Cezanne™

ONBOARDING
new employees:
The facts HR needs to know

A report by Cezanne HR

Introduction

It's a widely known fact of life that you only get one chance to make a great first impression. Those first interactions with a person, a place or a product can shape your whole relationship or attitude towards them.

The same is true of businesses and their employees. While many will have joined a business on the strength of its job advert, its industry reputation, or the prospect of an enhanced salary, those crucial first impressions will still count for a heck of a lot.

The onboarding of new hires is a company's best – and only – chance to make that dazzling first impression. It can win hearts and minds and also act as a jumping off point for successful and long-lasting careers. Not only will the employee

benefit from a rewarding experience, but their organisation will also reap the rewards of having an engaged and motivated employee on board.

Given that people professionals will know the true value of great onboarding, it makes sense that every organisation creates the best possible experience for their new hires. But here's the question: are employers successfully integrating their new hires and helping them to understand their new position and job requirements, or are they being set up to fail?

> **"Onboarding is a magic moment when new employees decide to stay engaged or become disengaged. It offers an imprinting window when you can make an impression that stays with new employees for the duration of their careers."**
>
> **Amy Hirsh Robinson,** The Interchange Group

The true state of onboarding

To help us draw an accurate picture of what onboarding for employees really looks like, we conducted a comprehensive survey in June 2022 of 1,000 employees across the UK and Ireland. Our respondent base was a broad mix of ages and demographics and were employed by companies of between 251 and 5,000 employees.
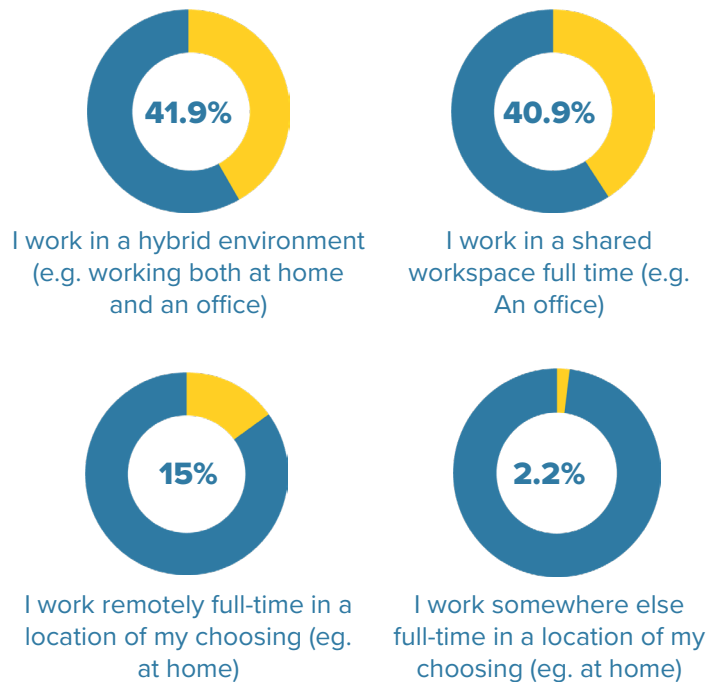
The answers contained within this report will help people professionals to understand the key issues affecting the successful onboarding of new hires. It will also highlight the areas which employees believe are the most important, what requires improvement, and the actions HR can take to create effective onboarding strategies.

The survey results

To begin our survey, we wanted to find out where people completed their day-to-day duties. The largest proportion of employees we surveyed worked in hybrid environments, with the traditional shared workspace coming a close second.

Despite the much-publicised popularity of home or remote working, less than a fifth of employees we surveyed worked from a remote location full-time.

Where do you work?

41.9%

I work in a hybrid environment (e.g. working both at home and an office)

40.9%

I work in a shared workspace full time (e.g. An office)

15%

I work remotely full-time in a location of my choosing (eg. at home)

