

docebo®

# Employee onboarding:

How to improve the performance and engagement of your most important asset





## Intro

Onboarding isn't a mundane chore like doing the dishes: It's a magical opportunity like cleaning out your closet. Except instead of freeing up valuable sneaker space, onboarding gives you the chance to create an amazing first impression that lasts.

Exceptional onboarding can improve new recruit **retention by 50%** and **productivity by 62%**.

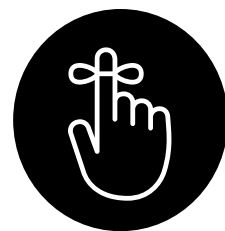
**Is it worth the trouble? In a word: Yes.** Exceptional onboarding can improve new recruit [retention by 50% and productivity by 62%](#). Onboarding makes people happier, more engaged, more loyal, and more productive.

In this ebook, you'll learn how to create a structured onboarding program that will set you apart from the crowd. We'll help you identify the key components of onboarding and show you how to integrate them into your culture to create a powerful, lasting impression.

But onboarding doesn't happen in isolation (that would be sad). It's also part of the larger employee learning and development journey. So, we'll also explore how to create a culture of continuous learning—and reap the benefits that come with it.

# The onboarding opportunity

Exceptional onboarding isn't easy, but data on its impact suggests that the juice is worth the squeeze. Take retention: Great onboarding means that a new hire has a nearly [70% chance to stay with the company for 3+ years](#). For a sales employee, this is nearly a [50% improvement](#) over the average tenure of 1.8 years. Looking at profitability, good onboarding can [shorten time-to-productivity by up to 70%](#). For many roles, this directly translates to increased revenue (just imagine getting a whole extra quarter of sales activity from every new member of your sales team).



Companies invest a fortune in attracting the best talent—**and then they squander that investment** by failing the onboarding test.

Employees who receive highly effective onboarding don't just stay longer and produce more: They're happier, too. They're [18 times more likely](#) to feel committed to their organization and 89% of them feel strongly integrated into their company culture, elevating morale and collaboration.

These are significant benefits that can have a major impact on a company's bottom line. By investing in onboarding, companies can reduce the costs associated with turnover and lost productivity, all while creating a more engaged and committed workforce.

These are amazing results. The most amazing part? **They're achievable.** There's nothing mysterious about great onboarding and no secret formula that only Google and Costco are privy to. Here's the gist:

- Make new hires feel welcomed, informed, and supported.
- Ensure they know what's expected of them and have the tools and resources to get it done.
- Help them build connections and become part of a team.
- Ensure your managers are trained and enabled to properly deliver your onboarding plan.

That's it. Simple! But of course, 'simple' doesn't equal 'easy.' Maybe that's why [according to Gallup](#), only 12% of employees strongly agree that their organization does a great job of onboarding. Twelve percent!

Only **12% of employees** say their organization does a great job at onboarding.



Less than a third **feel prepared to excel** in their role after completing onboarding.

**Similarly, less than a third of new hires feel fully prepared to excel in their role after they finish onboarding.**

This is the situation we're in: Companies invest a fortune in attracting the best talent—and then they squander that investment by failing the onboarding test.

Most organizations aren't achieving onboarding excellence, which presents an opportunity: For the businesses that do it, exceptional onboarding can be a true differentiator. Let's explore how you can be among them.



# How to be an onboarding leader: Strategies and best practices

The average onboarding program lasts [90 days](#), with a majority of the key activities front-loaded into the first few weeks. That's too short.

Think about it: Do you know anyone who was a well-settled, well-adjusted expert after three months at a new company?

According to research from Gallup, it typically takes about [12 months](#) for employees to reach their full performance potential. If you want them to be more productive faster, they need additional onboarding.



## Here are some best practices to follow:

**Create and share a structured onboarding and training plan.** No winging it. This means outlining a clear plan for new employees' first days, weeks, and months on the job. And don't bury this process in an intranet labyrinth—share it with new hires to give them a clear picture of what to expect and what's expected of them. Starting a new job is already a time of uncertainty, so every reduction in ambiguity will be appreciated.

At a minimum, provide clear and measurable goals for new hires' first 30, 60, and 90 days. New hires want to contribute, and this gives them a simple way to feel like valuable members of the team.

