

The onboarding buddy toolbox



Everything you need to know
about the onboarding buddy



What's in the **box**?

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Introduction1

We've all been there. Starting a new job is both exciting and stressful at the same time. As a new hire, you don't even know where the bathroom is, much less all the new work processes necessary to get the job done on your first day. Or who can answer your questions?

At the end of the probation period, you want your new hire to feel that they've made the right choice to join your organization, instead of wanting to look elsewhere. Therefore, as a company, you need to support your new talent and set them up for success within the first months: this is where an onboarding program comes in.

According to data compiled by Brandon Hall Group, organizations with a strong onboarding program improve their retention of new employees by a massive 82% and experience 54% greater new hire productivity.

However, there is a way to ensure your onboarding program is getting an extra layer to make the new hire feel heard and supported: by implementing an onboarding buddy system.

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What is a buddy, and what not?

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What is a **buddy**, and what **not**?

Most new hires start their first day with a lot of excitement and anticipation. This early eagerness can be either enhanced or potentially wrecked, depending on what happens in the first few days. Your organization's first impression significantly influences the new hire's long-term perception of the job and your organization. Without any support or guidance when lacking a proper onboarding process, you may leave a new hire with a bad first impression, leading to unexpected turnover or poor performance.

However, a well-organized onboarding program sets the foundation for long-term success. It guides your new hire in understanding your company culture, your specific product(s), and how you use tools and technology to become a genuinely productive employee.



Many tasks come along within onboarding your new hire: filling in the necessary paperwork, preparing your new hire's workplace and devices, setting performance goals for the first months, and many more. People from across the whole company are involved in this process, like HR, the manager, IT, etc. Each of them has a specific role. Therefore, onboarding is a true team effort. In this process, the onboarding buddy plays an important role and has his own responsibilities.

A buddy is a clear point of contact

An onboarding buddy partners with a new hire during the first months on the new job, being the first point of contact outside of the manager, HR, or People Operations. The role of a buddy is different from that of a mentor, manager, or coach. This relationship is less formal, with its core purpose being support and friendship.

The buddy can make the new employee feel welcome and answer the many questions a new hire might have at the start of their new job. In some cases, new employees will feel more comfortable asking them to a peer rather than their manager for fear of appearing incompetent, such as “How does the printer work?” to “Is the VP of sales as tough as he seems?”

The buddy is more on the new hire's level, creating a safe place to ask questions. Your onboarding buddy is, therefore, supportive,

casual, and private. Your new hire should never have a fear of details getting passed around the office.

A buddy helps new hires navigate through the organization's culture

It's the most convenient when your onboarding buddy is working for a longer time at the company. Only then can he or she help address most of your hard-to-know specifics in a friendly and accessible way. They can determine who relevant stakeholders are or go over procedures and policies and help the new hire become acquainted with the company culture.

The buddy can shed light on cultural norms and any unspoken rules that could lead to a much smoother transition into the organization. They should share helpful insider, socially-focused information. This enables the new hires to quickly fit in and understand ‘how things are done around here’, such as:

- The best spot to get a club sandwich for lunch
- Where to get the best latte macchiato
- Where everyone goes for the happy hour drinks
- The quickest options to travel to work

- Unspoken kitchen rules (Julie's oat milk is not communal... don't find out the hard way!)
- How informal is Casual Friday?
- How to fill out the expense form and who you need to send it to
- How to use office equipment
- How you can win internal discussions and make sure decisions are made faster

"An onboarding buddy system helps your organization 'pass along' its cultural genes to each new hire," as Ingrid Towey from [Opensource.com](https://opensource.com) puts it so beautifully.

A buddy helps to achieve a sense of acceptance and belonging

Assigning onboarding buddies to new hires helps them build an immediate connection between them and the organization. A buddy can show your new hire around, making connections by introducing them to others, and going to lunch with them in the first days. This leads the new employee to feel comfortable sooner and to achieve a sense of acceptance and belonging.

This encouragement and socialization right from the start, ultimately improves employee retention.

A buddy builds new hire confidence and boosts productivity

A new hire who feels part of the team gains more confidence and is likely to become more productive faster. Especially when new hires work individually or remotely, they don't get many opportunities to interact with others. This could lead to job disengagement and poor productivity. A buddy builds strong working relationships that will help your organization have better collaboration and more effective communication.

New hires are more likely to be creative and innovative if they have a support buddy that can give them valuable feedback. If they have someone validating and supporting their ideas, they build more confidence in themselves and their job satisfaction will improve.

What a buddy is not

It's also essential for the new hire and the buddy to know what the buddy is not. Remember that an onboarding buddy is not responsible for the complete onboarding process. The buddy usually partners with the new hire for only the first months of their employment, guiding through processes, tasks, and other aspects of their day-to-day life in the workplace.

However, an onboarding buddy's role is not to be the new employee's supervisor or manager. They should not be held accountable for the new hire's performance. Therefore, evaluations and performance reviews should not be delegated to the buddy. Those are your manager's responsibilities.