2.2%

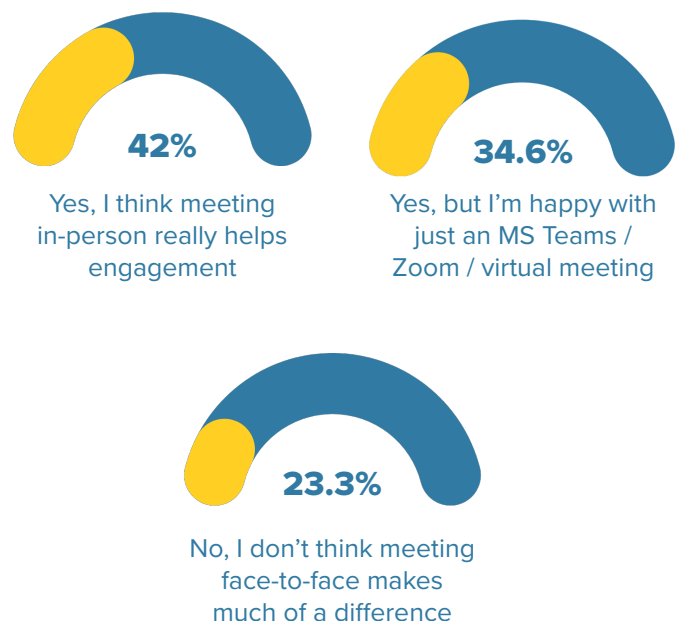I work somewhere else full-time in a location of my choosing (eg. at home)

Onboarding remote-working employees? Don't forget face-to-face introductions...

A significant percentage of respondents who work remotely felt that face-to-face meetings with new colleagues are vital when building long-lasting engagement. And it's easy to understand why, too.

"Face-to-face" meetings can help trigger a much wider range of physiological responses, such as trust, empathy and warmth. These responses can help promote collaboration and also give a much more personal feel to proceedings. In addition, they can also help convey a company's workplace culture in a more meaningful way than an employee handbook or a virtual meet and greet could.

As an HR professional, you can take the lead in educating the business about the value of face-to-face meetings. Although remote working employees may not always be able to meet their colleagues face-to-face (be it due to location or time differences), it should always be an option on the table for them.

Do you feel meeting new colleagues face-to-face can help new starters build engagement with a business?

42%

Yes, I think meeting in-person really helps engagement

34.6%

Yes, but I'm happy with just an MS Teams / Zoom / virtual meeting

23.3%

No, I don't think meeting face-to-face makes much of a difference

Over a fifth of all new hires didn't know what to expect when they started their job.

Over a fifth of employees we surveyed said they were provided little or no onboarding before their first day on the job. Perhaps more worryingly, was the fact this figure rose to **27%** for remote workers. Interestingly, respondents in senior management roles appeared to have the better onboarding experience of all employees: with only **12%** of them saying they received little or no onboarding.

Effective onboarding should be for every employee joining a business. It should also start as soon as a candidate accepts a job offer – not when they 'walk through the door' on their first day. Not only will this help alleviate 'first day nerves', it will also help them to settle in quicker and really hit the ground running. Pre-start activities could include:

• Keeping in regular contact with new hires between them accepting and starting work with a business

• Letting them know what to expect on their first few days

• Providing a forum or point of contact for any questions they may have

• Sending out new starter paperwork so they can get it completed before they join

• 'Introducing' them to their team via profiles in your onboarding portal or private social media group

• If applicable, inviting them to their new place of work to become acclimatised to their surroundings.

Onboarding is the process of introducing new employees into an organisation and usually starts before your first day. Thinking about your own experience, which of these statements do you agree with?

39%
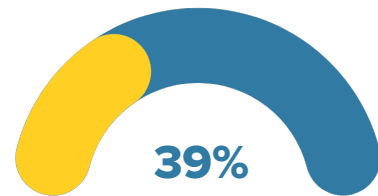
My current company onboarded me really well. I felt confident and part of the team from the day I joined

40%
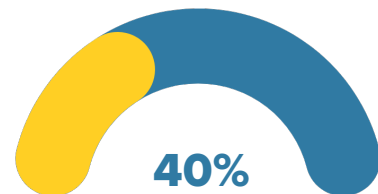
My current company onboarded me well enough. I felt I knew just enough to get started in my new role

21.5%
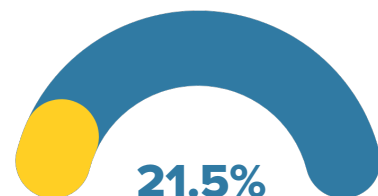
My current company provided little or no onboarding before my first day. I didn't know what to expect when I started

"Nearly a third of employees who failed to turn up to a new job said it was down to a bad experience with an organisation following a job offer. In addition, a 2009 Aberdeen study revealed that 86% of their respondents felt that a new hire's decision to stay with a company long-term is made within the first six months of employment."

