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On-boarding in a virtual world

A guide for employers

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You never get a
second chance
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Introduction

Well trained employees are more important than ever for business success. Having a team with the right skills allows businesses to meet the challenges of competition, growth and innovation.

But in order to achieve this, hiring the right candidate is essential.

Over the course of the past 18 months, many of us have struggled with our hiring, on-boarding and training of new staff because of the pandemic.

As a direct result of this, we have developed this resource to help you:

- Develop practical strategies for on-boarding, remotely or not
- Creating an engaging on-boarding experience for new team members
- Identify ways of adapting the stages of the on-boarding experience to the world of virtual working

This guide has been created to help support our apprentice employers primarily during the COVID 19 pandemic. Its content is based on our own experience as an employer, feedback from our apprentices and their employers as to what has ‘worked’ for them.

What is On-boarding?

Often confused with induction, on-boarding is the process by which a new employee gets familiar with the company.

Ultimately it is a combination of different tasks and processes across the business combined, including, but not limited to;

Orientation

Assimilation

Induction

Integration

Alignment

Transition

Why does it matters that businesses get on-boarding correct?

Research shows that employees are 58% more likely to still be with a company 3 years later*, if that company has an effective on-boarding process.

Based on our experiences and those of our apprentice employers, we feel that there are 3 main benefits to a business from getting this correct:

- Improved retention rate of staff
- Faster time to productivity for new entrants
- Reduces cost of hiring

**Wynhurst Group*



Employer On-boarding Milestones

There are several schools of thought around how many phases of on-boarding there are. We believe there to be 6 and they are:

1) Before the first day

2) First day

3) Second day

4) First week

5) First month

6) Month two and beyond

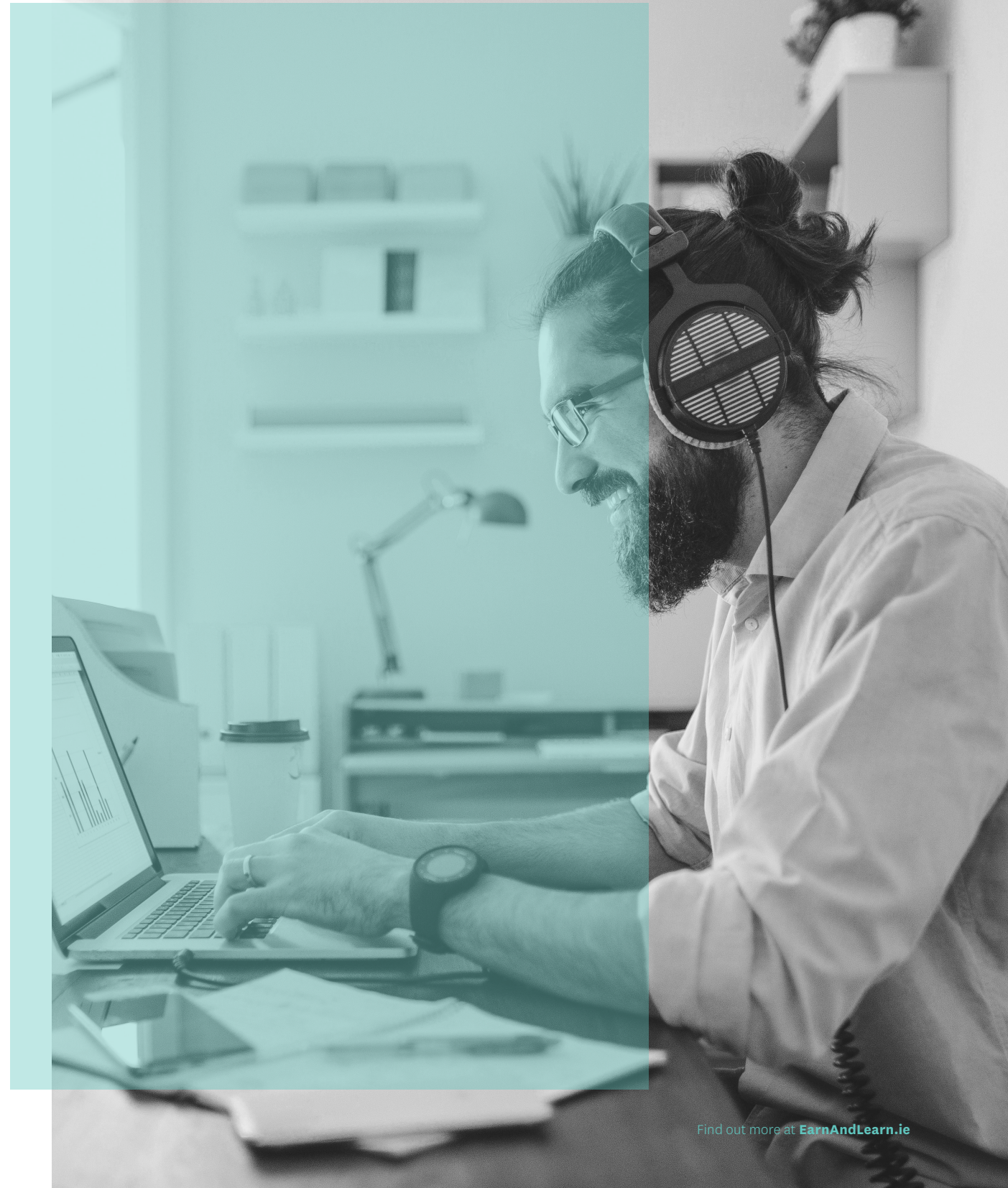
These phases cover everything from the preparing yourself for the new staff members arrival, through to getting them access to IT systems, correct desk set up, meeting their wider team and closing the loop, i.e. seeking feedback to ensure you are playing to the new hire's strength's and gather rich feedback from them to improve their and other new hire's experiences.