The buddy is also not responsible for helping the new hire outline their development goals, both personally and professionally, and long-term career growth. Assisting in your hire's development should be included in a mentoring program, while a coaching program seeks to increase the individual's job-related skills.

And all that paperwork? Please leave that to HR, buddy.

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Why onboarding buddies are important

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Why onboarding buddies are important

Implementing an onboarding buddy system is beneficial for the new hire, the organization, and the buddy himself.

New hire benefits

- Early productivity
- One-on-one help
- Understanding of how things get accomplished

A buddy gives personal attention and support to the new hire during the start of a new job. This positively benefits the new hire, as we can see at Triade Vitree, a healthcare institution that provides care for children and the disabled with multiple locations in the Netherlands.

The organization uses the Appical onboarding app to prepare new employees for their first days. The new hires also get acquainted with their onboarding buddy via the app. This way, they are informed at an early stage of the role of the buddy, and the new employee and the buddy get in touch earlier in the onboarding journey.



The buddy is often a personal supervisor or a team coordinator. He or she gives the new employee a tour on the first working day, shows the most important systems, and explains which aspects are important in the new position.

And guess what: employee research at Triade Vitree shows that at locations where a buddy is assigned, **new employees score the onboarding program better than where there is no buddy.** The onboarding experience of the new employee is perceived as positive because there is a clear point of contact and more attention is paid to questions. A buddy, therefore, ensures a ‘soft’ landing of the employee in the organization.

The [Harvard Business Review](#) collected ‘hard’ data that shows the benefits of a buddy in the following example. At Microsoft, they found out that the more the onboarding buddy met with the new hire at Microsoft, the greater the new hire’s perception of their speed to productivity.



“56% of new hires who met with their onboarding buddy at least once in their first 90 days indicated that their buddy helped them to quickly become productive in their role. That percentage increased to 73% for those who met two to three times with their buddy, 86% for those who met four to eight times, and 97% for those who met more than eight times in their first 90 days.”



What we can learn from the cases is that the more time a buddy spends with the new employee, the better an employee will land in the organization and will be productive more quickly. The buddy provides an additional layer of one-on-one support that is critical to a new hire's success.

Buddy benefits

- Leadership development
- An increased network
- Opportunity to support others

It's not just the new hires who can benefit from this relationship. Being an onboarding buddy allows the buddies to demonstrate and develop mentoring and leadership skills. Teaching others can strengthen the buddy's knowledge base, enabling the onboarding buddies to develop a deeper level of expertise.

Furthermore, being in the buddy role allows expanding the buddy's network and gives a fresh perspective on the job. By chatting with the new hire, the buddy will learn the ways of working at other companies and improve leadership know-how that is ultimately useful within your company.

Company benefits

- Increased employee satisfaction and retention
- Enhanced onboarding process
- Increased employee productivity

A buddy system may accelerate new hires' productivity and enhance job satisfaction, making it easier for employers to retain individuals.



Research by [HBR](#) found that new hires with buddies at Microsoft were 23% more satisfied after their first week on the job with their overall onboarding experience compared to those without buddies. This trend continued at 90 days, with a 36% increase in satisfaction. Those with buddies also reported receiving more active support from both their manager and the broader team.

It also helps managers save some time onboarding new hires and closing the gap between management and new hires because they can and dare to ask questions.

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Characteristics of a great onboarding buddy

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Characteristics of a great onboarding buddy

The onboarding buddy will become your ambassador during the new hire's onboarding: he or she is the first point of contact who communicates your company culture and relates non-job specific—but essential—information. You want to make sure that you pick the right person for this role.

When selecting a buddy for new employees, base your decision on the following characteristics that make a great onboarding buddy:

✓ **An experienced employee**

A successful buddy candidate should be a seasoned employee. The buddy has been at the company for a minimum of 6 months, so he or she has a good understanding of organizational practices, culture, processes, and systems.

The buddy should demonstrate strong performance in their current role and understands the role of the new hire. You don't want new hires to learn lousy work habits. Instead, you want your new hire to learn from the best in your team.

✓ **Accessible and approachable for the new hire**

It will be most convenient when the buddy is located in the same office as the new hire and doesn't mind being interrupted. When working remotely, the buddy must ensure that the new hire can always access him/her via multiple communication channels.

Therefore, when selecting a buddy, make sure they have time to perform this role and are not overburdened by tight deadlines or urgent deliverables.

✓ **Proactive and helpful**

The new employee is probably feeling overwhelmed in the first months. If you're an onboarding buddy, you need to let new people think you can take care of them. So buddies need to reach out proactively to their new hires daily.

And they need to do more than ask, “Hey, is everything going okay?” Buddies have to be willing to ask probing questions. Some would rather suffer in silence for days during onboarding than say: “Hey, I don’t get it.” Nothing worse than being new and assuming all of your questions are things you should have known when you got hired.


