



You Hired a New Graduate, Now What?

By Jennifer Anderson

You recently hired a new college graduate to join your team – congratulations! Adding someone new to the team feels great and has the potential to be very rewarding for you, the existing team members, and the new hire. In this article, four key points about assimilating your new graduate into your company will help you and the new hire have more success.

Onboard

The onboarding process is as important, if not more important than the recruiting and interview process. Over the years, the author has heard from countless new employees who have expressed frustration with the onboarding process at their new employer. It is ironic that companies go to great lengths to improve their recruiting and interview process and, when they finally bring on the new hire, it is as if they have forgotten that the new hire is still evaluating their decision to join the company.

If you have hired anyone in the last 3 to 6 months, ask them about their onboarding experience. Look for gaps in their expectations. Clean up any discrepancies in what new hires were told during the recruiting and interview phases in comparison to their actual onboarding experience. A fruitful source to recruit new employees is from the contacts of your new hires, so take their feedback seriously. It does not mean that their perspective is accurate, but it is their reality which means it is true to them.

Ultimately, you want to have an onboarding process that is simple to navigate for the new hire, the manager, and HR. Cut out anything that is not helpful and aim to make their first day – and week – as comfortable as possible. You are concerned that you have hired a good person; likewise, they are concerned that they have joined the right firm. Building your employer brand during the onboarding process will make a big difference in ongoing recruiting efforts.

3-Month Mark

The first 3 months will be a time of transition and growth; a new college graduate probably has not had a “real job” previously. Many



companies have a 90-day probationary evaluation, but the same goes for the new hire. The new hire is evaluating you to make sure that they still want to stay with the company. If any of the promises that you made in the interview process are not coming to fruition, the new hire is going to be more and more frustrated until those promises are met. It is vital that you ensure that the new hire’s experience will align with what was communicated to them during the interview process. If their expectations are not met, then you will experience rapid turnover in new recruits.

New employees flock together and talk. They will compare notes on how work is going, what the managers are like, how to navigate the new job, etc. So, if one of them is not happy, it is likely their bad opinion will spread to other new recruits; likewise, if they are happy and enthusiastic to be at your firm, they will encourage each other to stay and work hard. While it is great to hang out with “like-minded people,” especially during the first 3 months, encourage and support new employees

to get to know a variety of people in the company so that they are learning about your firm from different points of view, not just their peers.

Mentor

An effective way to make sure that the new college graduate feels like they are a part of the team is by facilitating a mentoring program in your company. In a previous STRUCTURE article about mentoring (*Mentoring in the Workplace*, April 2018), you will find advice and techniques on how to effectively implement a mentoring program at your company. Mentoring, specifically for new college graduates, is critically important because they are coming from a lifetime of always having a mentor – be

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it a college professor, University advisor, teacher's assistant, friends, parents, or family members – who have guided them through major decisions and turning points in their life. Now that they are working at your company, they will still appreciate and seek career guidance and counsel from a mentor. If they are going to seek guidance, you want them to get advice from someone who is committed and experienced in your firm.

When connecting them to a mentor in the company, look for opportunities to pair

them with someone who is only a few years older. Mentoring from someone who is close in age, but has at least 5 years of working experience, will help the new graduates feel like they are getting relevant career guidance. After they have been with the company for at least a year, they can look for another mentor from the senior team and get additional career development assistance. In the first year, they need help with basic things that may be in the too distant past for senior team members.

Survey

If you feel your company is doing a good job with onboarding and communicating with and mentoring the new hires, you may want to survey them to confirm that they feel just as good about being there as you think they are. A short anonymous online survey with a few questions is ideal so that you can get feedback on your specific new hire processes. Always include a way for the survey respondents to comment in general and encourage suggestions. If you have fewer than 10 new hires in the last 6 months, it may be better to talk to each of them individually and get direct feedback. Ten people is a reasonable number for sending out a new hire survey without them feeling like it is not really an anonymous survey.

Keep in mind that new graduates are sensitive to doing a good job; they might not be accustomed to giving honest feedback. Encourage honesty and candor as much as possible. Once you receive the feedback, compile and review for trends and tangents. Review the results with the management team and develop a plan for how to assimilate new hire feedback and suggestions. You probably will not be able to do everything they have suggested but start with at least one thing. Tell the new hires – and the rest of the company, for that matter – that you heard their suggestions and what you are doing about them. If you listen to and move forward with their idea(s), they will be more invested with their time at your firm and will honestly respond to future surveys.

With new hire onboarding, attention to the first 3 months, short and long-term mentoring, and surveying, you will connect with your college new-hires in helpful and satisfying ways. Ultimately, when hiring a recent college graduate, you will find that they want to succeed and have a great career. Make the most of their time with your company and odds are they will stay and help grow your firm while they are growing their successful careers.■

Born into a family of engineers but focusing on the people side of engineering, Jennifer Anderson has over 20 years helping companies hire and retain the right talent. (www.CareerCoachJen.com)

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