Where your plan calls for training and development, remember to consider the new hire experience.

While there might be three days of mandatory compliance training, it's probably not wise to put it all in a hire's first week. Instead, strike a balance between the boring stuff and building understanding of the role, learning about the organization's culture and values, introducing new tools—and of course, helping the new hire form connections with their team.



Have your team **send welcome messages** or try a 'get-to-know-you' survey. Strong communication and **'pre-boarding' activities** will help ensure that day one begins on a high note.



**Get social and make it easy to engage with your people and culture.** Help foster positive relationships between new hires and their colleagues. Mentors or buddies work well for this, and it's best practice for managers to lead the way in introducing new hires to the broader team. At recurring events (like weekly stand-ups), managers should also devote extra attention to new hires for the first few occurrences.

**Gather feedback and have regular manager check-ins.** If you teach new hires that it's 'sink or swim,' they'll never soar. To avoid this, managers should check in with new hires regularly so they feel heard and are getting what they need. You should also gather feedback about the onboarding process through tools like surveys or candid conversations. Because no matter how detailed your onboarding plan might be, it can always get better.

**Focus on manager training and enablement.** Odds are, there are many great leaders in your organization that aren't great at onboarding new employees, especially virtually. Often, an established manager simply doesn't remember what it's like to be new to a team. Sometimes, new hires can fall off a manager's radar as they prioritize existing team members and in-progress work. But the benefits are clear: When managers are involved in the onboarding process, new hires are more than [3x as likely](#) to rate the experience as 'exceptional.'



A winning onboarding program (and L&D program in general) helps managers help their teams. Ensure that managers have a detailed plan to follow, as well as learning opportunities of their own to fill in their own skill gaps. Exceptional onboarding doesn't happen by accident. Even if your program is exceptional, your managers must be empowered to deliver on it.

**Plan for 'upboarding,'** which is the onboarding existing employees require when changing teams or roles. Skipping this can be disastrous: There's nothing worse than taking an exceptional performer and then putting them in a new role where they aren't set up to succeed. Not only do you lose their above-average productivity, you risk churning one of your most valuable people. And continuous learning isn't just for internal promotions. With [19% of skills](#) becoming obsolete every three years, having an 'always-on' learning culture is more important than ever.

**Collect data and use it to power continuous improvement.** To assess the impact of your onboarding and training programs, you can measure ramp-up time, product knowledge, performance and productivity, and more. And don't neglect human feedback. Tools like [Docebo Learning Impact](#) collect and analyze this qualitative data so you can measure the impact of your L&D plan—including individual modules of your onboarding program.