An ideal buddy works proactively with new hires to help them find answers to their questions and show them the best ways to approach your organization’s problems.

✓ **Patient and strong communication skills**

Ideally, the onboarding buddy is of a similar level or peer group to the new hire. Therefore, he or she remembers what it was like to be new and wants to help take away that insecurity for the new hire.

An excellent onboarding buddy can answer questions without making new hires feel foolish. They should be encouraging the new hire to express their thoughts and concerns in a safe setting.

A buddy also has to be patient: they should be willing to answer the same question more than once. Learning often occurs as a spiral: as new hires begin to understand more, they will revisit something they’re learning but at a deeper and more complex level. Buddies need to be willing to have multiple (but deepening) conversations about similar topics. Therefore, the buddy is a great communicator who can easily provide information.

 **Tool:** To give some extra tips on how to be a great onboarding buddy, we’ve added some do’s and don’ts on mindset and behavior. See tool D: Do’s and don’t for the onboarding buddy on page 37.

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The virtual buddy

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The **virtual buddy**

Due to globalization and the coronavirus age, more and more employees are asked to work remotely and struggle with isolation.

Annie McKee, a happiness expert and author of [“How to Be Happy at Work.”](#) previously told [Business Insider](#) that having friends in a workspace is vital for boosting success, feeling fulfilled on the job, and helps coping with feelings of loneliness.

Therefore, one-on-one guidance and a buddy system is even more crucial for remote workers, who don't get the usual face time with managers as office employees, to succeed and thrive within the company. Your buddy system may need some adjustments and digitalization compared to working on location. For example, during the new hire's first month, they need to have a daily or weekly video chat with their buddy. After the first month, the conversations become more spread out during the program.

 **Tool:** to break the ice and get the conversation going between the buddy and the new hire, we've added a small conversation starter card game to this toolbox! The buddy can use it during one-on-ones or check-ins with the new hire. See tool E: 'Conversation starters card game' at page 39 of this toolbox.

Also, the buddy system doesn't have to be limited to just one buddy. Here's an example of the company Buffer using multiple virtual buddies in their onboarding program.

Case study: Three types of virtual buddies at Buffer

Since 2015, the social-media-management company [Buffer](#) has been a fully remote company with over 80 team members world-wide. Nicole Miller, People Operation Manager at Buffer, told [Business Insider](#) how they use a “virtual buddy” system to build relationships among colleagues within a new hire’s first three months.

New hires are assigned not one but three different types of buddies. Employees are first assigned a ‘culture’ buddy, a peer who can help the new hire learn more about the history of a company and ease the teammate into the company culture. For example, Miller said this buddy can discuss fun group-chat channels or offer support if they’re struggling in the workplace. The culture buddies receive training and are taught how to provide constructive feedback to new hires.

The ‘role’ or ‘workplace’ buddy can walk new hires through their job’s expectations. This allows immediate feedback while encouraging a new hire to ask more questions. Through building camaraderie among remote teams, new hires feel more confident, supported, and less alone in the workplace as a result, Miller said.

After 90 days, new hires at Buffer transition to a ‘mastermind’ buddy, a person who shares similar interests and experiences. Mastermind buddies share their personal stories such as schooling, childhood, hobbies, and how they came to Buffer.

During the first three months of the program, more than half of the teammates at Buffer met with their mastermind buddy, [according to an employee survey](#). Miller credits this buddy system to helping remote employees learn the ropes while fostering a sense of belonging on their new team. “Having that sort of work best friend is really essential,” she said. “Especially with being remote, it takes extra intention and attention to ensure people are staying on track and not feeling lost.”

