hire should know:

- Onboarding buddy (navigator)
- Role expectations
- Core value expectations
- How to best work with the manager
- Scheduled meetings
- 100 Day Plan

The 100 Day Plan lays out the new employee's path for training and provides tangible projects and responsibilities the new hire can accomplish. It should be broken down into three sections:

- Days 1-30
- Days 31-60
- Days 61-100

Common items to include in the 100 Day Plan are:

- Attend new hire/onboarding meetings and complete paperwork
- Get introduced to all stakeholders and familiarize yourself with the office layout
- Meet with each department to understand how they add value to the team
- Understand the new client process and the client experience
- Familiarize yourself with the current client review structure
- Create test service cases and new accounts before moving on to live accounts
- Shadow client meetings
- Complete training on CRM and other technology programs
- Recommended reading and tasks to do during any downtime

Each role in your firm will have different training requirements and every new hire will have a different background -- so while there may be some common items, it's important to create a unique 100 Day Plan for each new hire.

COACH TIP: If you're not sure what to include in the 100 Day Plan, refer back to the job description you created for this role. Look at each activity listed and ask yourself: *What training or knowledge is needed for them to complete this task successfully?*

Use our blank ***New Employee Guide*** as a template to create your own document. We've also included sample ***100 Day Plans for a Wealth Advisor*** and ***Operations Associate*** as examples.

Onboarding Checklist

The onboarding checklist will have a number of items but should closely relate to the 100 Day Plan. As an example, an item on the new hire's 100 Day Plan might be "Get introduced to all team members and familiarize yourself with the office layout." The new hire onboarding checklist should have corresponding items like "Office tour" and "Make introductions." In another example, if there is an item on the 100 Day Plan to complete online training, the manager's checklist should have an item to provide login information for the online training. Here are items you'll find on our sample ***Onboarding Checklist:***

First Day

- Office tour
- Clarify first-week training schedule, including what to do with downtime
- Go over departmental meetings: schedule, agenda, flow
- Provide an overview of the company history, purpose, organizational structure, and goals
- Review job description, 100 Day Plan, outline of duties, management style, and expectations with new hire

- Describe how the employee's job fits in the department, as well as how the department contributes to the company
- Review hours of work. Explain policies and procedures for overtime (if applicable), use of PTO, holidays, flextime, etc.

First week

- Make it a point to debrief each day
- If new hire will be a manager, make sure they understand managerial duties
- Begin training on software programs and other "basics" of the job
- Begin training on company value proposition and processes
- Give them an initial assignment and follow up with feedback. Make it something small they can take ownership of

First month

- Schedule and conduct regularly occurring one-on-one meetings
- Continue to provide timely, on-going, meaningful "everyday feedback"
- Elicit feedback from employee and be available to answer questions
- Explain the annual performance review and goal-setting process
- Check in on occasion with employee and their onboarding Buddy

First 3 months

- Have the employee shadow you at meetings to get exposure to others and learn more about the department/organization
- Take the employee out to lunch to have an informal conversation about how things are going
- Gauge if additional training is needed
- Conduct 90 Day Check-In meeting and do your best to follow up on any feedback that comes out of that meeting

First 6 months and beyond

- Conduct regular performance reviews to continue to evaluate goals
- Continue providing regular informal feedback
- Provide formal feedback during annual review process
- Acknowledge and celebrate employee's personal or professional milestones or successes
- Have a conversation about experience at the company to date (during annual review or one-on-one meeting):

- Extent to which employee's expectations of the role aligns with the actual responsibilities of their role
- Extent to which employee's skills and knowledge are being utilized and ways to better utilize them; what's working, what they need more of, etc.
- Begin discussing the year ahead

- Encourage employee to attend internal and external events
- Meet with onboarding Buddy and discuss how things went and what else would be helpful

COACH TIP: Find a balance between over-training and the "sink or swim" method. You can definitely tell if a plan has been thought out in advance, so your plan should be more than "Shadow Bob and then you'll be starting on your own soon." At the same time, ensure your plan allows your new hire to add value quickly and reduces the time until they are at full productivity. Don't hold them back when they're ready to go!