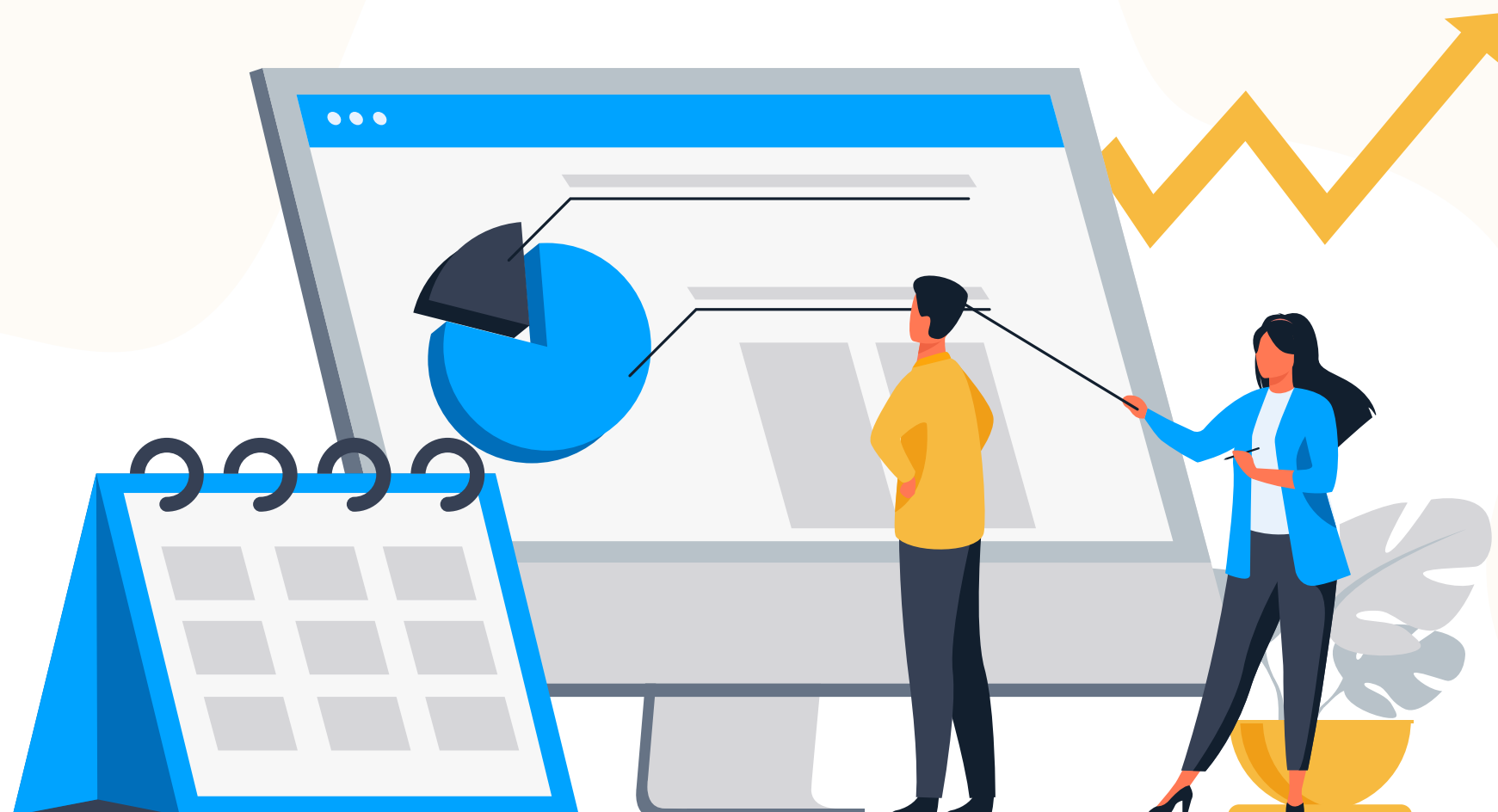
If you teach new hires that it's **'sink or swim,'** they'll never soar.

# Trends and innovations

The average onboarding experience is insufficient, but businesses are catching on and starting to improve it. As they do so, they're looking for creative ways to innovate the traditional onboarding paradigm. Here, we'll briefly touch on three of those disruptions: The rise of virtual onboarding, social learning and gamification in the onboarding and L&D process, and the concept of upboarding.

## The rise of virtual onboarding:

If you started a new job in the spring of 2021: Our condolences. Odds are you experienced a kludge-y, ad hoc virtual onboarding process. But now that remote and hybrid work are normalized, businesses can take a breath and create an intentional virtual onboarding experience. This lets them onboard employees from anywhere, unlocking new talent pools and saving time and money. No wonder virtual onboarding is taking off.



To make virtual onboarding successful, companies should ensure that new employees have access to resources and support to help them navigate their new roles and build relationships with their colleagues. In a virtual setting, there's naturally less dynamism and interactions don't happen organically the way they do in person. It's the job of your onboarding program (and manager) to facilitate those interactions.

Keep in mind that you're more likely to under-engineer this than over-engineer your onboarding program (especially virtually), so try to create a detailed plan that includes meetings with the broader team, concrete milestones and deliverables, and enough learning resources to fill the new hire's time. In a virtual environment, it's much easier for a new hire to finish their mandatory training and then not know what to do next or what they're accountable for. There's nothing worse.

### **Social learning and gamification:**

Companies are increasingly using gamification to level up their onboarding experience (pun intended). Remember: New hires want to contribute as soon as possible and gamified elements like points, badges, and leaderboards can help create a feeling of progress and achievement. That's probably why when you ask employees where they'd like to see more game-like elements, 'training software' is [the #1 choice](#).



**83% of employees** who receive gamified training feel motivated, whereas **61% of employees** who receive non-gamified training say it's [boring or unproductive](#).