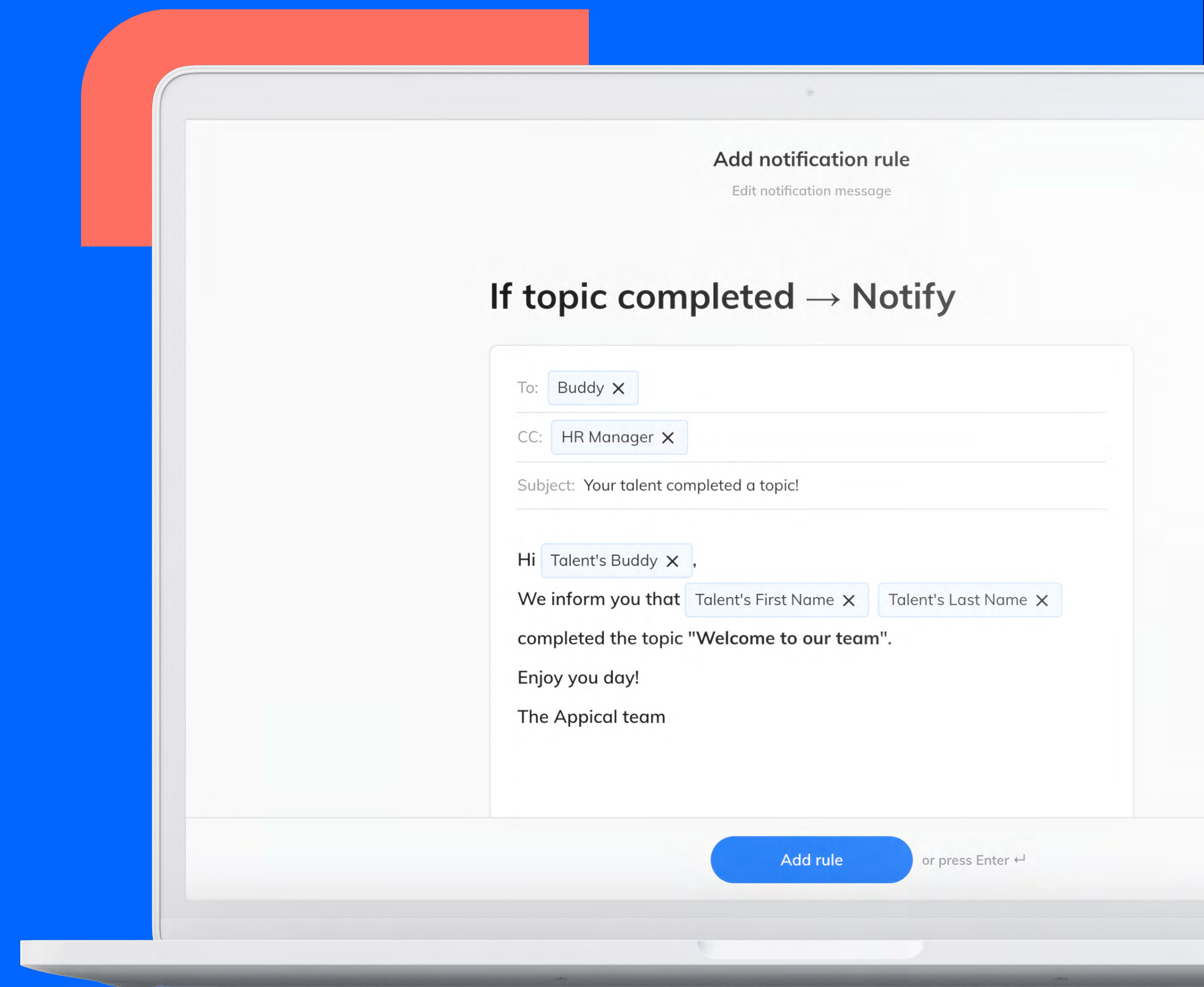


Tip: Use technology to help facilitate the buddy system

Keep in mind that most buddies have their own schedules and obligations outside of being an onboarding buddy. Therefore, we would recommend making the buddy's life as easy as possible by using technology.

For example, the Appical platform makes it possible for HR, the hiring manager, and the buddy to monitor the new hire's onboarding progress. If you notice in advance the new hire is running behind in the onboarding process, it's easier to reach out, identify and remove any roadblocks by offering some extra support. With the workflows function, buddies automatically receive notifications whenever a new hire finishes a part of the onboarding program. The platform has also the possibility to create a checklist for the buddy with important tasks and responsibilities.

Not only does it help organizations reduce the chance of potential errors and re-work, but it also ensures a centralized, personalized onboarding experience for all of your new hires.



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Implementing the buddy system in 5 steps

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Implementing the buddy system in 5 steps


1. Design the buddy program and frameworks

Now it's time to set the buddy system in place. Where to start? Write down what your buddy program should look like, such as purpose, roles, ground rules, length of time, and so forth. The program should establish the following:

- Expectations for the new hire, buddy, and supervisor/manager/team lead
- What knowledge the buddy should impart to increase productivity.
- How much time the program should take. Set an end date for the new hire-buddy relationship.

- Requirements for “check-ins” and follow-up from the buddy and new hire on program effectiveness.

Keep in mind that the goal is for new employees to be acclimated to the organization quicker, become more productive sooner, and keep talent within the organization.

 **Tool:** See tool A: ‘Buddy program info sheet’ for an example on page 27.

2. Find participants


Create a process to find and select volunteers who want to become onboarding buddies. Consider who in your team or other teams are suited as a buddy, based on the characteristics mentioned earlier in this guide. Or use one of your communication tools to reach out to them. For example, create a Slack channel tilted [#buddyprogram](#) and post news about incoming hires. Ask for volunteers based on your selection criteria.

Research by [HBR](#) has shown that onboarding buddies reporting to the same manager receive more favorable ratings than those who report to different managers. Buddies who report to the same manager may also be more familiar with the new hire's role and responsibilities. If the onboarding buddy lacks an understanding of the new hire's role, it can create frustration for both parties.

Also, make sure to reprioritize the buddy's workload. When matching a new hire with an onboarding buddy, consider the onboarding buddy's current workload. In some cases, you may need to help reassign or deprioritize work so the buddy has time to support the new hire's needs.

