

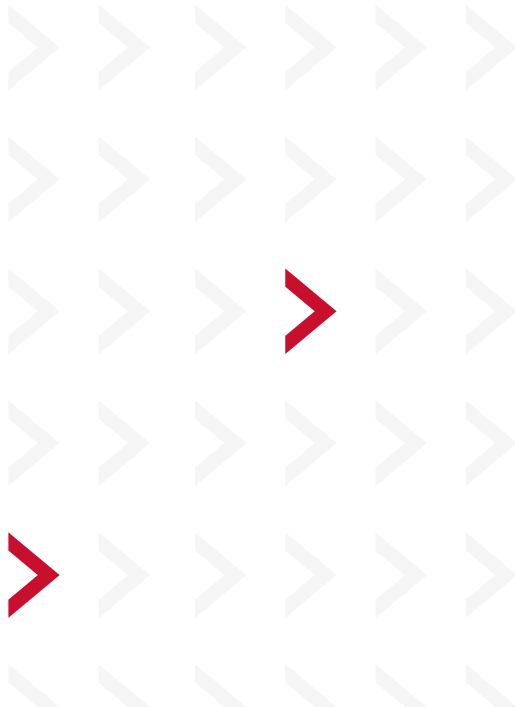


How to Attract and Retain Top Talent

A Guide to Building a Successful Recruiting, Onboarding, and Retention Program

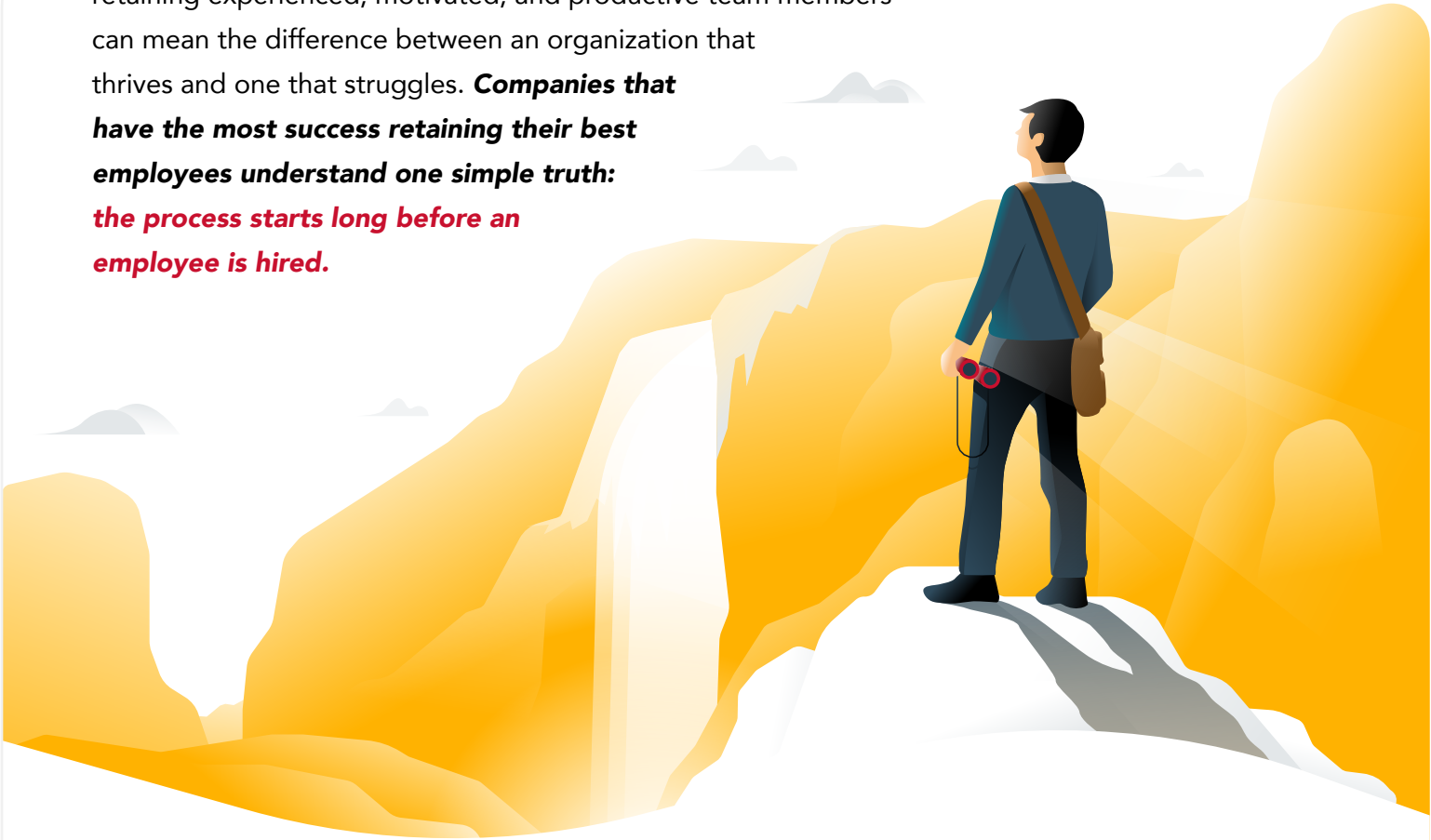
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Introduction

