

Successfully Onboarding Your New Remote Employees

Although the way many of us work has shifted into WFH mode, it doesn't mean things are at a standstill. Many companies are ramping up their hiring as they look forward and plan for their future growth and development. If you are among them, it means that once you've identified the right person for a new position or to fill an existing one, you have to figure out how you're going to onboard your new hires remotely. You want them to get to know their colleagues and understand your work culture. While you can't take them to lunch and their introduction to their new team is virtual, you still need to ensure that they feel valued and supported.

“We have always recognized that onboarding is a critical component of employee retention,” says Nancy Halverson, SVP Global Operations at **MRI**Network. “Our methodology includes guiding our clients through the entire hiring process, which means that we don't consider the search complete until our clients' new hires are successfully onboarded.”

Halverson recognizes that onboarding today is a little more challenging, but she says, “The principles are the same. It simply requires a different approach. Many of the best practices that we've honed over the years are still applicable, such as creating an onboarding packet.” She advises that this should include expectations for the first two weeks, a list of tools, links, and systems and direction on how to access them, internal/external contact information for any issues that may arise, colleague contact information, and an organizational chart.

What has become an imperative in today's work landscape is the need for a clear digital strategy. “Many people are struggling to adapt to WFH,” says Halverson, “and employers have to provide the digital tools needed to get along and work efficiently with team members, collaborate on projects, and boost output. These should be in place and ready to access for every new employee.”

What are the most important areas you need to consider?

Communication. “Slack, for example, is a software application that brings team members and interactions together,” says Halverson. “Companies are using it increasingly because it provides seamless communication between team members, departments and the entire organization, but there are many other good alternatives such as Google Hangout, Microsoft Teams, Flock, Mattermost and Wire.”

Videoconferencing. The Zoom app seems to have soared to the top of the preferred list, even making great strides in the stock market. “Anybody can use it from anywhere,” notes Halverson, “and videoconferencing replicates face-to-face meetings by showing the facial expressions and body language of the participants.” Alternatives include among others GoToMeeting and Google Meet.

Project management. Evernote is a popular project management and productivity tool because it works on all platforms, including smartphones and tablets, and allows users to quickly sync notes and files among devices. Alternatives such as Google Sheets and Basecamp can also help you to create daily, monthly, or yearly to-do-lists and assign tasks to your entire team.

Halverson believes that companies will continue to rely heavily on digital tools after the crisis has passed. “Use this time to discover which tools work best for your people, your business and your organization,” she advises. “Observe how your new employees respond and adapt to your culture and learn from it. Seize this opportunity to embrace the new world of work.”