3. Create a buddy checklist


Provide a checklist with specific topics and tasks the buddy should cover with the new hire in each stage of the onboarding journey.

 **Tool:** See tool B: 'Buddy checklist' on page 30 for an example!



4. Organize a buddy training session

Before your new hire comes into your organization, organize a quarterly training session for the buddy to explain the program's expectations, the buddy's role, and offer tips to the buddy on what makes a great buddy experience. Explain the program's expectations, the buddy's role, and offer tips to the buddy on what makes for a great buddy experience. A fun and useful exercise to play during this training is 'Feedback-it ball', to see the value of different forms of feedback.

 See tool C: 'Exercise for buddy training session: how to provide feedback' on page 33.


5. Evaluate and debrief with the buddy and the new hire

After the agreed duration of the buddy program, revise it as you hire new people. Watch for the things that do not work so you can guide both the experienced and new employees.

Ask the new hire to provide feedback about the buddy program, such as:

- How is your job going?
- Any surprises? If yes, what?
- How has your buddy been helpful/not helpful?
- Have you been comfortable asking your buddy questions?
- Do we need to change anything for the buddy program?

Don't forget to show your appreciation to the buddy for participating and the experience. Ask the buddy if they have any recommendations to improve the buddy program and discuss the results.

 For an example, see tool F: 'Buddy program evaluation' on page 44.

This feedback will polish your buddy program so new hires are getting the support, information, and friendship they need to excel.

chapter

Onboarding buddy tools

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A. The buddy program info sheet (example)

Here you can find an example of a buddy program info sheet to establish the framework, goals, expectations and requirements of an onboarding buddy program.

👉 This template is available online. Download it [here](#).

The **buddy program** info sheet

Congratulations! You have been asked to be an onboarding buddy at _____.

Purpose:

An onboarding buddy makes the transition into a new job much easier for our new hires. By buddying new hires up with an experienced employee, they gain insider knowledge and get comfortable in their new workspace more quickly. It boosts new hire productivity and allows you as a buddy to develop leadership skills.

An onboarding buddy is:

- A clear point of contact to the new to answer questions
- Helping our new hire navigate through the organization's culture
- Explaining our basic work ethics and processes
- Helping build the new hire's network
- Supporting the new hire by providing feedback
- Building the new hire's confidence

What a buddy is not:

- Accountable for the new hire's entire onboarding process
- Accountable for the new hire's performance
- Responsible for evaluations and performance reviews with the new hire
- Responsible for completing HR paperwork and administration

Length of the buddy program: 2 weeks of pre-boarding
+ 3 months of onboarding

Your responsibilities as an onboarding buddy:

- Attend the buddy training session (organized every quarter)
- Be the first point of contact before and at the new hire's the first day
- In the first month: do daily check-ins with the new hire for 10-15 minutes

- After the first month: do weekly check-ins with the new hire for 10-15 minutes
- Complete the buddy checklist together with the new hire (this includes sharing information, explaining processes, introducing colleagues, etc.)
- Be available for questions; communicate acceptable boundaries for the amount, duration, and communication channel with the new hire
- Respect confidentiality

After the program:

- Fill in the onboarding buddy survey at the end of the program
- Discuss the results with HR

Are you up for it? HR will assign you a new hire and send you and the hiring manager an email to make the first contact. Good luck!

B. Buddy checklist (example)

Here you can find an example of an onboarding buddy checklist. Which specific topics and tasks should the buddy cover with the new hire in each stage of the onboarding journey? Share this in a checklist with your buddy to provide role clarity and clear expectations of the buddy's tasks during the buddy program.

👉 This template is available online. Download it [here](#).

Buddy checklist

During the new hire's pre-boarding

- ☐ Learn about the employee via LinkedIn or by accessing their resume
- ☐ Meet with your supervisor to discuss role expectations
- ☐ Write a welcome email and make some introductions
- ☐ Provide the new employee with your contact information

On the new hire's first day

- ☐ Stop by the new employee's work area or office to introduce yourself and your role or, when working remotely, schedule a video call
- ☐ Provide an office tour/welcome (if applicable)
- ☐ Introduce the new hire to the team
- ☐ Invite the new employee to eat lunch with you
- ☐ Check-in at the end of the day if the new hire has any questions

The new hire's first week

- ☐ Do a daily check-in with the new hire
- ☐ Give the new hire an outline of your experience at the company and be a resource to ask any initial questions to
- ☐ Explain where to get technical help, processes for ordering supplies, using equipment like printers, travel policy, declaration forms or other help
- ☐ Support new hire's social integration into [company name]
 - ☐ Describe the company culture and explain unwritten rules
 - ☐ Set up casual meetings between the new hire and 5 team members from across the company (this should be a lunch or coffee, not a desk fly-by)
 - ☐ Accompany the new hire to a company event or extracurricular activity
- ☐ Discuss what you wish you knew when you started as a new hire
- ☐ Share information on local lunch or café options
- ☐ Learn about the new hire's work experience, hobbies, and goals
- ☐ Show safety plans, emergency exits, and safety information postings

