

GETTING YOUR DRIVER READY FOR DAY ONE

Think about the first job you ever had. How did you feel when you got the offer and started thinking about what working for the company would be like? Were you excited? Did you have questions? Was anyone in touch with you before your first day?

Then on your first day, what was it like to meet your new team - was it clear from the beginning who was who, and what you had to do? Did the role meet your expectations?

This period of time from receiving a job offer to joining a new workplace is called onboarding. It pretty much determines what a person will think about the company throughout their whole tenure.

If it's good – they will thrive.

If it's bad – they'll never perform at their full potential.

As the fleet manager, you have a good opportunity to influence this period.

Induction vs. onboarding

People often mistake onboarding with the induction of new staff.

Onboarding refers to activities and processes both before and after a newcomer's first day, and it can take weeks or in some cases, even months.

Induction typically refers to activities and processes happening in the first few days and very rarely takes longer than that.

As this lesson will focus on successful induction and onboarding after the first day at work, we assume you've done all pre-employment onboarding activities before your newcomer's first day – e.g. you checked your new hire's references or completed the police and traffic checks.

What an excellent induction looks like

To ensure you give your staff a warm welcome, think about that first job you had and the little things that could have made the experience better for you. It was likely more than just being shown the basics – e.g. maybe involved stories about the team you were joining and being made to feel welcome.

Creating a good onboarding experience may require some preparation from you, as a manager, before your new staff member joins the team. But it's totally worth it as you'll reap its benefits. Here are a few things you can do, for instance:

- **Consider introducing the new starter to the team** in an announcement before their arrival. Include information your team may want to know – e.g. the new driver's hobbies, family, favourite food, previous work, experience level etc.
- **Prepare your elevator pitch** you're going to welcome them with, and learn how to sell the company in your introductory presentation. Remember, you only have one chance to make a good first impression.
- **Identify a buddy you can pair your new starter with.** Select a motivated and personable driver to show them around the fleet, facilities, or drive with them in the first couple of weeks.

- On the first day, **surprise your newcomer with a small company gift** such as a piece of company merch.
- **Provide the new hire with the necessary forms and an induction checklist.** If they haven't signed their contract or provided essential documents needed to start their new job, this is the right time to ask for them.
- **Provide them with a staff directory and information about the company, the management and their role.** We covered the importance of goals and success profiles in the performance review process – so make sure the new member of your staff knows what's expected of them, and understands who to ask for more information if needed.
- Sit down with your new driver at the end of the day to check if they have any questions and **always ask for their feedback.** It's better to let them know early about the 360° feedback culture you encourage in the team.

Don't forget, the industry you're in is quite specific, so you may want to tailor the induction to the role you're hiring for and the tasks you expect of that person. Identify the objectives that the role-specific induction needs to have.

Mandatory information to share during induction

Always ensure your new hire:

- Completes all compliance training (e.g. health and safety, road safety, customer service etc.)
- Has all essential head office and site information ready (e.g. emergency, fire, accident, first aid or out of office procedures)
- Knows and understands what's expected of them and the responsibilities and boundaries of their role (e.g. parts of the business they can't enter, how to deal with your customers)
- Knows key people in the business and knows how to contact them directly (e.g. managers who they don't usually work with, client contacts they liaise with etc.)
- Has a buddy they can rely on during the first few weeks or longer if necessary
- Has been introduced to the fleet, equipment and technology, and can navigate around it or knows how to ask for help with it (e.g. Seeing Machines, tech used for team communications, etc.)
- Has had their competency assessed and their learning plan mapped out (e.g. service and technical skills they need to do their job)

Provide further information during onboarding

- Rely on the buddy assigned to your new hire to provide more context to them about clients – e.g. traffic management at their sites, potential hazards, points of contact – and ensure the information is also available for them in their truck. It's useful to provide training/checklists to the buddy to make sure this is being done consistently with any new starters.
- Brief your new driver on expenses that may occur – e.g. fuelling – and tell them about preferred payment methods, how to record costs, or where you want them to fuel their truck etc.
- You can provide them with a checklist, including essential activities they're expected to undertake when getting ready for the road, to ensure they don't miss anything.

Outcomes of effective induction

Remember, good induction is when your staff:

- Understand the vision and culture of the business, and can manage the relationship with customers to retain the brand reputation
- Know and understand what's expected from them – and comply with business and industry requirements
- Can adopt technology, be productive and retain what they've learnt

To ensure this, deliver the information:

- Using a mixture of communication methods to complement different learning styles remembering that the majority of people learn visually.
- Taking short breaks between training sessions with walks on the yard or a short introduction to tech, so information is easier to take in. The average adult has a maximum attention span in presentations of around 20 minutes. Not to say you need a break that often but keep it in mind to mix things up.

As a golden rule, always document the induction process and ask for the signature of your staff once they are inducted to a particular area of their role. This can serve as evidence they've been trained and protect you and the business in case of any future incidents.

If you do this, rest assured you'll make a great first impression and provide a good onboarding experience – covering everything your driver needs to be set up for work on all bases.

Now let's see how you can put this theory into practice.