Cezanne HR, "Effective Onboarding: The Fundamental Dos and Don'ts for HR "
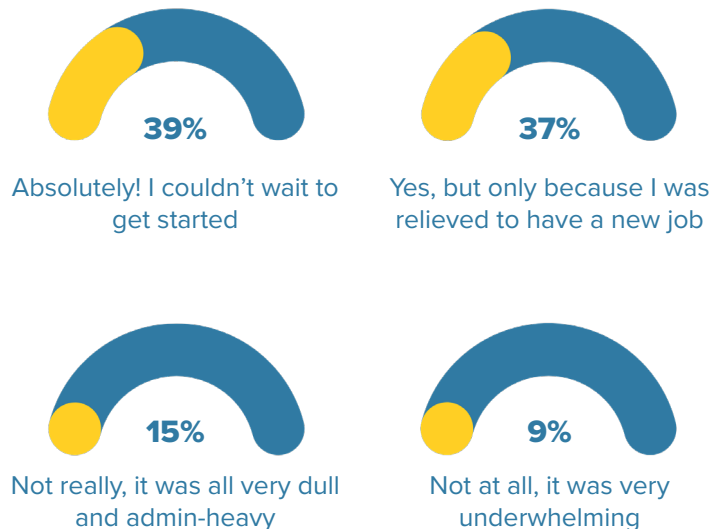
Over 60% of employees weren't motivated or excited by their onboarding experience.

Onboarding should be an exciting journey for new employees. After all, starting a new job should be something they look forward to! So, why have so many found their onboarding experiences underwhelming?

New hires will undoubtedly be busy learning the intricacies of their new role and settling into a new team. The last thing they'll need is to be bombarded by huge volumes of emails on their first few days at work. So, look to get all essential new starter paperwork completed before they join.

It'll also be the case they'll want to get off to a flying start in their role. If they're having to wait days for equipment or access to do their jobs, that initial spark of enthusiasm may just go out. Lastly, consider if you need to tailor your organisation's onboarding experience to different roles - rather than provide a one-size-fits-all experience.

Did your onboarding experience help you feel excited and motivated about your new role?

39%
Absolutely! I couldn't wait to get started

37%
Yes, but only because I was relieved to have a new job

15%
Not really, it was all very dull and admin-heavy

9%
Not at all, it was very underwhelming

Nearly a quarter of all new employees didn't hear from their new line manager before starting their role.

Considering the run up to starting a new job is such a delicate stage of an employee's journey, it was surprising to discover that over **22%** of employees we surveyed didn't hear a thing from their managers before they started their new role. This figure increased dramatically to **34%** for workers aged 54 and over.
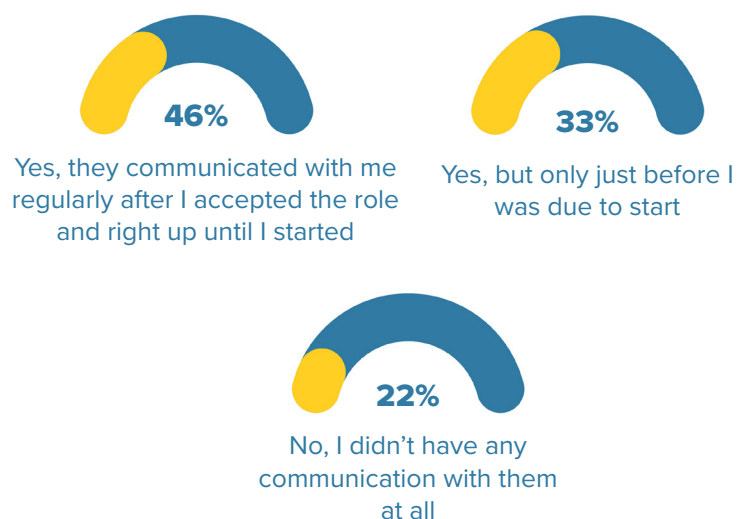
HR should encourage managers to contact their new joiners to confirm their role and duties, and what their first week at work will look like. This will help them to fully prepare for their first day and get off to the best possible start.

Things HR can do include:

• Sending them information about where they need to be on their first day, including the site address, time, department and person they'll need to report to

• Letting them know who to contact if they are delayed on their first day

• Offering advice on dress code

• If the role is remote, make sure they know what kind of tech or equipment you'll be providing, when it will be delivered and who will be in contact with them to set it up.

Did your line manager communicate with you before your first day in the job?

