

What to do if a new hire struggles to fit into your organisation

Introduction

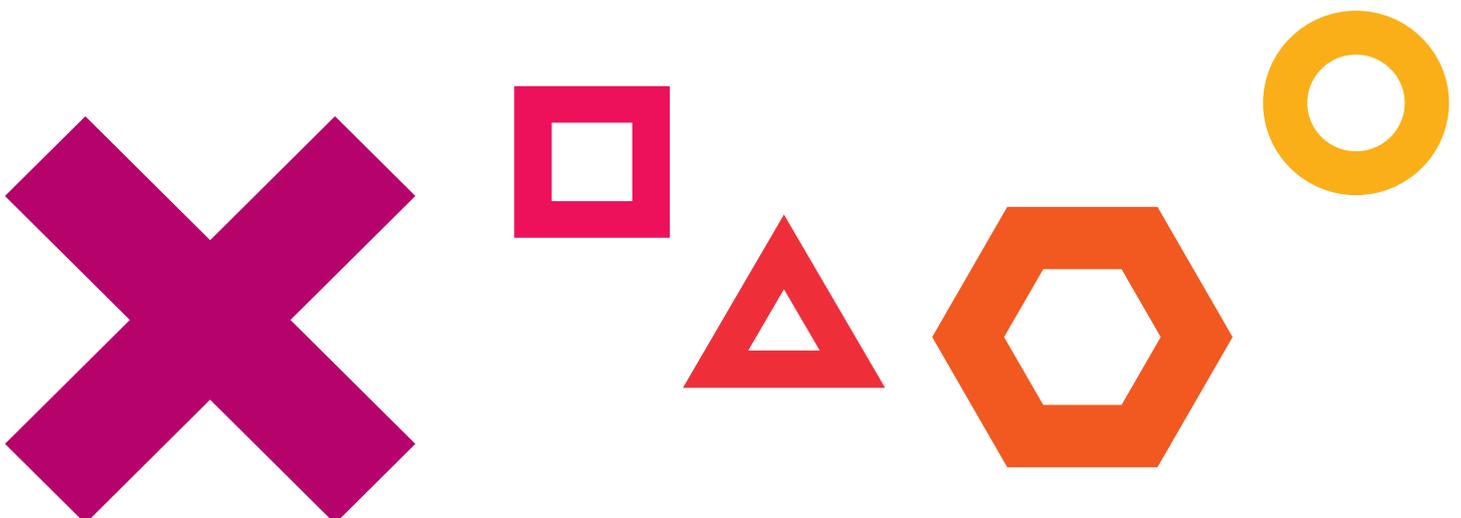
We all know how it feels to start a new job. No matter how experienced you are, the 'newbie' feeling never quite goes away, regardless of how well you hide it. So, imagine the boot is on the other foot. Now, you're the Hiring Manager, Director or even the Managing Director, responsible for ensuring the Employees are onboarded in the right way and gradually become part of the culture of the business.

The trouble is, you've heard on the grapevine, or can see for yourself, that something's not right. Your new Employee just isn't fitting in to your organisation. There are a number of reasons for this. It could be your onboarding process itself isn't quite as effective as it could be.

Maybe there is a lack of communication between their line manager and the individual resulting in a mis-management of expectations. Or perhaps they simply don't get along with their co-workers. It might even be the

case that your company culture needs a bit of tweaking. Whatever the reason this Guide is intended to be a series of practical steps you can take, to make sure new hires settle in.

Over the course of the next few pages, we will offer some explanation as to why this might have happened, and what you can do to resolve the problem for the future.



The problem

Hiring is great for business! It indicates growth, change, innovation and perhaps a lighter workload for members of the team. However, it's not always sunflowers and rainbows, sometimes a wrong decision or a lack of organisation can lead to your new Employee not exactly 'fitting in'.

According to a study published by Harvard Business Review, 85% of HR decision-makers admit their organisation has made a bad hire, and truth be told, it can be awkward to rectify. What are your choices? Approach the situation, or fire the Employee? I think it's safe to see what the more rational approach is.

What many HR professionals and business leaders forget however, is that starting a new job is a nerve-wracking event. Pulling an individual aside to have a 'conversation' may even make the situation bleaker.

The trick is...

...to take the time to analyse the issue, look at what's wrong, and also question your own processes. After all, it might not necessarily be the Candidate's fault. Hiring is a huge investment. An investment of time, effort and money and of course this may lead to denial or making excuses. Whatever the method of avoidance, if your new hire is struggling, it is really important to tackle the issue head on.

Here at Allen Associates we have specialised in finding the right talent for Clients for over 20 years. If there is one thing we have learned during this time, it is that the hiring process takes time.