Buddy checklist

The new hire's first month

- ☐ Schedule daily meetings together to enjoy over a hot drink
- ☐ Act as a training resource on processes, procedures, or system tools (collaborative tools, learning center, IT, the HR system, Outlook Calendar, etc.)
- ☐ Guide the new employee with work specific to the role/unit/program
- ☐ Check-in between meetings to see if the employee has questions
- ☐ Continue to introduce the employee to others (from other teams as well)
- ☐ Invite the employee to relevant work or social event

After the new hire's 3 months

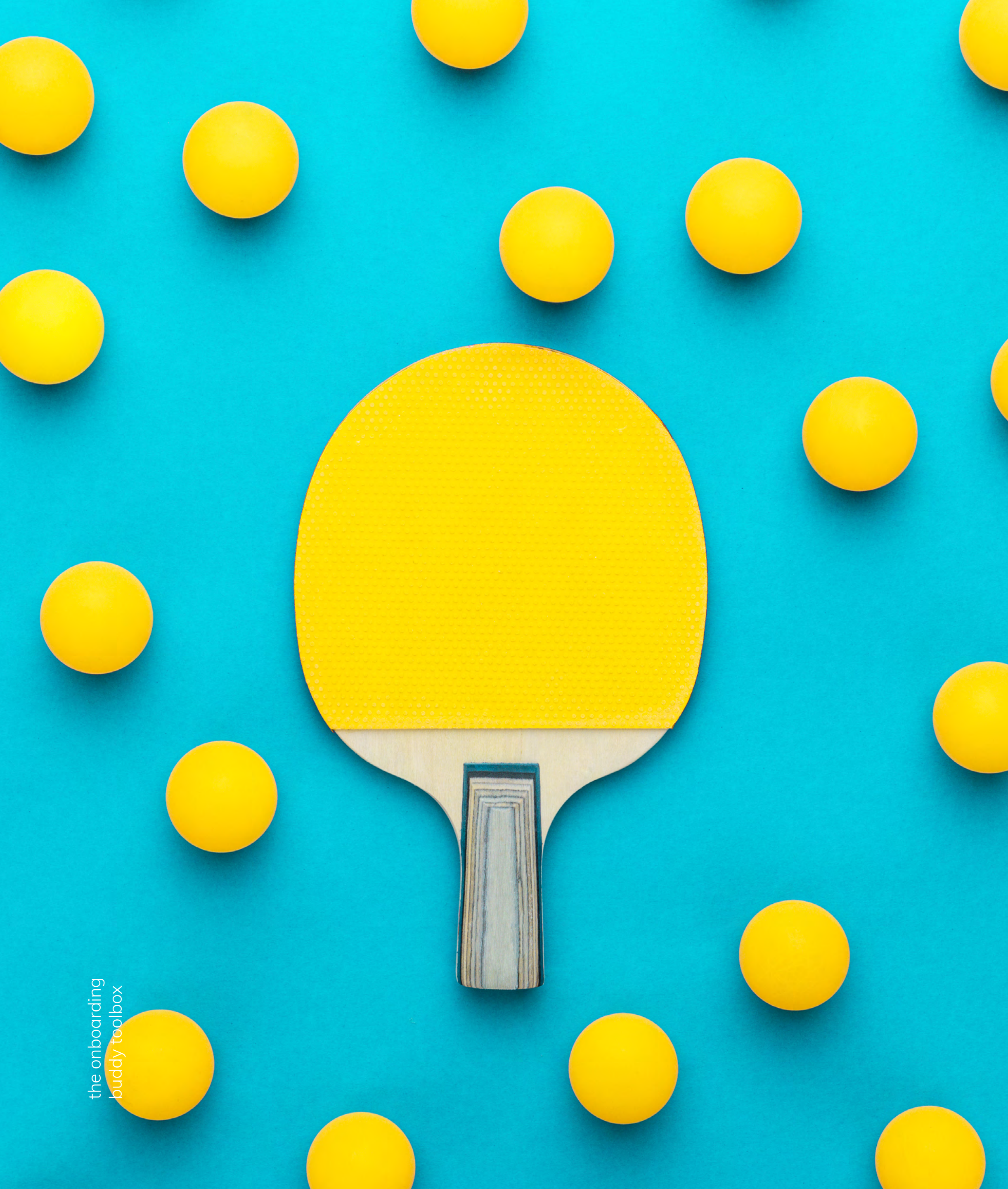
- ☐ At the end of a few months, discuss with the supervisor if and how to continue the relationship.

C. Exercise for buddy training session: how to provide feedback

Feedback-it ball

A great onboarding buddy helps new hires to find answers to their questions and provide them with feedback to learn, grow and set up for success. Here you find an exercise that can be used in an onboarding buddy training session. See and experience the value of different forms of feedback and examine how this impacts performance, while participating in a fun activity.

👉 This template is available online. Download the exercise [here](#).