46%
Yes, they communicated with me regularly after I accepted the role and right up until I started

33%
Yes, but only just before I was due to start

22%
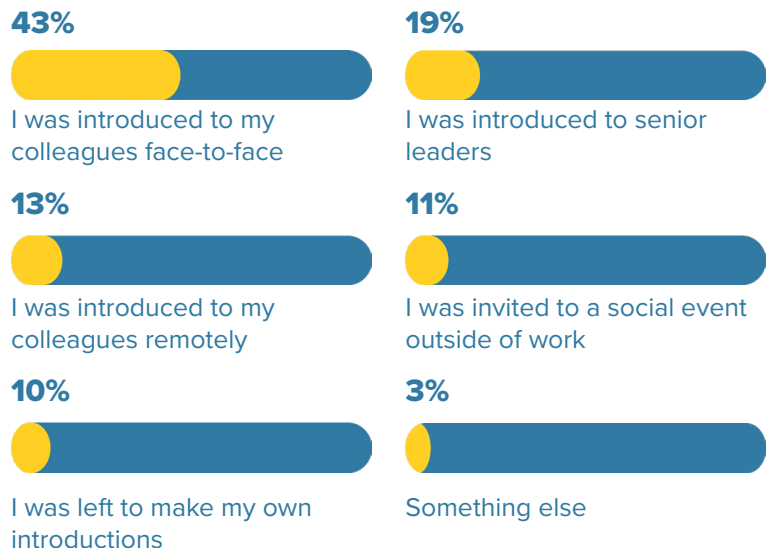No, I didn't have any communication with them at all

Face-to-face meetings with colleagues are still a popular method of helping new hires settle into their roles. But, that's not enough.

As our research confirms, introducing new hires to colleagues is something virtually every organisation does. However, we found no correlation between how well employees felt they had been onboarded (or how confident they were in their choice of employer) and whether or not they'd been introduced to their colleagues. It was much more impacted by:

• how much contact they'd had with their new employers before they started

• the on-the-job training they received

• whether they had the right equipment when they started and

• appropriate level of check-ins.

While meeting colleagues for real will be a big part of any good onboarding experience, it's critical that HR don't forget the other impacting factors mentioned above.

How did your employer help you to settle into the business?

43%
I was introduced to my colleagues face-to-face

19%
I was introduced to senior leaders

13%
I was introduced to my colleagues remotely

11%
I was invited to a social event outside of work

10%
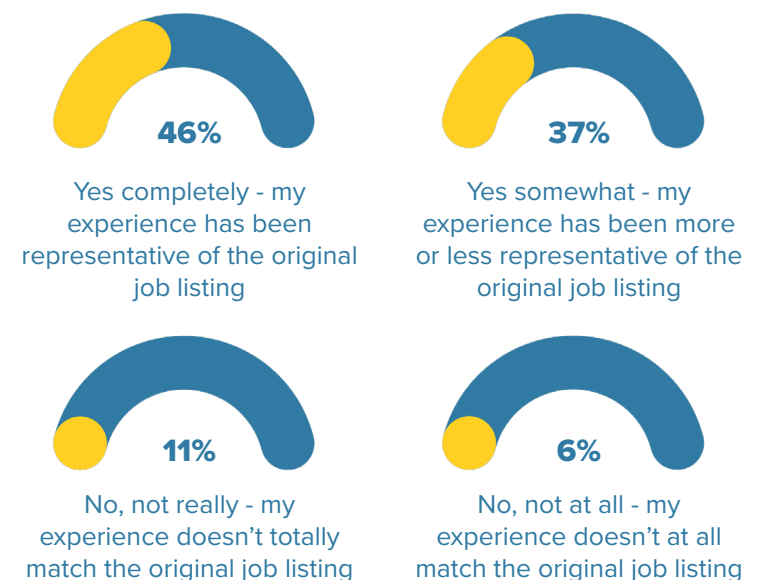I was left to make my own introductions

3%
Something else

Nearly a fifth of all employees believe they were misled by their employer's original job listing.

One of the more worrying results was discovering that **17%** of all employees surveyed believed the job they applied for was not representative of their actual role. This number rose to **25%** for those who worked remotely.

This kind of mismatch will have a negative impact on engagement and retention and is something HR needs to address quickly. Alongside vetting job descriptions and educating recruiting managers, it makes sense for HR teams to have their own check-ins with new employees a month or so after they join. You can learn more about effective check-ins by following this link.

By asking questions about how the onboarding process could be improved, or where expectations weren't met, they can uncover where issues arrive and reset expectations if required.

Thinking about when you applied for your current role, do your job responsibilities and expectations match the original job listing?

46%
Yes completely - my experience has been representative of the original job listing

37%
Yes somewhat - my experience has been more or less representative of the original job listing

11%
No, not really - my experience doesn't totally match the original job listing

6%
No, not at all - my experience doesn't at all match the original job listing

New starter training is common for many, but some feel they're missing out...