Whether you're a company of five or 500+ employees, hiring and retaining experienced, motivated, and productive team members can mean the difference between an organization that thrives and one that struggles. **Companies that have the most success retaining their best employees understand one simple truth: the process starts long before an employee is hired.**



➤ This guide was created to provide you and your team with the tools to help you recruit, onboard, and retain employees in a more comprehensive and effective manner. We wish you and your team success and if you have any questions, our HR experts are always here to help.



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• Define Your Company Culture



What is a Company Culture?

According to SHRM (the Society for Human Resource Management), “An organization's culture defines the proper way to behave within the organization,” and “consists of shared beliefs and values established by leaders and then communicated and reinforced through various methods, ultimately shaping employee perceptions, behaviors and understanding.”

In business, your most valuable asset is your employees. They are critical to every work process, work product, and service you provide. And while it can be difficult to directly correlate the value of human capital to business operations, it's your team (not your business) who manages the daily challenges and provides excellent service to your customers. In short, your culture starts and ends with the people that make up your company.

Like individuals, organizations—no matter how large or small—have their own unique personalities; their own set of beliefs and values that (knowingly or unknowingly) impact day-to-day behaviors and interactions between management, employees, and customers.

At its best, a company's culture is well defined and clearly communicated. Expectations are known and team members and management work together to stay aligned, in sync, and committed to the mission and values they have set forth. On the flip side, if a company's culture and values are ill-defined and poorly supported (especially if that organization is growing or going through a merger), it can result in low productivity, high employee turnover, and a negative impact to the bottom line.

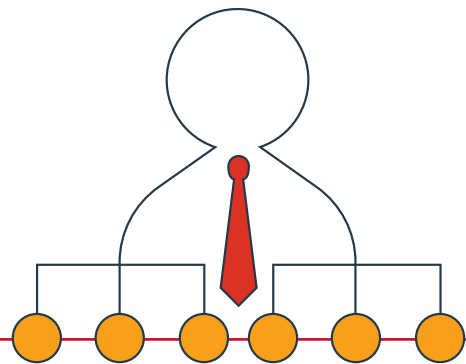
“A strong culture is a common denominator among the most successful companies.”

The Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM)

Reviewing Your Current Culture

Finding and retaining happy and high-performing employees starts with defining who you are as an organization. When you do so, clearly and effectively, you significantly increase your chance of holding onto your most valuable team members, and you decrease your instances of turnover— especially within the first 30 days of employment.

Even organizations with clearly defined and deep-rooted values can benefit from revisiting how they communicate, administer, and support their culture. In the case of a growing business encountering new and different challenges, reassessing and sometimes even redefining your culture and values can contribute to a smoother, more successful transition to the next chapter in your company's story.



"A courageous culture connects its values to specific behaviors, so people know what is expected, encouraged, and rewarded within their team and organization. Setting clear expectations gives organizations a shared language and a well-defined culture."

