



THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO ONBOARDING LEGAL PROFESSIONALS

Finding the right candidate for your legal team is only the first stage...

... in a successful hiring process. Once you've delivered the job offer, you need a plan to engage and empower your new employee from day one.

According to SHRM, 50% of people leave their new roles within the first four months. Additionally, up to half of all senior hires fail in the first 18 months too. The best way to address these challenges is to find a way to immerse each employee in the workings of your business. That's where your onboarding plan comes in.

Onboarding helps new hires to understand the performance and social expectations of their new position. From teaching crucial skills to ensuring your people feel like a part of your company culture, proper onboarding leads the way to an invested and productive new hire.

The Benefits of an Onboarding and Induction Programme

It's an employee's market in the Legal industry. Nearly 33% of new hires start looking for a different role within their first six months on the job (the number is higher for millennials). Additionally, around 23% of hires turn over before finishing their first year.

Building a high-performing team is a time-consuming and expensive process. Onboarding is one of the best ways to make sure that you retain the talent you spent so long finding. Organisations with an onboarding process achieve up to 62% greater new employee productivity, along with 50% better new hire retention.

Onboarding eliminates the "sink or swim" approach to welcoming someone new into your business and replaces it with a strategic and welcoming plan of action. With the right campaign you can:

- Reduce the costs of turnover: The costs of employee turnover can range between 100% and 300% of a replaced employee's salary.
 - Improve company culture: Helping new staff members to build bonds leads to more cohesive and positive company culture.
 - Boosts productivity: It takes up to 8 months for new employees to reach full productivity, but an onboarding programme can speed things up by showing team members what they need to do to be successful.
 - Improves employer brand: Sharing stories about your onboarding and induction process will show that you're an employer who invests in their people.
 - Attracts new talent: In a time when legal employees are looking for more than just a good salary from their jobs, an excellent onboarding plan can set you apart from the competition and improve your chance of finding great candidates.
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What is a Legal Onboarding Plan?

Employee onboarding is a crucial process of welcoming new employees onto your team. Some companies assume that this process only needs to last for a couple of days. However, to get the most out of a new staff member, it's important to offer guidance and support consistently, managing their growth as they mature.

Beyond making a new team member feel welcome, onboarding systems also ensure that your people are equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge to integrate into your workforce. According to Tayla N. Bauer of the Portland State University, the average onboarding process requires a focus on four C's:

- **Compliance:** The most fundamental aspect of onboarding, compliance refers to everything from essential company rules to legal procedures, dress codes, and government policies.
- **Clarification:** Even the most competent employees benefit from a breakdown of their job requirements. Clarification involves letting your people know exactly what's expected of them, and how their performance will be measured.
- **Culture:** Everyone in your team needs to feel connected to the overarching company culture. This process involves introducing people to the norms of the workplace, work ethics, and leadership techniques.
- **Connection:** Networking is crucial for any new hire. Ensuring that your people can interact well together provides not only a more positive workforce but also a more productive and efficient environment.

What Does a Best Practice Onboarding Plan Need to Include?

The best onboarding processes begin as early as possible. For some companies, the plan will start from the moment an employee accepts an offer. For others, it's possible to begin discussing onboarding details during the recruitment phase too.

Though each company has its unique issues and challenges to address during onboarding, the legal process will usually include some of the following tasks:

- **Teaching Employees How Things Work:** The first part of an onboarding process involves teaching your new people how your workplace functions on a day-to-day basis. This means letting them know where to park their car, where the bathrooms are, and where they need to go if they need support. You may also introduce your people to the unique language used in your environment, such as acronyms for roles or processes, or common terms their co-workers might use.
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- **Introducing Values and Norms:** Onboarding is all about assimilating employees into a new environment. Throughout the onboarding process, hiring managers will need to engage their staff in informal conversations about the history of the organisation, the brand image you're trying to build, and the values that are rewarded in the business. Mentors and peers can assist with this process by giving new people someone to emulate as they begin work in a new space.
 - **Defining Success:** Job descriptions aren't always clear when outlining what an employee needs to do to be truly successful in a role. Make sure your new team members understand how their performance will be measured in the months ahead, so they know what kind of outcomes they need to focus on. Address any accountabilities and boundaries that the individual may need to be aware of and provide them with resources that will assist them in delivering the results that you want.
 - **Welcoming New People into the Community:** New employees are likely to feel isolated in your business at first. They're outsiders coming from a completely different environment. Setting up opportunities for these individuals to bond with their new teams will make them feel more confident and supported in their roles. Additionally, by ensuring that your people don't feel lonely at work, you can reduce the chances that they'll leave for another job.
 - **Set up Early Wins:** Finally, giving each employee a clear set of goals is a valuable part of the onboarding process, because it allows you to demonstrate clear expectations. Around 60% of companies say that they don't use short-term goals with new hires. Assign tasks that you'd like your new staff member to complete within the first 3, 6 or 9 months, then meet with them regularly to see how they're progressing towards their targets.
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What to Do Before Your New Employee Starts