Our survey discovered that on-the-job training appears to be a common method of helping new hires settle into their roles. However, over a quarter (**26%**) of new remote hires got very little to no training as part of their onboarding. In addition, a fifth of respondents aged 18–24 years old also said they didn't receive any form of help in preparing for their new roles.

Having a well-designed onboarding program that includes an element of training can help new hires settle into their jobs quicker and feel more confident, too. In fact, with only **4%** of respondents saying they didn't require any training, it is clear it is something that the vast majority of employees want.

Did you receive any on-the-job training when you started your most recent role?

43%

Yes - I was given a lot of training as part of my onboarding

36%

Yes - I was given a little bit of training as part of my onboarding

13%

Not really - I had to figure a lot of things out myself

4%

No - I didn't receive any training or support as part of my onboarding

4%

No - I didn't require any training

Employers are forgetting to regularly check in on their new hires.

Regular check-ins with managers can help new members of staff build a rapport and clarify initial short-term priorities, as well as longer-term goals. It's also a chance for new starters to raise any difficulties they may be having, and what support they'd like.

Given the value of regular check-ins, only **50%** of all respondents felt they had the right amount of check-ins and felt both comfortable and productive in their role. **18%** of remote workers who took part in our survey said they had very little to no check-ins at all and felt unconfident and unproductive as a result.

You can read more about conducting effective check-ins by following this link.

Did you have regular check-ins during the first few months of your new role?

50%

Yes, just the right amount. I felt capable of doing my job and felt productive

27%

Yes, but only sporadically. I didn't feel too confident and sometimes felt at a loose end

11%

Yes, but far too many and I felt micromanaged

8%

No, hardly any. I often felt somewhat unconfident and unproductive

3%

No, none at all. I didn't feel at all confident or productive

Poor onboarding processes left 42% of new hires feeling isolated or not part of a team.

Although the majority of respondents didn't feel isolated or alone, a significant number did feel as if they were left to their own devices during their onboarding. Remote workers appeared to suffer the most from feeling separated from their business, with **19%** saying they often felt alone and isolated with minimal support, and **9%** feeling totally isolated and forgotten about.

It's important that new hires don't feel isolated or on the peripheries during their first few days - that's because first impressions really do matter. As our research into the psychology of HR discovered, a great onboarding experience not only boosts productivity and engagement but significantly reduces the risk of employees leaving within the first six months.

If new starters feel as if they're being forgotten or isolated, you may find them considering their career options sooner rather than later.

You can download our report into the role of psychology in HR by following this link.

Did you ever feel isolated or forgotten about during your onboarding?
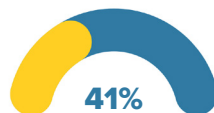
41%
No - I rarely felt isolated or forgotten about

23%
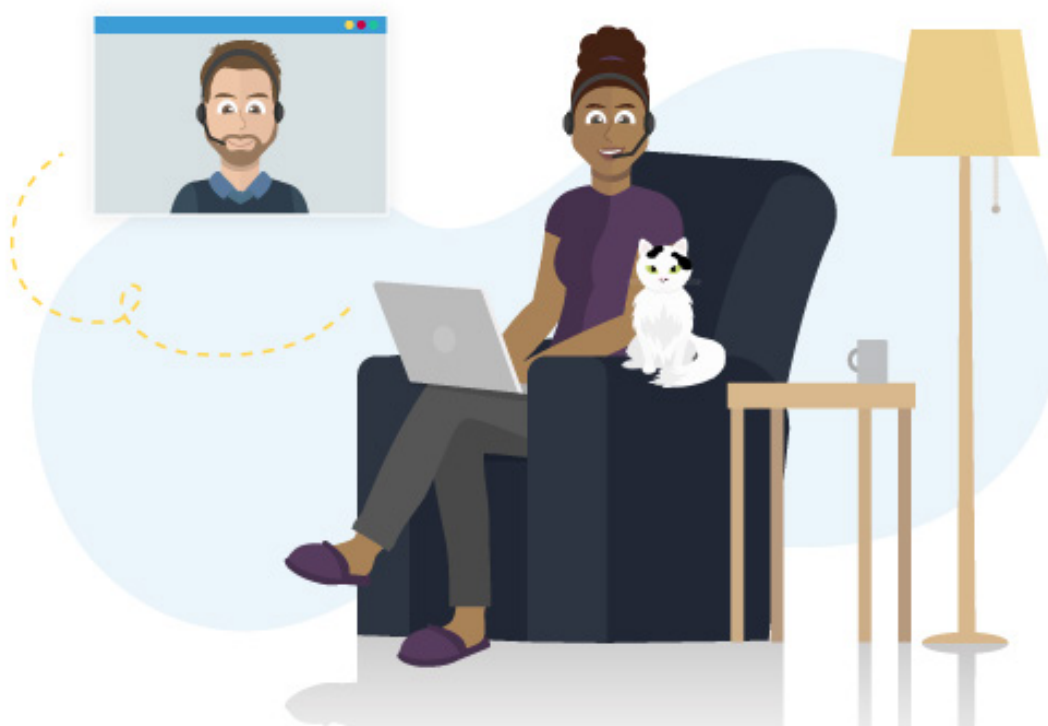Occasionally I felt that I wasn't part of a team
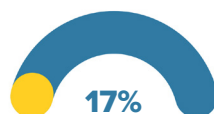
17%
No - I didn't feel as if I was isolated or forgotten about at all
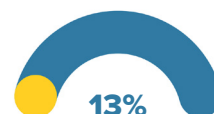
13%
Yes - I often felt alone and isolated with minimal support