A large yellow ping pong paddle with a wooden handle is centered on a bright blue background. Several yellow ping pong balls are scattered around the paddle, some near the top and bottom edges of the frame.

Exercise for **buddy** **training session:** how to provide feedback

Feedback-it ball

Duration: 10-20 minutes

For this exercise, you'll need:

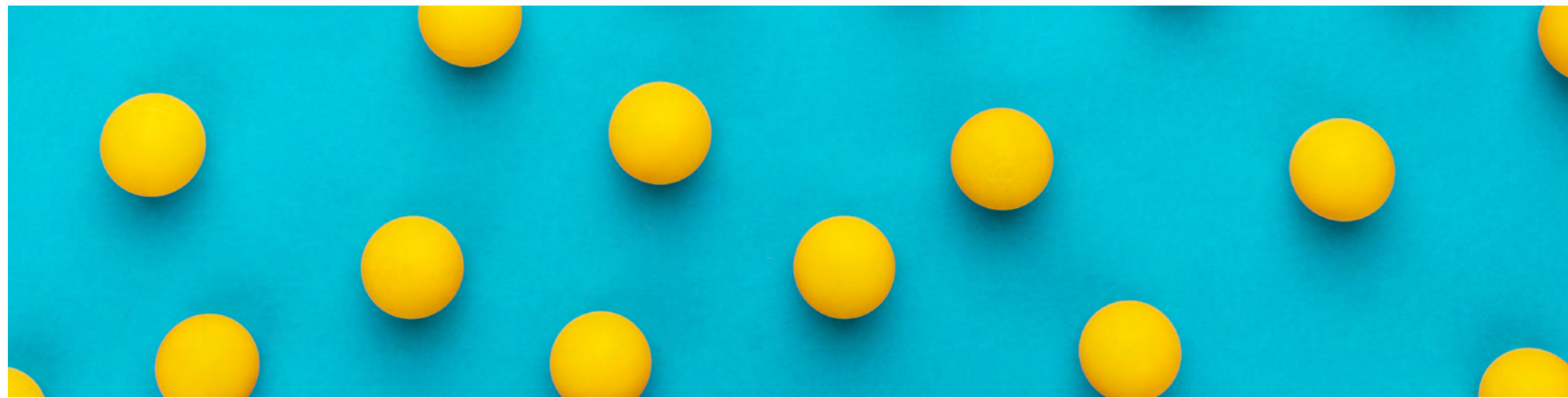
- An instructor
- An observer
- 4 volunteers/buddies
- Ping Pong balls
- A box or bucket
- A blindfold

Aim of the exercise

See and experience the value of different forms of feedback and examine how this impacts performance while participating in a fun activity.

Set-up:

- Select four volunteers who are going to throw ping pong balls in a box.
- Give each of them a blindfold and take them outside (or to a place where they cannot hear you giving instructions), have them wait for you.
- Place a box or bucket on a table and have ping pong balls ready.



Instructions:

- The instructor and the observer will stay in the room. Only the instructor can speak and give feedback during the exercise.
- The observer will examine how the receiver reacts and benefits from this feedback.
- Ask one blindfolded person into the room at a time (make sure they don't hurt themselves).

- Ask the volunteer to throw as many ping pong balls in the box as possible while being blindfolded.
- While throwing, the instructor will provide each participant with different feedback:

1. Volunteer no. 1 will be provided no feedback at all - remain completely silent

2. Volunteer no. 2 will be provided exclusively negative feedback: 'That was a poor throw', 'Can't you do better than that?!', 'You're so bad at this!'

3. Volunteer no 3. will be provided exclusively positive feedback: 'That was a wonderful throw!', 'Wow, you're amazing!', 'That one was even better!'

4. Volunteer no 4. will be provided constructive feedback: 'Good, a little bit more to the right', 'A little more power', 'You almost got it, a bit more to the left!'

After everyone is done, let the volunteers remove their blindfolds. Discuss how they felt while receiving this feedback. Which feedback had a positive impact on their performance? And which didn't? What was it like to receive no direction on their performance? Or only negative and positive? Did they know how they were doing? What would have helped?

Ask the observer what their body language looked like. Did they get irritated? Or did they become more motivated and tried harder?

To summarize the exercise: negative feedback or none at all are destructive to performance, while positive feedback is nice, but doesn't necessarily improve your performance. Constructive feedback is the best way to give support and give insight on how to improve your performance.













D. Do's and don'ts for the onboarding buddy

What makes a great onboarding buddy? We've listed some do's and don'ts on mindset and behavior of the onboarding buddy.

👉 This template is available online. Download the sheet [here](#).