We have created useful checklists to help you plan these phases which can found in the resources section at the back of this guide.

The 7 Steps to Success

Whether you are doing it remotely, in person or a hybrid of both, we have found through our own experiences and feedback from others, that these are the 7 steps for on-boarding success.

- 1 Formal, but fun**
Starting a new job and recruiting staff can at times be a little formal. However, don't forget to add in the fun where you can.
- 2 Should extend over several months**
A lot of companies stop at the end of week one. Whilst on-boarding has no definitive end date, if possible structure it over a few months to get the most out of it.
- 3 Information is provided in bite-size chunks**
Remember not to overwhelm and to also focus on providing new hires with what they need, as they need it.
- 4 Provide digital versions of documents**
By doing this, core reading could be done in advance of day one or bite-size pieces of information can be linked to longer documents easily.
- 5 Management involvement**
Get them involved early and explain the importance of their involvement. Also make sure they stick to appointments as much as possible by scheduling well in advance.
- 6 Involve mentors as much as possible**
Our apprenticeship programme has a detailed role for mentors and a structured programme of engagement. The benefits of this are well documented by our apprentices.
- 7 Follow up!**
Ask for feedback from new hires wherever possible. Main milestones we use are end of first week, first month and 6 months. However, you might wish to do informal feedback at the end of the first day to address any immediate concerns.



On-boarding Duties and Responsibilities

Many businesses believe that on-boarding is the sole responsibility of the HR department.

Whilst that is true for the most part, it is vital to the success of the process that the wider organisation is aware of the important roles they play too.

HR Manager (or company HR liaison)

The person within your organisation with responsibility for HR typically takes on on-boarding responsibility for presenting information to the new hire around payroll, policies and health and safety, outlining the organisations culture and highlighting any initial training requirements.

On-boarding buddy

This is a person within the organisation (ideally doing a similar role) that is assigned to the new hire from day one (or earlier if that suits your on-boarding plan). It is this person's job to be the go-to for anything that the new hire might need to navigate their new role and organisation, offer encouragement and bridge social connections in the early months.

Direct Manager

One to one time with their direct manager is really important. Outlining management style, expectations, duties and training is valuable early on in this process, especially if either or both of you are remote. It is also important that during this first week, you have as many touchpoints as possible so your new hire gets the sense you are accessible to them, even if not physically.

Wider team

As well as HR, a new hires wider team has a really important role in outlining the organisation's culture and providing context to the new hire about their role and responsibilities. Setting up a 'team chat' whether in the office as part of their day one orientation or via a zoom call, is really important to help a new starter feel that sense of belonging.



The new hire

Let's not forget that recruitment is a two way street and therefore the new member of the team also has a role to play here. They must take the initiative to assimilate themselves through participation in and engagement with support provided.

Apprentices

For an apprentice, it is also important that as early as possible they get to spend time with their mentor and supervisor and quickly develop a strong working relationship. As they have key responsibilities for their training and coursework as part of the programme, they are also a role model for the new hire and act as the liaison between your organisation, The Institute / LIA and IT Sligo.

Virtual On-boarding. What's the Difference?

Simply put, there are broadly two; technology and frequency of communication. A strong on-boarding plan is fast becoming a strategic must and as we have all seen over the past year or so, being able to flex our offline processes to an online format is the key to success. Here are our suggestions as to where to add the most 'virtual' value to your on-boarding process:

1

Providing information in easy to digest, online formats – for example, do you have a short hand version of the company handbook for day one that outlines the '10 main things they need to know'? The longer, PDF format can be read over the coming month, or posted to them, if you have printed versions.

2

Plan in meetings in advance – set up an email account before they start and diarise all key meetings for the first week so that everyone has them in advance. Also make sure that the wider teams know how important it is to stick to these as it is easier to find something else to occupy someone with in an office environment, than it is at home.

3

Have a back-up plan – we all know that life can get in the way, so in case someone is sick, or tied up in a meeting, make sure you have something for the new hire to do that will keep them engaged and add value. This could be a piece of eLearning, familiarising themselves with training literature or simply having an additional check in with their buddy.

4

Send them out a physical welcome pack ahead of their start date and create a virtual version for day one – an example could be a branded mug, or a notepad and pen to be posted out (you could even include a little treat for their first day!) and then back this up with a personal email from the CEO or Business Owner on their first day to welcome them to the team.

5

Schedule weekly team and one to one catch ups (and stick to them) – in the early stages your new recruit will need support and reassurance on a regular basis. In addition to their on-boarding buddy, it is also important that you set out a regular schedule of catch ups as a team and one to one sessions. Do this to make sure that everything is going as you think it is and provide an opportunity for the new hire to provide feedback.



Resources

We have pulled together a short list of useful resources that you might find helpful if evaluating your on-boarding process. They can be accessed throughout this document or via the links below:

INFOGRAPHICS

Induction vs On-boarding – what are the differences and how to distinguish between the two

The 6 phases of successful on-boarding

Top 5 reasons new hires quit and how to avoid them

CHECKLISTS

On overview of what tasks should be assigned to which departments in line with the 6 phases

A set of cheat sheets of suggested activities for day one and beyond

What your first one to one meeting could look like

How to structure your new hires first day

BLOG POSTS

What is on-boarding and why does it matter?

What your new starters first week should look like – a guide to on-boarding

Practical tips for on-boarding

Visit
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The Insurance Institute
5 Harbourmaster Place
IFSC, Dublin 1
D01 E7E8
T 01 645 6600
E apprenticeship@iii.ie

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