And if you are working on a gamified onboarding strategy, don't keep it a secret. Gamification can be a tool for improving your employer brand: 78% of employees say that a gamified recruitment and onboarding process would make them more likely to want to work for an organization.

Gamification isn't just for new hires, either. Make it a team sport by recognizing team members who help new hires feel welcome or who go out of their way to provide mentorship and support.

### The concept of upboarding:

Upboarding can include new tech training, skills development, mentorship programs, and leadership development opportunities for existing employees. According to research commissioned by Docebo, [62% of employees would consider changing jobs if their employer didn't offer learning opportunities](#). But where would they go? Overwhelmingly (80%), they would choose to work for an employer that prioritized continuous learning and development.

**So yes, onboarding is absolutely critical, but it's still just one part of a robust L&D program.**



New hires want to **contribute as soon as possible** and gamification can help create a feeling of progress and achievement.

# Why an LMS is critical

**Trying to build a world-class onboarding program without a learning management system (LMS) is like trying to fly without a plane: You'll be working very hard, but probably won't make it off the ground.**

At a basic level, an LMS helps store, deliver, and track your onboarding resources in one centralized location. But who settles for 'basic?' For truly effective onboarding, you need an LMS that provides personalization, customization, interactive and engaging content, mobile accessibility, collaboration and social learning, and reporting capabilities.

It sounds complicated, but it doesn't have to be. At its core, all of these features and functions are about delivering content to new hires in an organized way and building connections authentically. Everything else is efficiency and data.



## How can an LMS help with onboarding?

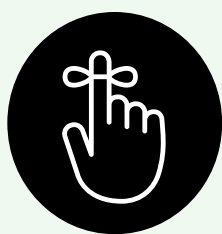
- Centralization and version control
- Tracking, reporting, and analytics
- Improved scalability and efficiency
- Manager training and enablement
- Personalized learning paths based on job role or department
- Adaptive learning based on employee performance
- Licensed content
- Gamification elements (quizzes, badges, leaderboards, etc.)
- Social learning and collaboration features (peer mentoring, ask-an-expert, forums and communities, etc.)
- Mobile apps for on-the-go learning
- Onboarding in the flow of work and at the point of need
- Integration with existing systems
- ...and more

A great LMS can unlock the [content](#) new hires need. It [can connect them to their team](#) and integrate into the [flow of work](#). But the real magic is this: A great LMS can give you the [data you need](#) to create clarity out of complexity (and even [grow your business](#)). 55% of businesses [don't measure the effectiveness of their onboarding programs](#) at all, so taking a data-driven approach can help set you apart.



And remember: Continuous improvement isn't just for people. An LMS provides data and analytics around the success of your onboarding programs, highlighting what's most impactful and what has room to grow. For example, you can find out which individual courses have the biggest impact on ramp time and retention or which users generate the most engaging content. An LMS can even help you deliver personalized learning to every user, so they get a tailored experience just for them—starting from their very first day.

**But wait! So far, we've touched on the benefits to your business and new hires. But your L&D team and learning admins will also thank you. A sound onboarding strategy (and a leading LMS) will make their lives easier, simplify their workflow, automate the most mundane parts of their jobs, and free up time to do the work that really matters.**



