



When we surveyed public sector and education HR professionals about the unique ways they onboard new hires, an anonymous respondent replied “Nothing unique at all. Death by PowerPoint and video.” That may sum up the majority of onboarding programs, but it doesn’t have to be that way. While onboarding can seem synonymous with endless paperwork and tedious company policies, engaging new hires with creative onboarding strategies in the first 90 days of employment can reduce employee turnover by 20% (SHRM).

To help you energize new team members, we compiled 30 creative ways real HR professionals get new hires invested from the first day on the job.

1. Put a box of donuts on the new employee’s desk to encourage other employees to stop by, grab a donut, and introduce themselves
2. Mail a company t-shirt for the new employee to wear on their first day
3. Create a new hire hashtag for your organization that the new employee can use to share their experience on social media and see other employees’ experiences
4. Build an onboarding portal for with new hire paperwork, fun facts about the organization, and pictures of their teammates
5. Book an offsite lunch with the team during their first week
6. Assign a “new hire buddy” who can introduce the new employee to other team members, show them around the office, and be a friendly face their first day on the job
7. Instead of having the new hire spend the first day completing paperwork, assign paperwork prior to the first day and reserve the first day for more exciting activities
8. Set up casual “coffee chats” with the new hire and their manager once a week for the first month to foster the new relationship and promote open communication
9. Have other team members send a quick personal video introduction to the new hire prior to their first day. When they get to the office, they will recognize a few faces and might remember a couple of fun facts their team members shared.
10. Create a “Jeopardy” game with information the new hire needs to know, such as the organization’s mission and values
11. Assign a different team member to join the new hire for lunch every day for the first week
12. Have a swag bag on their desk when they arrive with fun, branded items, like a logoed mousepad and sticky notes
13. Give the new hire a “cheat sheet” on their first day with key things they will need to know, such as their team members names and positions, the role of each department, where the closest bathroom is, the best food near the office, and more
14. Go offsite on the second day of onboarding for a fun team activity. Try a happy hour, ice skating, or team building exercises.
15. Set up a virtual presentation with a benefits representative to explain all the benefits the new hire has access to
16. On the first day, order lunch for the new employee, their supervisor, and members of the HR team to start building those relationships immediately
17. Have a brief meeting with the new hire’s team over coffee or tea to introduce themselves and ask questions about their life outside of work
18. Have the Executive Director or a senior leader of the organization leave a handwritten note on their desk for when they arrive
19. Get a brief bio and picture from the new hire and email it to the organization or post it on your organization’s blog
20. Decorate the newcomer’s desk with balloons, streamers, and welcome notes from team members
21. Send the new employee on a scavenger hunt throughout the office to get to know the lay of the land, meet people from different departments, and break the ice
22. Have the new hire and each member of their team create a presentation slide about themselves with one photo from the past and one from the present with some bullet points about their hobbies and history. Use the slides to kick-off a meeting the first week, where each person presents their own story
23. Allow the newcomer to shadow a team member for the first few days
24. Take the new hire on a city tour and show them how their work will benefit the area
25. If you can’t go on an in-person tour, provide a virtual tour of the City, County, or State facilities and share major projects going on across the organization
26. When IT sets up the new hire’s desk prior to their first day, have them set a screensaver or background that has pictures of the team, pertinent information, or a welcome message
27. Provide a picture frame for the new employee to bring pictures to personalize their desk
28. Send the new hire a survey about the types of skills training they need to be successful and then create a personalized training plan
29. Provide a name tag for the new hire to decorate and wear during their first week
30. Give them a Starbucks or coffee shop gift card to get coffee with a team member during their first week