Getting to the root of the problem

When it comes to matters of human nature, the issue could be external or internal. Whatever the outcome and despite the outdated traditional view that 'problems at home should not surface in the office', you, as an Employer, have a responsibility to support them.

If the Employee is down and out, struggling to integrate or is not working to an acceptable standard, it is highly indicative that they are not enjoying their position. There are a few ways to tackle this:

- 1) Regularly check up on the Employee and encourage conversation and friendliness in the office.
- 2) Initiate team-building and networking events for all members of the team to integrate.
- 3) Provide above-adequate training and support in areas where the Employee is struggling.
- 4) Consider a new position for them, perhaps a move will turn out to be the perfect allocation in the end.

Whilst it may seem straightforward, these simple considerations may make a huge difference and dispel the need to write off the Candidate.

Senior members of staff, at the end of the day, are busy, and they may forget that the new Employee is still learning or potentially struggling.

On the other hand, perhaps these small solutions aren't working. Maybe the member of staff was just the wrong decision for the business. It's a shame and it may lead to unfortunate consequences. However, there are methods to proactively tackle this from the start, and to avoid it altogether.

The solutions: Your onboarding process

Welcoming a new Employee into the business is easy: just give them a tour of the building, a seating plan complete with names and let them get on with it. Right? Well... not exactly. In fact, this magical moment is make or break; it's an opportunity to win the hearts and minds of your new members of staff. Yet, all too often, Employers squander this precious moment: instead of building engagement, they use it to bombard new hires with a boatload of materials when they're barely in the door. Overwhelmed and un-engaged, the dream Candidate you took so long to find soon becomes another number on your dropout list.

So, what went wrong? As tempting as it might be to scapegoat someone who isn't present, this is an opportunity to consider what you could have done differently.

Death by orientation

We all know the importance of orientation, but this should only play a small part of the wider on-boarding process. Ticking off tasks will quickly show your Employee that they are no more than a number in the books, and organisations who treat on-boarding as just another "To Do" are at risk of an early exit from their new hires. Remember, on-boarding exists to set people up for success, not to drum the company handbook into their head. The next few weeks should be focused on helping your new recruit to build connections with their colleagues, engage with business objectives and integrate into their new environment.

Targets with no training

As if starting a role at a new company wasn't nerve-racking enough, Employers are often guilty of setting goals and expecting their Employees to exceed them without a single serving of support. Afraid to ask for help or assert their opinion for fear of painting themselves in a negative light during probation, new hires will soon feel disappointed, and begin to question either themselves, or

the organisation. Sitting down with new staff and setting achievable goals, as well as a clear plan and realistic deadlines, is a simple but effective way to alleviate pressure and reassure your Employee that they are not alone.

Lonely lunch breaks

Within their first few weeks, many Employers assume their new hires need as much breathing space as possible, and they aren't wrong. However, that isn't to say they don't want the business to make an effort in making them feel welcome.

It may not seem like much, but taking a new recruit to lunch to talk one-on-one, away from the office, can make all the difference. No matter whether they came prepared with a packed lunch, Employees will appreciate the effort, and relish the opportunity to ask questions in a comfortable setting, without feeling like they're bothering anyone.

Cynical staff

When your culture is cracked and broken, frustrated staff will jump at the chance to have a dig at the company, rant away about particular colleagues, and even badmouth clients. What starts as a few comments in the kitchen can quickly become a common occurrence and before long, your new recruit is playing a pivotal role in your company's equivalent to *Stitch and Bitch* - whether that be face to face, or through Instant Messaging. Desperate to vent at someone who hasn't heard them complain yet, old timers prey on new meat - of course, they aren't the real problem.

A cynical staff-base is a symptom of a poor company culture and a sign that change is needed. No matter how positive the on-boarding experience, the Employee experience hinges on their day to day interactions. Simply put, here's no use putting on a show, if the reality doesn't mirror the image you have perfected.

The solutions: Communication

We have looked at tackling the issue early and taking a look at your onboarding process, however, if you've gone through this impeccably and you're still experiencing a 'settling in' issue, it's still not too late to resolve the issue. The emphasis on communication within businesses has been a high priority of late. With the emerging prominence of positive company culture, senior management are striving to accommodate the best practice in order to retain and engage Employees effectively.

Communication is key

Upon hiring a new person, it is crucial to engage with all members of the team. Introduce your new hire to everybody, encourage a lunch with their senior manager, talk to the team and ask for feedback on how they are integrating. This is not a behind-the-back process; by talking to the team, it will give you a strong insight of how they are doing, or whether there is an issue to tackle from the preliminary stage. If they are still not quite fitting into the team it might be a good idea to have weekly team meetings where you can encourage idea sharing. Your team is there as an innovative source of idea generation. They may be all you need to inspire the new team member, and encourage them to put their own ideas forward.

