



Best Practice for Onboarding Remotely and Managing New Starters

Research shows that new employees decide how long they want to work for a company within the first 3-6 months, which means that a positive onboarding experience is key.

Meanwhile, it's Tuesday morning. Your team is stretched due to Covid-19, work is piling up faster than you can deal with it and you suddenly remember you have a new joiner starting next week. Your team is desperate for an extra pair of hands but you also know the additional time and effort it takes to induct and train someone properly. It's hard enough in the

office but this time you have the added complication of undertaking it remotely.

You probably already have an induction programme or procedure in place with elements that can easily be adapted to a remote environment, but how do you ensure that your new member of staff feels valued, gels with the team and builds relationships quickly and effectively?

Within this article you will find tools to assist your induction planning along with tips and best practice to help you overcome some of the challenges posed by onboarding remotely, including:

1. **Assessing new starter requirements and getting them set up for homeworking**
2. **Making them feel valued**
3. **Key considerations for induction planning**
4. **Ways to help them build relationships**
5. **Keeping the momentum going**





1. Assessing requirements and getting them set up for homeworking

Ideally you'll want to have your new starter's IT set-up complete before the first day so that they are ready to get started. In order to do this you could:

- Chat through their homeworking set up to determine their requirements - where will they be working at home? What equipment do they need? Are there any health and safety risks?
- Carry out our **Covid-19 Vulnerability Assessment** to identify any areas where they may need additional support
- Arrange delivery of the IT equipment, including set-up instructions and login details
- Use our basic Remote Onboarding Checklist to help guide you through the process



2. Tips to make them feel valued

Think back to a time when you were starting a new job – how did you feel?

Even the most confident of new starters are likely to have new job nerves and the current climate might also mean they are concerned over job security. You could:

- Give your new joiner a call before their start date to chat through the plan for their first week – let them know what they will be doing and how you plan to manage their onboarding remotely. Be honest – discuss their concerns and let them know how you're tackling the challenges thrown up by this unusual situation
- Consider sending something to welcome them to the team such as flowers, a card welcoming them, some biscuits for their virtual coffee sessions. This is obviously not essential but is a nice touch to help them feel engaged and valued
- Use a professional social networking site such as LinkedIn to connect your new starter with the team in advance
- If they live locally, you could personally deliver their IT equipment so you get the chance to chat face to face (provided you can still observe social distancing guidelines)



3. Key considerations for induction planning

Many aspects of an onboarding process are unstructured and happen naturally through 'office chat', meetings etc, but these will now require your planning and input. For example:

- Fitting into the team
- Understanding the company culture
- Understanding people's roles and the organisational structure

Whether you have the support of other departments, such as HR, Compliance and Learning & Development, or whether the onus is solely on you, preparing a structured induction plan helps to enable your new joiner to become a productive contributor quickly, thereby relieving the pressure on your team.

We have prepared a basic **Induction Planning Template** to save time and assist you with your planning, but it might help you to consider these points in advance:

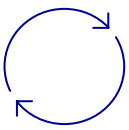
- Clear time in your diary for a virtual meet and greet, 1-2-1 and team meeting
- Identify their key stakeholders – think who they will work closely with outside of your team and book introductory meetings
- Book induction sessions with other departments (if applicable)
- Think about using a digital tool so that HR paperwork/contracts can be digitally signed (eg. DocuSign or Signable)
- Use your Company intranet or organisational charts to help them understand the company structure



4. Ways to help them build relationships

You would usually see senior managers or department heads around the office, overhear conversations that help piece together your learning or begin to understand team dynamics by watching their daily interactions. But with those elements removed, there are ways in which you can try to recreate them remotely:

- Welcome them to the team by holding a virtual team meeting. Ask the team to introduce themselves and their roles
- If you don't do it already, you could consider allocating a buddy and a mentor so that they have other points of escalation/support when you're not available
- Encourage social interaction and ask each of your team to set up a 15-minute virtual coffee and chat to recreate those 'water cooler' moments
- Share the load! Ask colleagues from other departments to spend 30 minutes giving an overview of their role by video call if possible. This will allow your new start to build their network within the business and will also ensure that their diary is kept full – there is nothing worse as a new employee than not having anything to do!



5. Keeping the momentum going

Once the first few days are out of the way, your focus will naturally be diverted elsewhere, but there are ways in which you can keep the momentum going and ensure your new joiner remains engaged and productive:

- Agree a communication plan and schedule regular 1-2-1s
- Set clear expectations and encourage continuous two-way feedback to help you build a rapport and get to know them. For additional guidance on setting clear expectations when managing remotely [click here for edition 1 of the Working Well Toolkit](#)
- Let them know what to do in the event of any 'down-time' – is there any e-learning they need to complete or reading they can do? Keep them busy but be mindful of information-overload. Give them time and space to digest their learnings but keep a constant dialogue to ensure they're not getting bored

You don't need to be communicating with them 24/7 but giving them a structure and framework to operate in will help to remove uncertainty and keep them engaged.

At the moment we don't know when we will begin to see offices re-open and life return to normal, or indeed what the new 'normal' will look like. It's unlikely that businesses will return to operating in the same manner as before. The ever-evolving situation of Covid-19 has emphasised the need for businesses and people managers to be agile and resilient. It has forced fast-paced innovation

in working practices which are likely to continue being utilised going forward.

As people managers, it's up to you to decide how your team will operate when/if they return to the office but now is a good time to seek feedback and apply the learnings in order to remain flexible and structured for success.



If you would like any free one-to-one HR advice or guidance, our expert HR specialist Gemma Martin, is on hand to support.

Please email your request for support to gemma.mcdaniel@axa-insurance.co.uk or harriet.brown@axa-insurance.co.uk.