The act of onboarding a new employee is often one of the most crucial factors in ensuring your talent will be productive and content.

The faster you can get started with the process, the better. The Aberdeen group even suggests that integrating onboarding in the recruitment process can lead to better performance from new people.

Before a new employee starts, ask yourself:

- What kind of goals will you set for this person?
- How much do they know about the work environment/culture?
- How long will your onboarding process last?
- How will you measure the success of the programme?
- What are the major milestones for the process? (e.g., 1 day, 1 week, 1 month, 3 months, 6 months, 1 year)

As soon as you offer a job to someone new, give them access to as much information as possible, including a glossary of company acronyms, photos of the people they'll be working with, and a copy of the employee handbook. Other things to cover include:

- Setting up the new person's desk, computer, password and email address
- Making sure they know where to go for guidance
- Filling out paperwork and crucial forms
- Providing them with a list of their responsibilities

Now that you're prepared, let's look at what you can do to onboard your legal employee one milestone at a time.

On the First Day...

The first day will feature a combination of housekeeping tasks and educational moments. For instance, housekeeping will include letting people know where the bathrooms are, where people go for lunch, and how they can get in touch with crucial colleagues. You can also offer education in the form of company history, a list of critical values, and a complete guide to the role that the employee has been hired for.

Help your new addition to settle in by:

- Delivering a crystal-clear overview of what their responsibilities are, and how their progress will be measured going forward.
- Taking them on a tour of the office and introducing them to the people that they will be working with both regularly, and on occasion.
- Greeting the employee in a friendly way when they arrive on-premise (let your receptionist know to expect the new team member).
- Explaining the ins and outs of the workplace. For instance, when do people usually take their lunch, are there any cultural experiences to be aware of, like dress-down Fridays?
- Making sure their workspace is set up for them with all the necessary supplies that they'll need.

Some employers also use welcome gifts like flowers or a branded coffee mug to make newcomers feel like part of the team. The smallest gestures can reduce some of the stress associated with the first day of a new job.



During the First Week...

Studies suggest that three-fourths of new hires consider training to be crucial on the first week of a new job. Though you hired your employee because they had the right skills, it's up to you to show them how they can use those skills to shine on the job.

During the first week:

- Schedule time for training: Don't inundate your hires with too much information too fast. Provide training in manageable chunks and offer opportunities for shadowing too.
- Immerse them into the team: Make sure that the new hire is welcome at all team meetings and set up one-to-one sessions with their managers so that they can deliver frequent feedback.
- Assign small, useful starter tasks: Focus on getting your newcomer up-to-date with the ins and outs of their job through tasks that aren't too challenging.
- Provide plenty of time for networking and interacting: Encourage your employee to go to the break room for lunch and take part in after-work activities so that they can begin to develop bonds.

By the end of the first week, your new hire will understand the basics of being a part of your team. They'll feel clear about their role, and how they can interact with other team members, and they will be in the process of making some new friends.

During the first week, your new member of staff will also have an opportunity to find out where they fit within your current company culture, which means that they'll feel less "out of place" in the coming weeks.

During the First Month...

The first month is a process of continuous improvement and development for new team members. Your people will be learning what it's like to be a dynamic part of your team, and they'll also start to come up with personal goals for what they'd like to achieve with your business in the future.

Set up small one-to-one interactions in the first month where you can discuss any questions your new legal employee might have and clarify any uncertainties. Don't miss the opportunity to ask for your staff member's feedback on the onboarding process so far too. This is a great time to find out whether they need any extra support in a specific area like getting to know new people or understanding the tools they're expected to use.