Brené Brown, Dare to Lead

Defining Your Culture

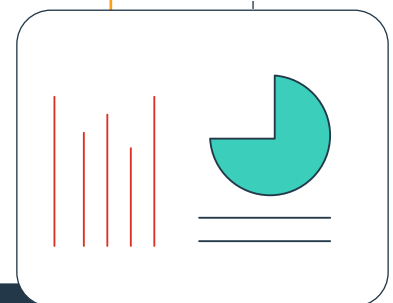
Think of your culture as your organization's DNA, made up of elements and ideas that define your company and set your workplace apart from others. Whether you're starting fresh, clarifying, or reevaluating—the first step in defining who you are and what you want your culture and values to look like—is to honestly and directly answer questions like:

- Who is your customer?
- How do you serve that customer?
- Why does your company do what it does?
- What do you believe?
- What are your core values?
- What are your mission and goals?
- Where do you want to go as a company?
- How do you define success—for your organization and for each employee?
- How do you want your employees to feel (i.e. valued, safe, comfortable, recognized, inspired)?
- How would your employees answer each of these questions?



Once you've come to a consensus, you can start to assess how well you support those beliefs and values, or how you can better incorporate them into every aspect of your organization.

A culture—your mission, values, and beliefs, are not just what you do and how you do it. It's who you are: the guiding principles by which everything else is measured.



Want to learn more about company cultures? Check out our article on the [Nine Categories of Organizational Culture](#).

Supporting Your Culture And Employees

At its core, an organizational culture is the way work gets done. It's how you hire, where you park, what you wear, who communicates in meetings, and much more. By reviewing, defining (or refining), and communicating your culture and values to your staff, you're providing each team member—from your leaders to your entry-level newcomers—with their North Star. This provides a guide, of sorts, by which goals can be set and measured, decisions and interactions can be approached, business can be conducted, and customer promises can be fulfilled.

So, how do you support your defined goals and values in the long term? A diverse and inclusive workplace will strengthen your organization as a whole, and when employees feel that their personal values align with those of the company they work for, then you have a strong and resilient culture.

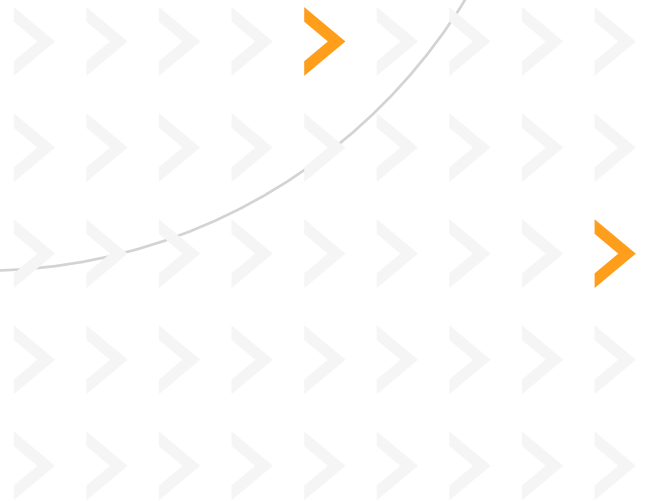
Key steps you can take to build and support a strong, healthy culture:

- **Lead by example.** Ownership and management should consistently display (through words and actions) the mission and beliefs that you expect your staff to value and represent.
- **Training.** For new and existing team members to understand your commitment and your expectations, you should provide training to new employees and consistently reiterate and build upon that commitment with your entire staff.
- **Recognition.** When individuals and/or groups positively represent your organization's culture and values—internally or externally—recognize them for their commitment and efforts.
- **Set goals and conduct regular reviews.** By setting clear and achievable goals with each employee, you can tie career advancement and salary/hourly pay adjustments to the achievement of those goals.



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Start with “Smart Recruiting”



What is Smart Recruiting

Now that your culture is defined and supported, you can more easily communicate who you are—as an organization and an employer. This allows you to source, vet, and recruit potential candidates in new and more effective ways.