Additional Training and Orientation Materials

In preparing for your new hire, consider what additional training materials will be helpful to get them started quickly. You might find that you want to create and/or provide materials like:

- Organizational chart
- Company history slide deck
- Company core values document
- Phone/email directory
- Client experience overview document
- List of where to find important documents or resources
- Company brand standards, including logos, fonts, colors, and email signatures
- Phone/voicemail quick reference guide, scripts, and process expectations
- Helpful publications or resources for industry information and best practices
- Books that are core to your service model or client experience ideals
- Thought leaders to follow on social media

Finally, all new hires will have initial onboarding documentation they need to review and complete. These will likely include:

- Employee handbook
- Benefits overview
- I-9 and W-4 forms
- Confidentiality agreement
- Non-solicit agreement

- Advisor employment agreement
- Remote working agreement
- Compliance documents
- Insurance, retirement plan, and other benefit paperwork

Included in the “resources” section of this lesson are some sample training and orientation documents you can use as examples. Keep in mind that employment laws vary by state, so it’s important to check with an attorney in your state before implementing an employee-related document or agreement.

Step 4: Modify your onboarding process for remote employees

Whether due to external circumstances or simply the desire to hire the best person for the job, regardless of location, many firms are beginning to hire and onboard new hires remotely. As we’ve mentioned, employee onboarding is the first opportunity and potentially the most important time to introduce and instill the culture of an organization. Here are some best practice tips to consider making sure that you can more effectively onboard employees remotely.

Set up

- Supply the new hire with appropriate technology and resources. Be sure to plan for extra time if you are shipping the resources to the new hire or arrange a pickup at the office.
- If you are supplying a new laptop, you may need to plan for additional time to install appropriate security and software.
- Prepare an inventory checklist of the resources that you supply and include any technology equipment guidelines.
- Schedule time with your IT professional and the new hire to assist with technology set up.
- If the training manager has not had previous experience with video conferencing, do a few practice sessions in advance.
- Provide the new hire with resources for training on the preferred video conference tool used.
- If you have not yet, move more to a paperless office setup and platforms.
- Update all processes and workflows within the software and platforms you are using.

Communication

- Set daily check-in calls with the new hire, moving to less frequent, but still regular meetings as the new hire is more established in the role.
- Be sure to ask about challenges that they may be experiencing working from home, especially if this is their first time as a remote employee.
- Have a system to track goals, projects and other important tasks.
- Share communication norms with the new hire, such as using video conferencing in scheduled team meetings, or using an Instant Message or Email for urgent questions.

- Consider using a team chat resource like Microsoft Teams, Slack, etc. Set up separate channels for “water cooler” chat, ASAP and general information.
- Set up One-on-Ones with the team and skip level meetings to get the team acquainted.
- Be upfront with the new hire if virtual onboarding is new for the office and ask them to provide feedback along the way that will help you improve the experience.

Training & Orientation

- Use a 100-day training plan; while this is always a recommendation, it is even more critical with remote employees.
- Provide a list of activities and training that the new hire can complete in down time, such as reading, lessons and specific projects or tasks.
- Complete all training virtually via a video conference tools like Microsoft Teams, Zoom, Webex, etc.

Culture

- If possible, maintain a “first day” type of experience, setting up one-on-one meetings and holding a virtual lunch with members of the team.
- Look for ways to connect the new hire to the culture, share with them about the activities and events held in the past and planned for the future.
- Consider adding a few company virtual happy hours or lunches to allow the entire team to come together outside of the regular team business meetings.
- Add a “question of the week” to the beginning of team meetings, or consistent questions like “What were your biggest personal and professional accomplishments since the last meeting?” Making time for “small talk” will help build a stronger rapport with your new remote hire and the entire team.
- Send the new team member a small gift at beginning and/or end of the first week. At Carson we always make sure that new employees have a few pieces of “swag” when they join the team.
- Plan to get together for a team retreat at least once a year, quarterly is ideal, if possible.

Remember, when hiring and onboarding remotely, use video as much as possible and ensure you are intentional about building personal relationships.

Step 5: Gather feedback from new hires

The final piece of the onboarding puzzle is to gather feedback from your new hire. Gathering feedback helps you:

- Improve your onboarding and training processes
- Address issues that might cause your new hire to leave
- Learn more about what went well so that you can emphasize those activities in the future

At Carson, we recommend two separate feedback mechanisms: Surveys and 90-Day Check-In Meetings.

Surveys

The purpose of the feedback surveys is to gather timely, relevant information about your new hire's experience while it is still fresh in their mind. You may also find areas of training that need to be further clarified. Send the survey using a simple online provider, like SurveyMonkey, so you can keep track of responses and trends over time. Sample survey questions are:

7-Day Onboarding Feedback Survey

- Were the details regarding your first day clearly communicated to you?
- Was the time spent with your manager during your first week beneficial?
- Mark all locations you were shown on the tour of the office space on your first day (select
- all that apply)
- Were you shown how to operate the phone, voicemail, and email systems?
- Are there any functions to these systems you feel you do not understand?
- Did you receive an explanation as to the procedure for receiving technical support?
- Were you given an overview of the company history, vision, and goals?
- Were you given an overview of the performance review process?
- Were you given an overview of your 100 Day Plan?
- How could we improve our onboarding process?