It's particularly useful to encourage your people to choose a mentor or "hero" employee that they'd like to turn to for guidance by the end of the first month.

A mentor at work can be a valuable tool when you're getting started -particularly if you're exploring a new role or sector. The Aberdeen group found that high-performing companies are 2 and a half times more likely to assign mentors or coaches to the onboarding process.

If your employee can't find a mentor by themselves, consider assigning them one based on factors like shared ambitions. Once you find a mentor for your new arrival, encourage regular meetings between them, as well as shadowing sessions where the more recent employee can learn from the veteran.

During the First 3 Months (90 Days)

The most successful onboarding programmes don't happen overnight. It can take several months to welcome someone into your space. During the first 3 months, remember to check in frequently, schedule interviews, and give your employees plenty of opportunities to air any concerns they may have.

According to the Society for Human Resources, the first 3 months of your onboarding strategy will concentrate on making hires feel:

- More confident in their roles
- Clear on the expectations you have for them
- Socially integrated into the team
- Immersed in the company culture

To achieve these four goals:

- Deliver plenty of continued training opportunities: Training and shadowing must continue until your employee feels confident and comfortable in their role. Studies show that people can forget up to 79% of what they've learned in a month with no follow-up educational activities.
- Schedule interactions with crucial people in the business: Make sure that your new staff members have a chance to meet with business leaders, shareholders and executives, not just the legal employees that they'll be working with every day, this will make them feel more immersed within the company culture..
- Assign the first major task or project: Start giving your newcomer a chance to demonstrate their skills and prove their value with significant tasks. Be clear on the objectives of the project and the expected deliverables before they get started.

Remember to regularly solicit feedback from your new hire too. Ask them what's working for them in the current onboarding process, and what they would like to change. As you continue to welcome diverse new people onto your team, you'll find that everyone has their own onboarding needs and preferences.

During the First 6 Months (180 Days) ...

The Aberdeen group suggests that only 15% of companies continue to onboard after 6 months. However, 90% of people decide whether to stay or go within that initial period.

When the first 3 months have passed, you're dealing with an employee who understands the basics of your organisation and knows how to perform well in their job. However, this doesn't mean onboarding needs to stop. The goal between the 3- and 6-month milestones is to encourage ongoing development in your staff members.

Maintain progress by:

- **Performing an Employee Assessment:** After the first 6 months, conduct an assessment to see how much progress your new staff member has made so far. Discuss both the expectations you have for your employee and any personal goals they may have set for themselves.
- **Provide Plenty of Recognition:** During the full first 6 months, don't forget to recognise anything that your newcomer accomplishes. The more you can provide useful feedback, the quicker your team member will settle into their role. During your 6-month review, help the individual see the impact that their work has made on the business to give greater meaning to their role.
- **Introduce New Functional Training Opportunities:** Now that you've finished delivering basic training, it's time to look for development opportunities that serve your new employee's goals. For instance, do they want to become a legal manager? Look for ways they can learn leadership skills. If they hope to move to a new role in the next 5 years, work on expanding their knowledge in techniques crucial to that position.

The first 6 months is an excellent opportunity for employers to show their people that they're truly invested in their progress. With feedback and new training opportunities, you can help your people to visualise a long-term future with your organisation.

During the First 12 Months...

According to a professor from Harvard Business School, Michael Watkins, new employees only begin to show their real value after the first 6 to 7 months. In the period between the 6-month and 12-month milestones, you'll be able to start uncovering your new hire's true potential and planning what you can do to develop them in the years to come.

The end of the first year is the period when the typical onboarding experience transitions into a process of retention and ongoing employee engagement. As well as shifting from on-the-job legal training to continuous development, make sure that you:

- **Arrange informal meetings with employees:** During this time, discuss the things that you think the staff member can do better, and ask them for feedback on your onboarding process. This is a chance for you to develop your strategy for future employees.
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- Discuss plans for the year ahead: Let your newcomer know that they're now a valuable part of your team for the long-term and share with them some of your goals for the years ahead. Ask them about their targets too and see where you can make the two concepts align. For instance, if you want to expand your business, you'll need new managers. If your employee wants to earn a promotion, you can look for ways to help them become a good candidate for managerial positions.
- Celebrate the first year: Draw attention to the challenges that your employee overcame during the first year and show them that you appreciate their hard work. This is a great way to build their confidence and convince them that they're making a difference to your team.