Through **smart recruiting**, you build recruitment efforts around your needs and your culture, allowing you to identify candidates who are not only qualified, but who are more likely to be a great fit for your organization.

Elements of Smart Recruiting



Aligning your recruiting efforts with organizational goals and values allows you to build out program elements that help you—and potential candidates—make more informed decisions. As a result, you significantly improve your chances of hiring and retaining skilled employees who are inspired and motivated to help the organization, and their fellow team members succeed. Elements of smart recruiting include:

Job Description Development

A successful recruitment program starts with carefully crafted job descriptions. By taking the time to clearly define the knowledge and skills you're seeking, along with the expectations you have for each role, you set yourself up to attract more qualified candidates, and you reduce the chance of receiving unqualified submissions. This not only saves time; it also helps to reduce costly turnover.

Tip

To avoid repeating any past mistakes, it's a good idea to go back and analyze what went right and wrong with former employees to determine if job description language led to any miscommunication or complications.

Candidate Sourcing

Candidate sourcing is a proactive process that includes the vetting of qualified candidates by monitoring job applicant platforms, industry-specific forums, and social media sites, like LinkedIn. By consistently reviewing resumes and work samples, you're able to build an active pipeline of promising talent that can be accessed at a moment's notice—when your growing company creates a new position or when an existing position is unexpectedly vacated.

Tip

Consider automated applicant sourcing, like G&A's ATS (applicant tracking system), which can simplify and streamline the entire recruitment process by posting job listings on multiple sites, pre-screening candidates, scheduling interviews, and more.

Interview Techniques and Strategies

Carefully written job descriptions and the consistent and targeted sourcing of potential candidates will help to bring you a more qualified selection of applicants. How you and your team craft and conduct interviews with those candidates is a critical part of the recruitment process—helping both interviewers and interviewees to accurately determine if they have a good fit.

The most effective recruitment programs lean heavily on interview techniques and strategies that:

- Follow a clear and crafted script that focuses on direct and revealing questions relevant to the requirements of the open position.
- Clearly define expectations and responsibilities established in the job description.
- Effectively communicate the mission and goals of your organization.
- Provide a comfortable and safe environment that allows for open and honest dialogue between the interviewer and interviewee.
- Consider the experience of each potential candidate. Every communication touchpoint is an opportunity to show the world who you are. How you treat even those applicants not selected for an interview can impact their perception of you, and how they speak about you in the marketplace.

An interview is also a unique opportunity to assess whether a candidate is a good cultural fit for your organization. Potential employees don't have to embody every quality you're looking for, but they should connect with the cultural fabric and values of your organization. This helps to ensure they will be happier, more engaged, productive and connected, and ultimately, more successful.





The Harvard Business Review proposes these questions to assess culture fit during the interview stage:

- What type of culture do you thrive in?
- What values are you drawn to (in a prospective workplace/employer)?
- What would your ideal workplace look like?
- Why do you want to work here?
- What do you think of our culture based on what you've seen so far?
- Is our culture a fit for what you're looking for?
- Have you ever worked for an organization where you did not feel like you were a strong cultural fit? If so, why do you think it wasn't a fit for you?

Tip

Avoid and/or eliminate any search or hiring practices that can put you at risk for discrimination claims, negligent hiring, or noncompliance with labor and employment laws. [Learn more here.](#)

Pre-hire Assessments

In addition to the interview questions outlined above, it's a good idea to put in place pre-hire assessments. These measures will help to further ensure that the candidate you're considering has the skills and abilities necessary to successfully perform the job. Assessments can be as simple as a quick online search of the applicant's name—giving you access to social media profiles that offer a glimpse into their activities and values—along with any potential red flags. But to get a true feel for their professional skillset, you can require applicants to submit to online tests, including:

- Personality and cognitive assessments, which measure soft skills, including leadership ability, communication styles, and more.
- Skills assessments, that provide you with easy-to-interpret results to help you weed out unqualified applicants and hone-in on those with relevant skills.