6%
Yes - I felt totally alone, forgotten about and isolated with no support

Nearly two thirds of employees found their onboarding experience stressful.

Changing roles can be unsettling, tiring and stressful for people. This was reflected in our survey results, with **63%** of our respondents saying their onboarding experience left them feeling stressed or overwhelmed.

There are a number of actions HR professionals can take to make the onboarding experience that little bit less stressful for everyone, including:

• **Share your onboarding plans.** It will be much easier for new employees to feel comfortable in a new environment if they have a better idea of what has been arranged for them.

• **Assigning a mentor or 'buddy'.** This can help new employees form a new professional relationship straight away, and also lets them learn about how things are run at their new company much more efficiently. It can also help reduce their stress levels should they find something difficult or get stuck with certain aspects of their role.

• **Introducing them to your company's mission and what you stand for.** Utilise the onboarding experience as an opportunity to highlight your company's values, employee value proposition and culture. Not only will this help build vital engagement with new joiners, but also demonstrates that the employee experience is something a business takes seriously.

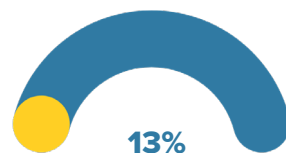## Did you ever feel isolated or forgotten about during your onboarding?

37%
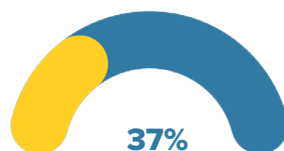
No - I didn't feel stressed or overwhelmed when I first joined

30%
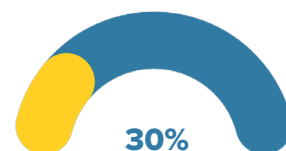
Yes - there were occasions during my onboarding I felt stressed

20%

Yes - I did feel stressed, but I was helped and supported by my manager and colleagues

13%

Yes - starting my most current role was very stressful and overwhelming

Less than half of all new employees are given everything they need to do their job.

New hires will be eager to get started and make their own good impression. They can't do that, though, if they don't have the equipment, access or space to do it! It's surprising then, that less than half of all employees we surveyed had everything they needed to do their job right from the get-go.

HR should be ensuring that before new employees arrive, their equipment, software or IT access and (where applicable) workspaces are setup and ready for them to use.

Your HR software can do a lot to help with these types of tasks. If it comes with task management functionality, it's a good idea to set up several different onboarding 'task templates', so you can pick the one that works for each new joiner: such as, automatically notifying the relevant facilities manager so they can arrange access, desks and other equipment, your IT team when specialist software is required, or a local payroll manager if your business is global.
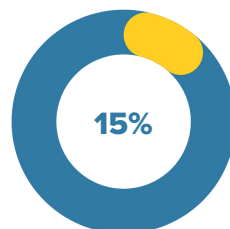
Did you have all the necessary tools and equipment to start your job right away?

43%
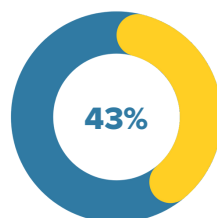
Yes - but I had to wait for some items or access to certain systems

42%
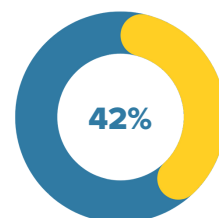
Yes - I had everything I needed to do my job right away

15%

No - I had to wait to be provided the equipment or system access to be able to do my job

Only 8% of employees believed they had a perfect onboarding experience.

