9 Dec 2020

Induction

A look at the induction process, and the purpose of induction for employer and employee

Introduction

An employee's first impressions of an organisation have a significant impact on their integration within the team and job satisfaction. Induction is an opportunity for an organisation to welcome their new recruit, help them settle in and ensure they have the knowledge and support they need to perform their role. For an employer, effective induction may also affect turnover, absenteeism and employer brand.

This factsheet covers induction's purpose for both the employer and employee. It looks at the induction process, including who should attend, who should be involved, what to include (as well as what to avoid), and the role of HR and L&D teams. There's also an induction checklist to help organisations plan or refine their own process.

What is induction?

The impressions made when someone starts work for a organisation have a lasting impact on how they view their employer, so a welcoming and effective experience is key to making this first impression a positive one.

Induction is the process through which employees adjust or acclimatise to their new jobs and working environment. As part of this, 'orientation' can be used for a specific event that new starters attend, and 'socialisation' can describe the way in which new employees build working relationships within their new teams. Some people use the term 'onboarding' to cover the whole process from an individual's contact with the organisation before they formally join, through to understanding the business' ways of working and getting up to speed in their role.

Every organisation, large or small, should have a well-considered induction that provides a new employee with a positive experience of the organisation.

The length and nature of the induction depends on the job role, the new employee's background, and the size and nature of the organisation. One kind does not fit all and a standard induction course is unlikely to achieve its aims.

The purpose of induction

Induction ensures that employees integrate well into and across the organisation. Research demonstrates that induction programmes benefit both employers and employees. For employers, these include reducing turnover and absenteeism, and increasing employee commitment and job satisfaction. For employees, starting a new role in a new organisation can be an anxious time and an induction programme enables them to understand more about the organisation, their role, ways of working and to meet new colleagues.

New recruits need to understand the organisation, the culture, the people, and what's expected of them in their role, so an effective programme will contain multiple, integrated elements. These include health and safety information required by law and practical information on the working environment and facilities. The programme should also familiarise the new employee with the company culture and values and provide information specific to their role.

Who needs an induction programme?

Managers (with guidance from HR) need to invest time in inducting all new employees. Some groups have specific needs, for example graduate trainees, people returning from career breaks, long-term absence or parental leave, technical specialists, senior appointments and directors.

Tailor-made programmes should also be available for groups such as job-sharers, temporary staff, promoted staff, transferred staff and remote workers. Induction programmes are important for employees working as part of such arrangements to ensure they are clear about the objectives of the arrangement.

The benefits of an effective induction programme

A well-designed induction programme results in a positive first experience of an organisation. It means the employee:

- Settles in quickly.
- Integrates into their team.
- Understands the organisation's values and culture.

- Becomes productive quickly
- Works to their highest potential.

Without an effective induction, new employees can get off to a bad start, and lack clarity on their role and how it links to the organisation's goals, which could impact on their intention to stay in the role. Turnover like this results in:

- Additional cost and time for recruiting a replacement.
- Wasted time for the inductor.
- Lowering of morale for the remaining staff.
- Detriment to the leaver's employment record.
- Having to repeat the unproductive learning curve of the leaver.
- Damage to the organisation's employer brand.

According to our 2020 Resourcing and talent planning survey, 42% of organisations are improving their induction process to enhance retention.

In addition, as more organisations are working remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic, it's important to tailor induction programmes so new joiners have a positive experience and additional support to connect with new colleagues.

HR and L&D teams' role in induction

Responsibility for the different elements of the induction process will vary depending on the size and structure of the business.

Although induction of a specific employee is the line manager's responsibility, the design, development and evaluation of induction policy and programmes is largely the responsibility of HR or L&D specialists. They may also implement some aspects of induction and will likely be the first point of contact the employee has with the business and ensure that important information (such as bank details, right to work documentation, etc) is collected and that the employee knows what to expect from the induction programme.

People professionals increasingly recognise the value of employer brand as part of the induction process. In many cases, this has led to a focus on the onboarding and induction process to ensure it reflects the employer brand and the values the organisation is promoting. This might, for example, mean reviewing pre-employment communications sent out to new recruits to make sure they are welcoming and engaging. Listen to our podcast on rethinking staff induction for case studies.

The induction process

The induction process depends on the size and nature of an organisation as well as the type of recruit.

Regardless of organisation size, an induction processes should cover practical information about organisational procedures (such as building orientation, health and safety, and information about systems and procedures), company strategy and services (such as company values, strategy, and products and services), alongside job specific information (including department information, discussion about what the job requires and objectives), and an introduction to the wider team. This ensures new recruits have something in their diary in the first few weeks, and understand where their role fits and how they can work with others. It’s also a good opportunity to share details of employee network groups and organisational initiatives they can get involved with.

This information can be communicated in a variety of different ways; in organisations where the workforce is dispersed across different locations, digital tools allow new employees to meet colleagues in other areas of the business. However it’s managed, the process is key in ensuring a positive and engaging experience for the new starter.

Organisations are also paying attention to employee experience before the first day of employment, ensuing pre-employment communications are engaging, as well as using social network sites such as Facebook to put new recruits in touch with each other before they start employment. This is particularly common for graduate intakes. Find out more in our report Putting social media to work: lessons from employers.