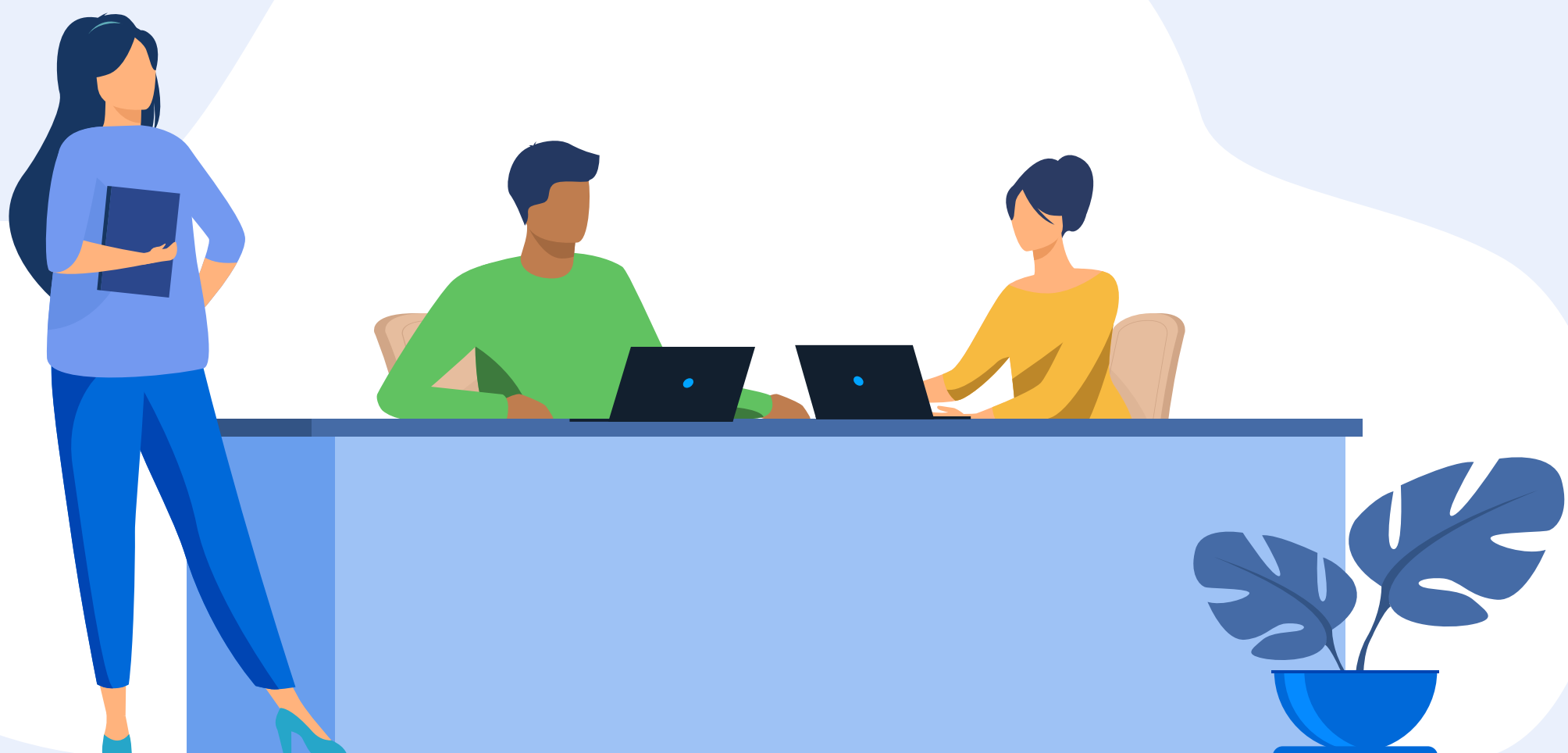
**55% of businesses** don't measure the effectiveness of their onboarding programs.



# Conclusion and summary

Effective employee onboarding is critical—not just for the success of new hires, but for the broader team and the organization as a whole. It significantly reduces the ramp-up time for new hires and dramatically improves their job satisfaction, productivity, and average tenure. You get more productive, more engaged people who stay longer.

Still, many businesses are failing to deliver an onboarding experience that meets their employees' needs. There are many explanations, but few excuses. The foundations of exceptional onboarding aren't complicated; they just require the right solutions along with consistency of execution. As the gulf between mediocre and exceptional onboarding widens, it is becoming a true differentiator for business performance and the battle to attract and retain talent.



## Most businesses would benefit from following these steps:

- Create and share a structured onboarding and training plan.
- Use social elements to help new hires engage with your people and culture.
- Gather feedback and have regular manager check-ins.
- Develop a plan for upboarding existing employees to keep their skills sharp.
- Embrace and master innovations like virtual onboarding, gamification, and upboarding.
- Collect and analyze data to continually refine your plan.
- Lean on an advanced learning solution to centralize, automate, and personalize onboarding.

**If you can manage to follow the steps outlined in this ebook, you can expect to be in or near the top decile of onboarding, for any company in any industry. It's a tremendous opportunity to unleash the potential of your organization's most important asset: Its people.**

**Want to be a leader in onboarding? Work with the leader in learning.**

[Find out more at Docebo.com](https://docebo.com)

[Get a demo](#)