Find out more information on pre-hire assessments in our article, [**The Value of Pre-Employment Assessments.**](#)



Employee-Focused • Onboarding



Onboarding for the Long Term

Job seekers today are more like consumers. They “shop” for the right employer, research companies through their online networks, and use that information to make career decisions. So, if finding and keeping your most valued employees is key to your company’s growth, it’s important that your brand is authentically represented throughout recruiting, onboarding and beyond.

When you think of onboarding, where is the starting line? Does the process begin when an employee accepts your offer? Or is it all initiated on their first day of employment?

When it comes to onboarding, many organizations load a new hire down with paperwork, job expectations, and much more in their first few days on the job. The focus? How to quickly get them started in their new role, so they can become a productive member of the team as soon as possible. As you can imagine, this can be an overwhelming experience for even the most seasoned individuals.

If you’re working to put in place a comprehensive recruitment program, you’ve invested your time and energy into:

- Defining, adopting, and communicating your culture and values
- Putting clear and consistent processes in place for sourcing and interviewing candidates
- Assessing and reassessing candidates to ensure they are the best fit possible



Once you and your preferred candidate have decided to move forward, now is not the time to throw processes out the window. In fact, initiating and maintaining contact with a new hire before their first day on the job, can have a significant impact on how well they adapt to their new environment, how they view you—as an employer, and how quickly they become a valued member of your team.

Employee-focused Onboarding: Step by Step

You've heard the old adage: You only get one chance to make a first impression. When you hire a new employee, you only get one opportunity to help them feel prepared, welcome, and supported during the process of onboarding.

Starting a new job is exciting, but it's also a time when people can feel vulnerable and anxious. The more you can do to provide security, support, information, and kindness during this time, the better chance your employee will have a smooth transition period—from new hire to an inspired and productive team player.

A few tips to help you put in place employee-focused onboarding processes:

Step 1: Before Day One

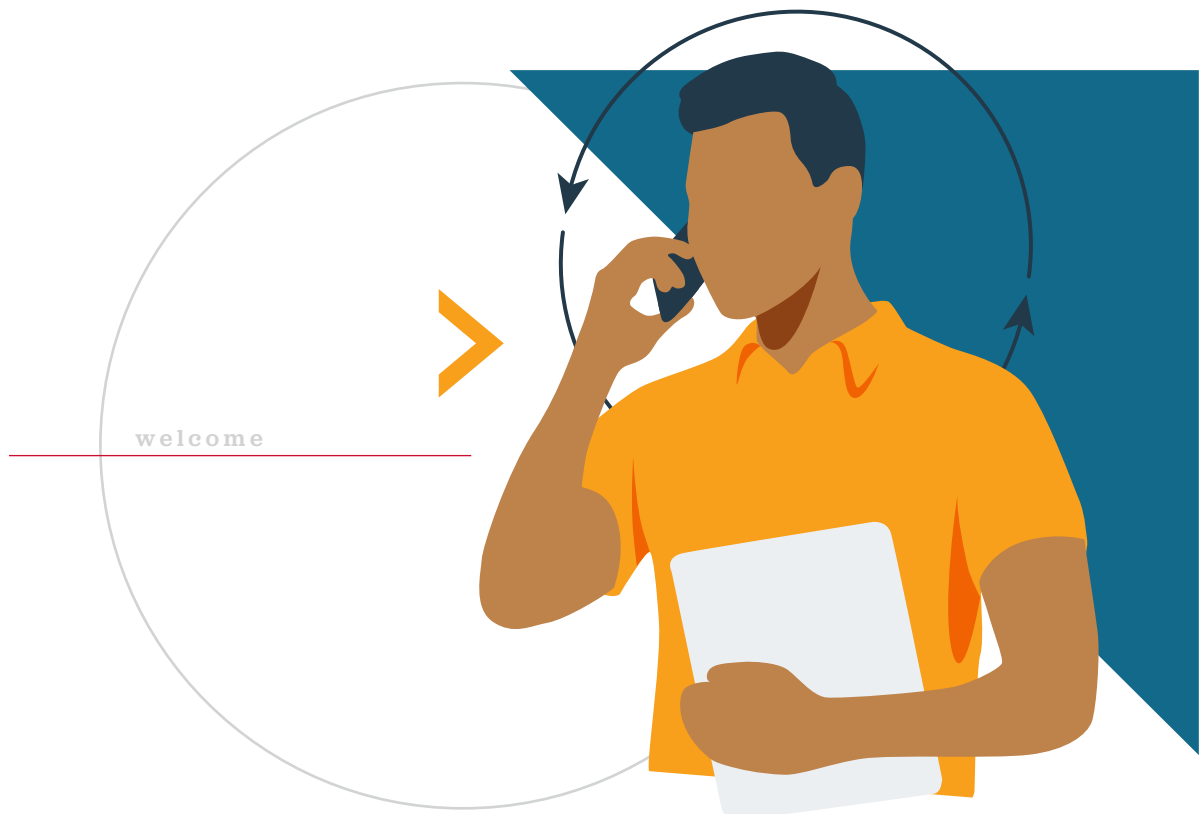
Step 2: On Day One

Step 3: First 90 Days



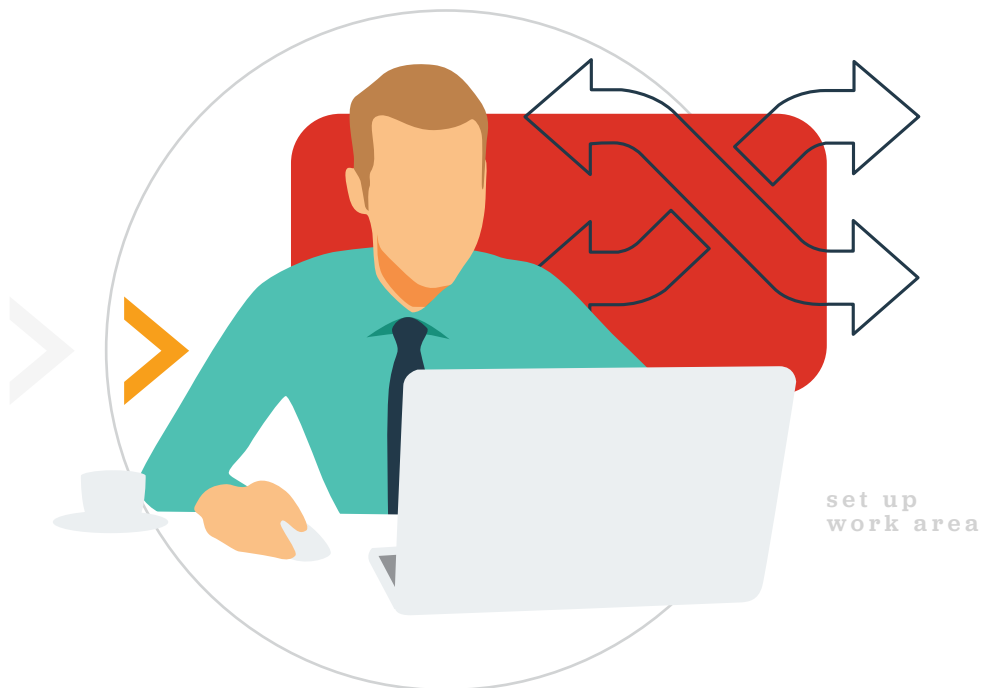
Step 1: Before Day One

- Make a call or send a “welcome” email—with written information or a linked video of what to expect on their first day.
- Get email set up ahead-of-time, so they can receive communications prior to their arrival, and be ready to go on Day One.
- Establish an online onboarding application process to send documentation electronically (i.e. W2 forms; payroll forms; employee handbook; online benefits enrollment information, etc.) This helps to streamline the process and get any potential questions answered or information gaps worked out ahead-of-time.
- Resend job description, role, and expectations; team member roles and responsibilities (i.e. organizational chart); and provide any background information on projects in motion.



Step 2: On Day One

- Set up your new team member's desk/work area with all necessary office supplies and information.
- Personalize their welcome with a welcome gift that signifies you're excited to have them on board and part of the team.
- Assign a "buddy" to help them feel comfortable and more easily acclimate to their new environment; someone who can show them around, introduce them to coworkers, take them to lunch, and answer the simple questions: Where is the break room or the printer? What are the security codes and where do I get my badge photo?
- Have a list of FAQs at their workstation and the names and contact info of those who can help answer any questions related to onboarding paperwork, etc.