Company Culture

There is a startling statistic that says 48% of Employees are not happy at work. While you may be putting all of your eggs in one basket and focusing on your fresh recruit, perhaps your team are struggling just as much. Therefore, the emphasis on company culture is far more important than you think, and transcends the hiring process. Company culture is the backbone of the business. Championing your values and visions is critical to place your business forward with a clear viewpoint. However, all of this effort is wasted, if you are not prioritising communication as being central to your company culture. From the minute your new hire enters

the building, they should have a clear explanation of what your business stands for. Not only will that clarify the work they will be doing, it will allow them to feel involved, and part of the team.

The 'How' of Communication

Now that you are engaging, how are you engaging? Remember that tone of voice, choice of words, even volume of speech can all come across as intimidating when used inefficiently. The trick is to remain completely welcoming and engaging to all of your staff, throughout all levels of hierarchy. Additionally, tone travels further than just in the boardroom. When maintaining a great company culture, it is key to be consistent. Are you championing the same values in your social media content and media appearances? Nothing is going to make a new hire more confused or out of place than inconsistencies, let alone your consumers or clients.

Are you not getting anywhere? It's no secret, senior management are not always the most approachable members of a business, particularly to somebody new and inexperienced. This is where the use of mentors is extremely useful. Namely, if you're working in a larger company with different departments, it can be really advantageous to pair up people from different teams. Not only does this encourage innovation and a cross-pollination of ideas, it encourages broadening networks across the business. A segregated team can cause rifts and it can be very beneficial to improve the links amongst everybody. You may start to find that new hires will find it easier to fit in when relationships are encouraged across the business, and when they have a mentor to talk to in confidence.

Communication is vital to an open and honest working environment. This should allow you to identify swiftly whether you made the right decision after all. However, if you are getting this all spot on and you're still experiencing this issue, don't forget you have the best resource available to you, and that is your team.

The solutions: Use the power of the team

We all know how nerve-wracking and intimidating it can be, starting a new position in a new company. No matter how experienced you are, or the route you have taken to get there, the idea of turning up to a new place of Employment as the newest member of staff, and having to build relationships all over again, can be terrifying. In fact, it is terrifying.

It's important to remember this feeling and apply it to how your newest Employee must have been feeling, on that Monday morning.

You've discovered that they're not fitting in, and, honestly, that's a problem nobody needs or looks forward to hearing about. However, there are some things you should consider doing, before you start worrying that your newest Employee was the wrong hire to bring on board.

Use inductions as an introduction

This may sound like an obvious one, but it's vital to schedule in time with your new Employee, to meet with every team member. The purpose of this is not only so that the new Employee can build up an idea of how the company functions day to day, but to make connections with the colleagues they'll be working with.

It doesn't need to be a whole day per person. In fact, the shorter the better; the first few weeks of a new Employee's career are likely to be full of information, and you want them to be motivated, not overwhelmed.

Try half an hour with each key member of staff your new hire will be working with. This is far more realistic and will probably ensure you can do this more regularly.

Moving forward, you may wish to implement a 'role reversal' scheme, that you enact as part of a company away day, or company wide update. This will provide an invaluable insight into each department's role for the new Employee, and will garner huge inter-department appreciation between the other Employees.

Mirror, mirror

It's never a comfortable thing to have to do. However, occasionally, just occasionally, you have to do a bit of soul-searching. One of the reasons your new Employee might not be fitting in might not be because of them – it might be because of you.

Fostering a positive company culture is a skill in itself, and it takes time to cultivate the working environment and the atmosphere you want to walk into every day. You may have invested a lot of time and effort into this, but there is always more you could do. We have, in fact, written a blog post on this very subject.

Employers must keep their communication channels open, for information to flow freely. If they are firmly closed, or jamming up, this poses all kinds of problems – Employees not feeling supported, to them feeling isolated from the rest of the team.

You must also always make sure you give feedback, on all projects and on a regular basis. Don't just give it, either, ask your other, longer-standing Employees how their onboarding process was, and what they wish they had had. Use it as feedback to help you in the future.

Lastly, inclusion is a huge part of making a new Employee feel like they fit in. Include them in brainstorming and company meetings, and encourage ideas and innovation. Nothing else will make a new hire feel like they fit in faster, than making them feel like they have been with you for years.

Don't feel disheartened – it's never easy being in a position of seniority, or a management role. Chances are, you're doing a great job, with many demands on your time. Conduct this internal review not just for the benefit of your new Employee, but for the future of the rest of the team, too.

Conclusion

Hopefully, this Guide will give you some helpful, practical tips on how to make sure that all the Employees you hire in the future, take to the role (and the company) like ducks to water.

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