Do's and don'ts for the onboarding buddy

Do's	Dont's
 Focus your attention on assisting the new employee with an open mind and with a positive teaching attitude	 Don't expect to be an expert on everything, so don't worry about living up to this ideal
 Offer feedback and be discrete	 Don't be judgmental: the new hire relies on you to be a safe place to get answers to their many questions
 Be patient	 Don't try to cover everything at once: the new hire will need time to digest all the information they are taking in
 Talk about each other's personality and communication preferences as you likely have different styles and adapt accordingly.	 Don't try to force a relationship; it may take time to develop one
 Be proactive, helpful, and identify resources as needed. Ask questions like "What do you need?" or "How can I help?"	
 Be positive: new hires will grow into their roles if given proper reinforcement. Maintain a good attitude and a teaching spirit	

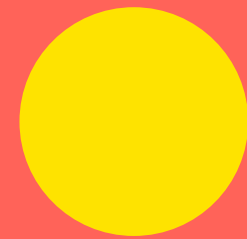
E. Conversation starters card game

To break the ice and get the conversation going between the buddy and the new hire, here is a small conversation starter card game. The buddy can use it during one-on-ones or check-ins with the new hire during the onboarding.

👉 This card game is available online. Download the cards [here](#).

Conversation starters card game

How to use these cards



You may choose the same card to use in all of your 1:1s this week or invite each person to pull a new card at the beginning of the conversation.

You could also pull one card to kick off Monday morning meetings, inspire conversations among the leadership team or ponder over staff lunch.

However you use them, remember: these cards are conversation starters. If you listen like a robot, you will get robotic answers.



How to use these cards



To that end, get curious. Listen to what the person across from you is saying and what core values are evident underneath the responses.

It's this invisible information - and your ability to hear it - that creates deep and meaningful relationships between managers and their reports.

Let the conversation wander and enjoy it!

Appical



Conversation starters card game

organizational
culture

What three words
describe the
atmosphere here
at work lately?



decision making

What's the **best**
decision you've made
recently at work?
What did you learn?



work-life balance

If you were invited
to give a **TED talk**,
what would you
talk about?



Conversation starters card game

productivity

How do you **decide**
what work to start
with each morning?



career planning

Tell me about the
highlights of your
work week/month



innovation

What kinds of
developments have
you seen in your field?



Conversation starters card game

leadership

Tell me about a time
you fundamentally
changed your mind
about something
important?



communication

Who gives you
the most **helpful**
feedback these days?
What makes it useful?



F. Buddy program evaluation (template)

Here is an example of a buddy program evaluation survey, focused on the new hire and the buddy.

With the right data, you can continuously improve your onboarding buddy program. One way to collect data is to ask new hires and his/her onboarding the buddy if they have any recommendations to improve the buddy program. Their feedback will polish your buddy program so new hires are getting the support, information, and friendship they need to excel.

👉 This template is available online. Download it [here](#).

Buddy program **evaluation**

For the new hire

We hope you enjoyed your onboarding program and the support from your onboarding buddy! We want to ensure the best possible experience for all new employees, so we would love your feedback on the buddy program.

Thank you!

***Required**

Name: _____ Starting date: _____

Department: _____ Location of orientation: _____

How is your job going?

Any surprises? If yes, what?

Please rate each of the following on a scale of 1 to 5*
(1 = you disagree, and 5 = you agree.)

	1	2	3	4	5
I would consider my buddy as helpful	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The onboarding buddy's role was clear to me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have been comfortable asking my buddy questions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
It was clear to me how to reach out to my buddy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The content of our discussions was appropriate	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

The number of contact moments/meetings with my buddy was*

- ☐ Too few
- ☐ Too many
- ☐ Exactly right

Do we need to change anything for the buddy program?

Is there something we should be providing and are not? e.g. any additional work tools?

Additional comments or thoughts?

Buddy program **evaluation**

For the buddy

We hoped you enjoyed the experience of being an onboarding buddy! Thanks to you, our new hires will feel more welcome and feel that they've made the right choice to join our organization.

Do you have any recommendations to improve the buddy program?
We'll appreciate your feedback.

***Required**

Name: _____ Starting date: _____

Department: _____ Location of orientation: _____

Please rate each of the following on a scale of 1 to 5*
(1 = you disagree, and 5 = you agree.)

	1	2	3	4	5
I was briefed well regarding my role as a buddy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I felt I knew what to do in the buddy role	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I was happy with the way in which I was allocated my new hire	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The new hire seemed satisfied with my support	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I received adequate support for participating in the buddy program	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The frequency of meetings with the new hire was adequate	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The content of our discussions was appropriate	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The buddy program had positive side effects for me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Do we need to change anything for the buddy program?

Is there something we should be providing and are not? e.g. any additional work tools?

Additional comments or thoughts?

Parting thoughts

Implementing a buddy system can be one part of an effective onboarding program that provides new employees with a reliable, motivated, ongoing, single point of contact for questions regarding work processes and the company culture. This socialization and support can make an enormous, positive difference in early performance, social integration, and long-term retention of your new hires.

Keep in mind that every organization is different: this toolbox is not a one-size-fits-all solution. Make sure to customize your buddy system to see what works best for you, the buddy, and your new hire.

We hope we inspired you to create a memorable onboarding experience!



Sources

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