Settling in a new employee
A step-by-step guide

Be prepared
Getting them off to a good start

The best candidate for the job has accepted your offer of employment. You’re keen to get them started and they are excited and eager to impress.

But you are also aware that they have a lot to learn about their new job, and have yet to build working relationships with colleagues or make contact with customers.

What kind of start they get off to will play a key part in shaping their attitude to you and the job. Will they become a valued member of your company, and be happy and productive in their work?

This may largely depend on how you help to settle them in. The first few weeks are critical. Eight out of ten staff who leave their employer are new employees.

You need to:
  - Get the basics right;
  - Put in place a well-planned induction timetable;
  - Comply with the law.

This tool is aimed at small firms, and line and team managers in larger organisations.

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**Be prepared**
**Know the basics**
- Send the new employee a small pack of information to give them a basic understanding of the business before they start.
- This can go with the letter offering them the job. The letter should include the main details of their contract – for example, place of work, job title, hours and pay – so there are no misunderstandings at the outset.
- Organise a structured induction so the new employee becomes clear on:
  - Their terms and conditions of employment;
  - Who’s who at the business and its aims;
  - The performance and behaviour you expect from the employee;
  - Company rules and what happens if they are broken;
  - Health and safety.
- Tailor the induction to suit the new employee – someone who is fresh out of university is likely to need a different induction to a new employee who has extensive experience with other companies, or someone returning to the world of work after a long absence.
- Appoint someone to act as a mentor to help with the new employee’s day-to-day questions after the induction.

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Know the basics

**Settling in a new employee**

**Step 1**
Before they start

- Draw up a checklist of what is being covered in the induction.
- Decide who will greet the new employee on their first day and who will conduct the induction.
  - Different parts can be handled by different staff to draw on their expertise.
  - But, if you are the owner and manager, the induction may have to be done by you, with input, if appropriate, from any other staff you may have.
  - Work out how long the induction should last – it does not have to be confined to the first day. It may spread over several days or weeks, depending on how it ties in with training for the job.

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Their first day

**Step 3**
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**Sample induction checklist** (see the Acas booklet Recruitment and induction)
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Step 2
Their first day

First impressions do count – so don’t forget the warm welcome.

- Give the new employee and all involved in conducting the induction a copy of the checklist so they can keep track of what has been covered and by whom.
- Also, make sure the new starter’s documents are all in hand – National Insurance number, P45 etc.
- Tell them about your business:
  - Who’s who and;
  - How the business works, its aims and plans for the future.
- Introduce them to the head of the business, the manager and colleagues in their team, and other managers and staff they may have less contact with.

Putting a name to a face
The new employee will want to avoid being rude by forgetting names, so make it easy for them: Give them an aide memoir with job titles, names, phone numbers, email addresses and photos.
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Step 3
The next few days

Tell them about the job:

- Explain the role fully, how their performance will be assessed, and possible opportunities for development, training and routes for promotion.
- Run through their terms and conditions so they understand what they mean in practice and details of any period of probation.
- Explain the company’s important rules:
  - What behaviour is expected and what is not acceptable, and work practices;
  - How problems concerning performance, discipline and absence, and serious complaints against staff, are handled. These policies should be referred to in the employee’s Written Statement of Terms and Conditions of Employment.
  - Any other important policies such as the use of the company internet, email and phones.
  - Cover the small details such as dress code, car parking and canteen facilities.

Legal Check: Health and safety
You must:

- Outline any health and safety precautions employees must take to protect them from harm;
- Give details of any training they need to do their jobs safely, and provide any equipment and protective clothing;
- Ensure employees know what to do if there is a fire or another emergency;
- Explain your insurance policy, in case an employee gets hurt or ill through work;
- Let employees know where they can find toilets, washing and first aid facilities, and drinking water.
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Step 4
On-going support

- Choose a member of staff as the new employee’s mentor or ‘buddy’ to help answer questions after the induction. They will also become a point of contact to further develop the employee’s understanding of the business and make them feel they belong.
- If you are the owner-manager, the mentor may have to be you.
- After, say, six months check with the new employee how useful the induction has proved. This could be part of a general review of how they are settling in, and include a decision at the end of any probationary period.

Special attention
Some employees may need special attention to address issues of confidence or anxiety, particularly:
- School and college leavers;
- Employees with disabilities;
- People returning to work after a break in employment, or changing their work situation;
- Management/professional trainees;
- Minorities.

For more on this, go to of the Acas booklet Recruitment and induction
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Useful tools

Real-life situation

You spent a long time getting the selection and interview process right, and now you’re itching to get your new employee started.

Surely, there’s no better way for them to learn than throwing them in at the deep end? Also, they need to get moving straight away on a big new order. You can always fill in the gaps later.

So, what do you do next? Get them working on that order?

In an ideal world, the employee’s first day or days should be devoted to their induction. Otherwise, they may start to question where they fit in – and that’s how misunderstandings start.

However, the realities of running a small business can mean that best-laid plans sometimes have to be put on hold for a while.

If that new order really has to be the priority, then explain the position to your new employee and how vital it is for the business that they help with it on their first day, and apologise for having to postpone their induction.

But, at the same time, reassure them that you are fully committed to them having a full induction as soon as possible so they understand their role and genuinely feel part of the business. Also explain the need for everyone to be flexible in a small business, where there can be only a few staff to meet a sudden influx of demands.

Next, as soon as the order is in hand, dedicate the new employee’s time to their induction – and thank them for their understanding and flexibility.

But first on day one, before they actually do start on that order, you must ensure they know how to do their job safely so they do not harm themselves or their colleagues, they know what to do in an emergency, and they have been shown the way to the toilet, washing, first aid, drinking water and rest room facilities.
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Myth busting: True or false?

The induction – it’s just another of those HR creations adding a tier in the workload of running my business. They would do just as well picking up everything as they went along.

Yes, they will pick up a lot of information about their job and the company as the weeks and months go by. But if you rely on your new employee gleaning information by chance, they are also likely to pick up a lot of mis-information because they have not been properly informed.

Also, if you skip the induction, you may unwittingly give a message that you can’t really be bothered to train the new employee correctly.

The induction does not have to be confined to the first day – it may spread over several days or weeks, depending on how it ties in with training for the job.

The induction should be the start of ongoing development, possibly with the help of an experienced colleague acting as a mentor, or ‘buddy’, to answer questions along the way.

And don’t forget, you must legally look after your employees’ health and safety from day one.

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And if you want to know more...

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