Although it's impossible to please all employees all of the time, it was interesting to discover that a mere **8%** of respondents believed they had a perfect onboarding experience.

When we asked what could have improved their onboarding, the top 3 answers our respondents chose were training or introduction to the finer points of their role, having all the equipment and access required to do their jobs before they started, and being assigned a 'buddy' to help them settle into their roles.

What aspect(s) of your onboarding would have helped you feel more productive and engaged in your role?
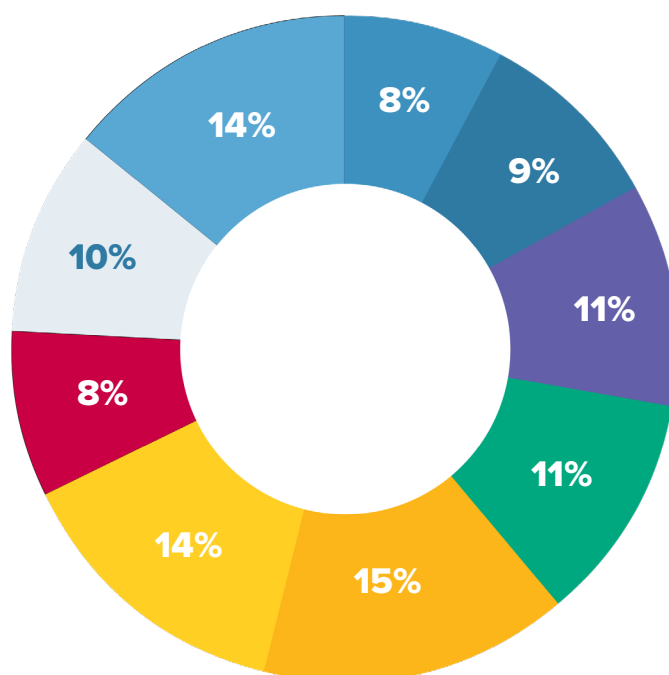
- 8% Nothing – it was perfect!
- 9% A better understanding of the organisation's culture, values and vision
- 11% More communication from my new manager before I started
- 11% A chance to meet and learn more about my team / colleagues
- 15% Training or introduction to the finer points of my role
- 14% The equipment / access I required being in place before I started
- 8% A chance to meet & talk to the senior team
- 10% More social events and a chance to meet people in the wider business
- 14% Being assigned a 'buddy' to help me settle into my role

Poor onboarding has led to over a fifth of all new hires feeling concerned about their choice of employer.

Lastly, and perhaps most alarmingly, our survey found that **21%** of all employees had questioned their choice of employer due to their onboarding. In addition, nearly **10%** of employees aged 18-24 said that their onboarding experience led them into thinking about leaving their job altogether.

Our research clearly indicates those first few days and weeks can make a huge impression with new hires. It's imperative, then, that HR teams put onboarding at the top of their list of priorities and investigate if their processes are fit for purpose.
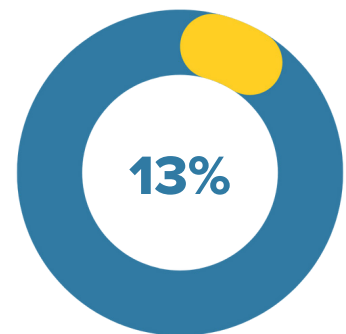
How did your onboarding experience make you feel about your choice of a new employer?
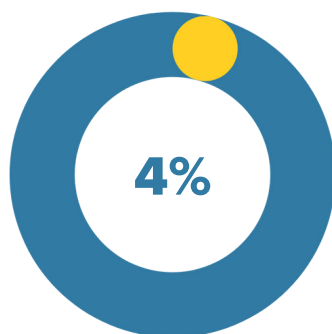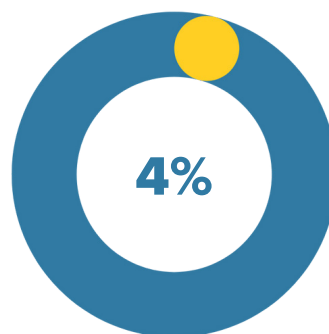
40%
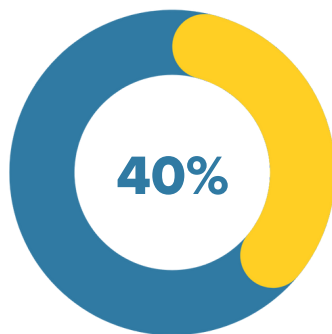
Somewhat happy with my choice