30 Day Onboarding Feedback Survey

- Do you feel the training you have received from your manager/department has been relevant to the specifics of your position?
- Is there anything you wish you would have been told about your job or the company during the interview process or the onboarding process?
- Do you think the onboarding process should have been longer or shorter, or was it just right? Who else do you think should have been involved in the onboarding process for a new hire in your department?
- What aspect of your job excites you?
- What aspect of your job concerns you?
- Do you have any other feedback on our onboarding process?

90 Day Check-In Meetings

Check-in meetings are conducted to help managers understand why team members stay and what might cause them to leave. In an effective check-in meeting, managers and a 3rd party ask standard, structured questions in a casual and conversational manner. Most check-in meetings take less than a half an hour. The 90-Day Check-In Meeting should be scheduled during the new hire onboarding process so that they don't get overlooked. Plan on scheduling two separate meetings: one with the manager, and one with an HR representative or neutral 3rd party.

To open the check-in meeting, a manager may use the following (or similar) statements:

- I would like to talk with you about the reasons you stay with our company, so I understand what I might be able to do to make this a great place to work for you.
- I'd like to have an informal talk to find out how the job is going, so I can do my best to support you as your manager, particularly on issues within my control.

Then, ask several open-ended questions that come from a standard set of questions. It's important to listen and gather ideas from the team member about how you and your organization can retain him or her. You may use questions like:

- What do you look forward to when you come to work each day?
- What do you like most or least about working here?
- What keeps you working here?
- If you could change something about your job, what would that be?
- What would make your job more satisfying?
- How do you like to be recognized?
- What talents are not being used in your current role?
- What would you like to learn here?
- What motivates or demotivates you?
- What can I do to best support you?
- What can I do more of or less of as your manager?
- What might tempt you to leave?

To close the check-in meeting, summarize the key reasons the team member gave for staying or potentially leaving the organization, and work with the team member to develop a stay plan. Be sure to end on a positive note. Examples of closing statements include:

- Let me summarize what I heard you say about the reasons you stay at our company, as well as reasons you might leave. Then, let's develop a plan to make this a great place for you to work.
- I appreciate you sharing your thoughts with me today. I am committed to doing what I can to make this a great place for you to work.

Once you've received feedback from your new hire, it's important that you do something with it. Work with the employee and others in your organization to address concerns and provide additional training where needed.

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Summary

Studies have shown that up to 20% of new hires leave in the first 45 days; having a training plan that goes for 3 months makes a big difference in the engagement of new team members. *Preparation and communication is key.* You don't have a second chance to make a first impression, and having an intentional, thorough, and welcoming onboarding process sets the tone for your new hire's entire experience at your firm. Take the time up front to prepare, welcome, and train your new hire – it will pay off enormously in the long run.

FAQs:

- **What if I'm too busy to create and go through a detailed onboarding and training process?**
  - If you're hiring, that means you are busy – that's generally how it works! But if you don't take the time to do it right the first time, odds are your first hire will depart prematurely and you'll be back to square one. So the big things are:
    - Communicate well before they join
    - Make sure they have the desk, technology, and supplies they need on day one
    - Create a training plan by looking at the job description and saying, "What knowledge or training do they need to complete this task?"
    - Be as prepared as possible. Open a word document and start a bulleted list. Add three categories, then begin adding items as they come to mind over the next few days:
      - Training needed
      - Projects they can work on
      - Things to do during downtime

- **How long should I expect my new hire to get to 100% productivity?**
  - How long it takes your new hire to get up to speed depends on the role, the person, and the prep work you did in advance. For many roles, it can take 6-12 months before they are *fully* up to speed, though if you've prepared correctly, they should start adding value in the first month or so.

Resources:

Learn more and download the resources referenced in this document from the ***Onboarding & Training Talent*** course in Carson Coaching Online.

- **90 Day Check-In Meeting**
- **Best Practice Checklist for Onboarding Remote Employees**
- **Bio Template**
- **Checklist for Developing a Robust Onboarding Process**
- **Confidentiality Agreement**
- **Email Templates**

- Employee Handbook Template
- First Week Agenda Example
- Getting to Know Me Form
- HR/Team Member Onboarding Checklist
- Manager Onboarding Checklist
- New Employee Guide Template
- New Hire Technology Request
- Operations Associate 100 Day Plan
- Remote Work Policy Template
- Survey Questions
- Tour Guide Checklist
- Wealth Advisor 100 Day Plan
- Wealth Advisor Employee Agreement