Step 3: First 90 Days

- Set defined and measurable goals (KPIs) for your new employee; define how the company's culture and values tie into these goals; walk them through expectations and evaluate performance at the end of a defined time period.
- During evaluation, provide and receive feedback; help them to see how they added value; refine and set goals for next 90 days.
- Provide on-the-job, and other necessary training.

Tip

Make a habit of continually interviewing recent hires at defined intervals (i.e. 30 days; 90 days) to get feedback that helps, if necessary, to improve and refine the process.

evaluate



Feedback is critical throughout the entire employee lifecycle, but it is especially important during the first 90 days of employment. By meeting at regular intervals (i.e. once per month), managers can offer useful feedback and identify any issues or obstacles that might be inhibiting an

employee from reaching their goals. These conversations also provide a check-in to assess how employees are measuring against defined performance goals, and they help to eliminate any surprises when performance reviews come around.



TARGET
RECRUITING



ADDRESS
ISSUES

The Road to Retention



Smart Recruiting and Retention

One of the most difficult challenges to overcome, especially in small to midsize companies, is when one of your best employees chooses to leave. Research shows that happy and valued employees are the truest predictor of a company's long-term success. So, how do you avoid, whenever possible, the loss of your most important team members?

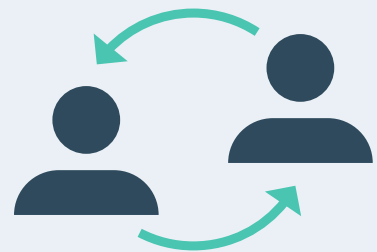
If you have in place—or plan to put in place—some or all of the recruiting efforts outlined in this guide, you're on your way to higher employee retention rates. Why? Because the more targeted you are in your hiring efforts, the more informed all parties are prior to employment—lessening the chance of miscommunication, surprises, or a “bad” fit.

Look to the past.

In addition to putting in place a comprehensive recruiting program, it's always a good idea to perform exit interviews with employees who choose to leave. This helps you to identify any concerning trends that may exist—especially if you are experiencing consistent, high turnover in the first 90 days of employment. These interviews and assessments will help you to pinpoint issues, so you can quickly address and cut down on avoidable turnover.

The most common reasons for avoidable turnover include:

- Lack of structure / goals
- No room for growth / no career track
- Lack of recognition
- Bad managers
- Trust issues
- Concerns about future of company
- Unstructured or reactionary recruiting/hiring processes



Improving Retention Rates

If your organization is dealing with a high instance of turnover—especially among high-performing, valued employees—targeted recruiting efforts will help. But without addressing issues identified (through exit interviews and other efforts), you’re only tackling half the problem, and turnover will likely continue.

By combining smart recruiting with a commitment to tackle any cultural or management issues head on, you can begin to hire and retain high-quality team members. Below are some steps you can take to start turning it around:

- Define the traits of a high-performer and write it down; speak to those you currently have on staff and allow for open and honest conversation.
- Define key issues and make a plan to address them.
- Learn to look through the eyes of your employees. This will help you to understand their wants and needs and help you to develop a new employee experience around shared goals.



- Communicate, communicate, communicate.
- Create regular processes that include:
 - Goal definition
 - Regular reviews
 - Career track and employee development
 - Weekly or monthly discussions on wins/concerns
 - Recognize those who perform well and those who embody your mission and values.



Tip

Continue to “recruit” your employees throughout their career with your organization. Never lose sight of who is contributing to your success. Recognize their efforts and provide them with what they need to continue to succeed.

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To provide human resources solutions that make a difference, you need deep expertise in a variety of areas and a true compassion for helping and serving every single client and their employees. We've found that by doing so, our clients often share or adopt a similar company culture—one rooted in the belief that happy and valued employees are the truest predictor of a company's long-term success.



Visit gnapartners.com to learn more about how G&A Partners can help you grow your business and recruit, hire, and retain your best employees.