It's also important that the process continues into employment - managers and HR need consider the ongoing support that a new employee will need to order to settle in and acquire the knowledge they need for their role. A ‘buddy’ system can provide support more informally to help new employees settle in, and ensuring new starters understand the learning and development opportunities available to them.

Using a formal induction course

For some, often larger, organisations, the induction process is formalised, with be a combination of one-to-one discussions and more group learning sessions.

The advantages of an induction course include:

- It ensures that all new recruits are given a consistent positive message portraying a clear employer brand, values and culture.
- It can use a range of engaging communication techniques such as group discussions or projects
- It enables new recruits to socialise with each other and build cross-functional relationships.

- Digital tools can be useful to share information where new recruits are globally dispersed.

However, there are also disadvantages which include:

- If not tailored correctly, it may contain topics that are unlikely to appeal to a cross-functional and mixed ability group of new employees.
- It may be scheduled weeks, or even months, after the inductee joins the organisation, which risks information being shared too late.
- It can be less personal and involve managers and people professionals rather than colleagues and local supervisors.

What to avoid

- Providing too much, too soon - the inductee must not be overwhelmed by a mass of information on the first day. Keep it simple and relevant.
- Pitching presentations at an inappropriate level - where possible, presentations should be tailored to take into account prior knowledge of new employees.
- HR rather than local managers providing all the information - it should be a shared process.
- Creating an induction programme which generates unreasonable expectations by overselling the job.
- Creating an induction programme that focuses only on administration and compliance and does not reflect organisational values - an effective induction programme should be engaging and assure the new employee that they have made the right decision to join the business.

Evaluation

The induction process should be evaluated to determine whether it’s meeting the needs of the new recruits and the organisation. This should include opportunities for feedback at the end of the induction process and allow new recruits to highlight areas for improvement.

As well as gathering feedback from new employees, it's important to identify key measures of success of the induction process and evaluate the process against these metrics. Information from turnover statistics or employee feedback can also be used – particularly from those who leave within the first 12 months of employment.

Induction essentials checklist

Regardless of the format of induction, it’s important to provide practical information on areas of compliance and company policy. Induction shouldn't be treated as a 'tick box' exercise, but there may be some areas where it useful to keep a record of the training provided – for example, cyber security, data protection or health and safety training.

The list below outlines the key information that can be included in an induction process alongside meetings with colleagues and managers.

Pre-employment

- Joining instructions.
- Proof of the legal right to work in the country (if required, and not already done during recruitment).
- New starter forms (enabling the set-up of bank account details and eligible benefits from day one).
- Conditions of employment.
- Organisation literature or other media.

Health and safety, and compliance

- Emergency exits.
- Evacuation procedures.
- First aid facilities.
- Health and safety policy.
- Accident reporting.
- Protective clothing.
- Specific hazards.
- Policy on smoking.
- Security procedures.
- Confidentiality.
- Compliance training such as data protection, bribery and modern slavery.

Facilities and IT

- Site map - canteen, first aid post, etc.
- Guided tour of the building and explanation of local procedures.
- Telephone and computer system information.
- Security pass.
- Car park pass.
- Opening hours.
- Remote / flexible working tools and access to work systems, including relevant file sharing and communication tools.

Organisation information

- Prganisation background.
- Organisation chart - global / departmental.
- Organisation strategy.
- Products and services.
- Quality systems.
- Customer care policy.

Culture and values

- Mission statement.
- Employer brand.
- Values.

Benefits and policies

- Pay - payment date and method.
- Tax and national insurance.
- Workplace / stakeholder pension schemes.
- Other benefits.
- Expenses and expense claims.
- Working time, including hours, flexi-time, and arrangements for breaks.
- Holidays, special leave.
- Probation period.
- Equality and diversity policies.
- Wellbeing strategy, including absence / sickness procedure.
- Internet, intranet, email and social media policies.
- Performance management system.
- Discipline procedure.
- Grievance procedure.
- Employee resource groups.

Role-specific information

- Clear outline of the job / role requirements.
- Introduction to the team and ways of working.
- Meeting with key senior employees (either face-to-face, or though the use of technology).
- Organisational orientation; demonstration of how the employee fits into the team and how their role fits with the overall strategy and goals.

Learning and development

- Development opportunities and in-house courses.
- CPD and Personal Development Plan.
- Career management.

Useful contacts and further reading

Contacts

Acas - What should be on your induction programme?

Books and reports

ACAS. (2015) *Starting staff: induction*. London: Acas.

ROBSON, F. (2009) *Effective inductions*. CIPD toolkit. London: Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development.

Visit the CIPD and Kogan Page Bookshop to see all our priced publications currently in print.

Journal articles

CABLE, D.M., GINO, F. and STAATS, B. (2013) Reinventing employee onboarding. *MIT Sloan Management Review*. Vol 54, No 3, Spring. pp23-28.

DAVILA, N. and PIÑA-RAMÍREZ. W. (2018) Let's talk about onboarding metrics. *TD: Talent Development*. December. Reviewed in *In a Nutshell*, issue 85.

HOWLETT, E. (2020) How to get onboarding right. *People Management* (online). 23 January.

ODOM, C.L. (2018) Onboarding in the gig economy. *TD: Talent Development*. Vol 72, No 9. pp38-42.

CIPD members can use our online journals to find articles from over 300 journal titles relevant to HR.

Members and *People Management* subscribers can see articles on the *People Management* website.

This factsheet was last updated by Melanie Green.