39%
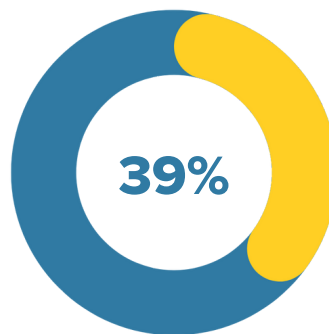
Really happy with my choice

13%

Somewhat concerned about my choice

4%

Very concerned about my choice

**4%**

It's made me think about leaving

Further reading for HR professionals

The results of our survey have shown that generally, the onboarding experiences for new employees here in the UK and Ireland are very positive.

When we asked our respondents how they would rate their onboarding, the majority **39%** stated it was 'Very good', with **20%** rating their experience as 'Excellent'. However, at the other end of the scale, our research discovered that nearly a fifth of all employees rated their onboarding as less than OK.

Our survey has shown that although most organisations recognise the importance of onboarding, many companies could do more to support employees both before they start and during this initial 'settling in' phase. There seem to be simple yet fundamental mistakes that are tainting the experiences of new hires, and these are something which HR teams must do more to both reduce and prevent.

To help build a stellar onboarding experience, we have a number of materials that can help HR professionals do exactly that. These include:
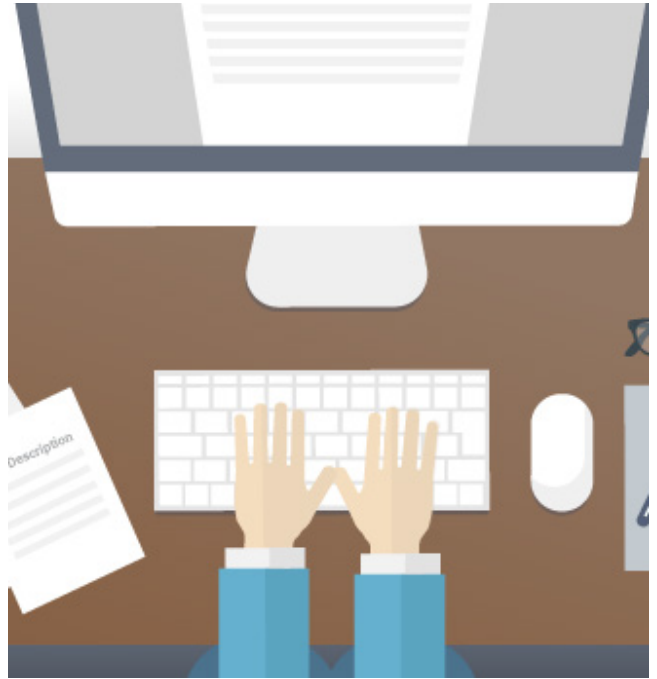
Free downloadable HR guides

How to create an effective onboarding strategy - Read this guide to find out what it requires to implement a well-planned onboarding strategy. Download here >>

The Psychology of HR Relationship Building - Applying psychological insight to professional relationships allows HR to optimise the positive outcomes, for both employer and employee, from the connection. Download this guide if you're looking to understand the importance of psychology in human resources management. Download here >>

Quick reads

Effective onboarding: fundamental dos and don'ts for HR Read here >>

What is onboarding software and which features should you look out for? Read here >>

Remote onboarding: providing a warm welcome using online tools Read here >>

No contact, no desk, no thanks: Common onboarding mistakes to avoid Read here >>

Who we are

As a team, we have been designing and delivering HR software systems for over twenty years. We've worked with some of the world's largest and most demanding organisations, and many hundreds of small and mid-sized companies, from virtually every industry sector. In that time, we've learned a lot about what it takes to deliver robust, secure HR solutions that really work.

We're passionate about providing great HR solutions and services that help HR professionals and the employees they support increase productivity, streamline people management, connect with each other and help drive the overall success of their business.

Our world focus ensures we bring a unique perspective to our HR solutions that few other HR software providers can match. Our systems have been designed from the ground up to offer global capabilities that reflect our extensive international experience.

Customers range in size from under 100 to more than 5,000 employees, operate on both single and multi-country basis, and come from virtually every business sector: tech, finance, legal, utilities, pharma, consultancy, recruitment, aviation, shipping, publishing, health sciences, research, housing, leisure, charities and many more .