Who Is Involved in Creating an Onboarding Plan?

When it comes to onboarding new employees, responsibility needs to be shared throughout your entire company. Every team member plays their part in:

- Making the new person feel welcome
- Introducing them to business expectations
- Getting them ready for success in a new role

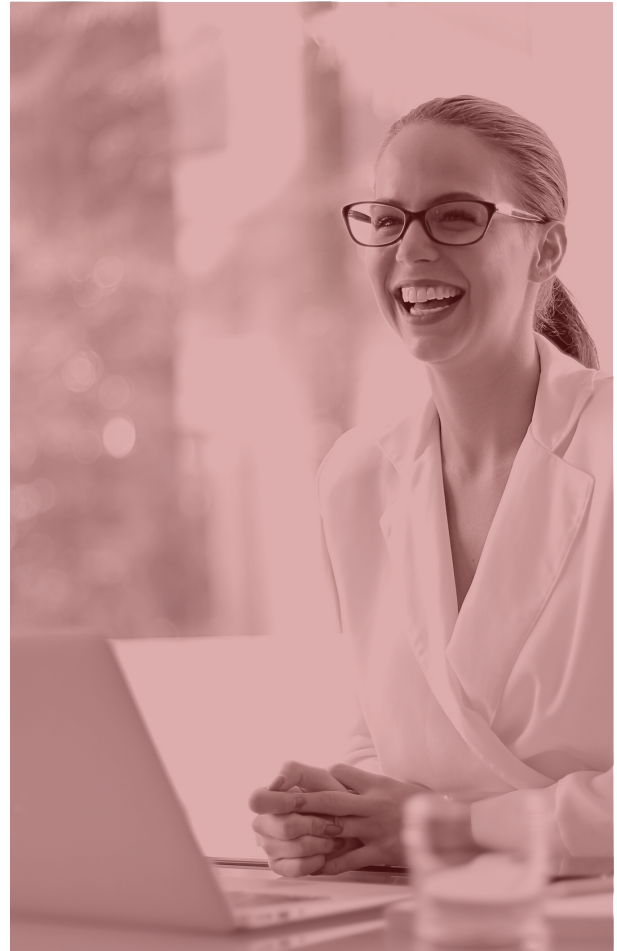
Some of the people included in your onboarding team will be:

- Human Resources: These individuals play a major role in orienting your newcomers and making sure that they're prepared for work with your business. They may deliver handbooks, checklists, and training, as well as ensure that the proper paperwork is filled out.
 - Managers: The manager of the new hire will usually be responsible for the most hands-on duties of onboarding, which includes giving tours of the office, introducing them to colleagues, and making sure that the employee understands business policies. Managers also introduce your hires to the values, goals, and missions of the company.
 - Colleagues and peers: A new hire isn't just working with a manager in their new role. The new staff member's colleagues have a responsibility to make that person feel like a part of the team. They can answer any questions that a person may have about basic processes, and even act as "buddies" to guide an employee through the first few weeks of their new role.
 - Executives and Owners: While many leaders, business owners, and executives won't play a huge role in the onboarding of a new employee, they can make an effort to welcome the addition to their team and introduce them to the business.
 - The Employee: The employee themselves also has a crucial role to play in onboarding. These new people need to be committed to learning about a business and integrating themselves into a team, or your onboarding plan won't work.
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CLOSING THOUGHTS

When it comes to the value and impact of onboarding, the data speaks for itself. Effective legal onboarding programs improve productivity, increase employee retention and enhance the culture of your entire company.

Completing a structured onboarding process also makes a staff member 58% more likely to remain with an organisation for 3 years or more.



In a competitive environment marked by talent shortages, onboarding is how you ensure that you keep the new people you worked so hard to find.

Once you've invested in the right recruitment process, your onboarding strategy will allow you to unlock the potential of your carefully chosen talent.

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We understand that while talent is your greatest asset -it can also be your scarcest resource -which is why you need a recruitment partner with the market expertise, insight and network to deliver the right people at the right time.

Clayton Legal has been partnering with law firms across the country since 1999 and during that time has built up an enviable reputation for trust and reliability. We provide an experienced and credible voice in the market by being able to demonstrate a detailed knowledge of the legal sector's talent agenda.

Talent is all about people and just like you, our consultants are true experts in their field with a real drive for excellence which informs everything they do.

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