

Internship Onboarding Guide

What is Onboarding?

Onboarding is the process of helping new interns adjust to social and performance aspects of their new internships quickly and smoothly. This should always be a priority for HR departments. Formal onboarding refers to a written set of coordinated policies and procedures that assist an employee or intern in adjusting to his or her new job in terms of both tasks and socialization. Informal Onboarding refers to the process by which an employee or intern learns about his or her new job without an explicit organizational plan.

Onboarding Outcomes for an Internship Program

- Create a structured, formal onboarding process. Ensure the process is one to two weeks.
- Write an internship plan which indicates the summary and job responsibilities for the Intern.
- Ask the new intern to read the internship plan during their first week. Have them review and familiarize themselves with the position description and responsibilities.
- Provide a method that allows new interns the ability to ask questions.
- Come up with a list of questions and answers covering common areas of concern.
- Provide new interns with a mentor.
- Make the first day on the internship special (ex: Provide a promotional item from the company or Take them to lunch and get to know them).
- Treat the process as a celebration, rather than an administrative task.
- Ensure they have the tools, information, and support needed to be productive.
- Mentorship-style programs often work best to assist and reinforce training and/or policies as well as encourage office relationships.
- Cover best practices, technology, & equipment.
- Have goals clearly stated.
- Clearly define attendance, arrival/departure times, conduct, expectations and any termination policies.
- Ask the exiting intern to re-read the internship plan and have them conduct a review and add any projects and tasks they may feel should have been included in the position description and used during hiring. You may also encourage them to include any other experiences they would have liked to have experienced during the internship period. This practice will help the administrators of the internship program ensure the position stays current, is relevant to learning outcomes and is consistently reviewed.
- Stay in touch with interns after they complete their internship.
- Consider offering to be available as a professional resource. This would be a kind gesture for the intern's hard work.