Hiring Supervisor Guide to Employee Onboarding & Retention
What is the Onboarding Process?

At Cornell University the Onboarding process begins with the completion of all required new hire forms and actions, but based on best practices and survey data we know that the success and retention of new hires does not end there. Included in this document you will find best practices to help you:

- Bring your newly hired employee up to speed with the policies, processes, culture, key relationships, expectations, and day-to-day responsibilities of your department/unit.

- Ensure new employees feel welcome and engaged, confirming why they joined your department/unit and Cornell University.

Why is the Onboarding Process Important?

- Builds Cornell's and your college/unit's reputation for being a thoughtful employer, with great training, clear leadership, and a strong organization.
- Helps to retain new employees.
- Reduces high turnover costs.
- Brings new staff members to fully contributing more quickly.
- Builds a more cohesive team, thereby raising everyone's productivity.

In a 2014 study of Cornell new hires, there was a strong positive correlation between employees reporting people in their workgroup "helped bring them up to speed in their job" and "helped to navigate how to get things done at Cornell" and their reported feelings of “belonging at Cornell”, their willingness to “recommend Cornell to a friend” as well as their “seeing themselves still at Cornell two years from now”.

One year later, those who had reported they had an effective department orientation were significantly more likely to have been promoted and those who had reported they did not "see themselves at Cornell two years from now" were significantly more likely to have left Cornell.

Data taken from the Cornell Acclimation Experience Survey given to employees who attended an Onboarding appointment between January 1, 2013-June 30, 2014.
Onboarding Mistakes to Avoid

You have spent a lot of time and money to recruit your top candidate but you aren’t done yet. The recruitment process continues well into their first few months on the job. In fact, studies have shown that new employees (87 percent of them according to a study by the Aberdeen Group) aren’t fully committed to the new job for the first six months. So while your new hire is still evaluating if they made the right decision, be sure to avoid these onboarding pitfalls.

1. Scheduling your new employee to start work while you are unavailable (i.e., on vacation, traveling on business, week of back-to-back meetings).

2. Forgotten to have someone meet the new employee as they arrive on their first day.

3. Not having an assigned work area ready for them. (Has to sit in a hall or share a cube.)

4. Failing to order necessary supplies/tools/equipment (i.e., computer, phone, etc.).

5. Leaving the new employee at their work station, to manage on their own, while co-workers pair-up and head out to lunch.

6. Not sending out notice in advance to inform co-workers and other key people that they was hired and what they will be doing. (See the Append for sample letter to send out.)

7. Showing the new employee their office/space and not introducing them to coworkers or assigning them a buddy/mentor.

8. Assigning the new employee to someone who has a major, career-impacting deadline in three days.

9. Assigning the new employee to (you fill in the blank)—your most unhappy, negative, department-bashing staff member.

10. Giving the employee “busy work” that has nothing to do with their core job description (like reading a ton of stuff), because you are having a busy week.
New Employee Success Profile

Documenting and sharing pre-established goals and success points for the first 90-days will create a foundation for success for your new hire.

Name _____________________________________   Today’s Date __________________

Position ____________________________________  Start Date ____________________

TOP 4 POSITION-SPECIFIC COMPETENCIES

1. ________________________________________________________________

2. ________________________________________________________________

3. ________________________________________________________________

4. ________________________________________________________________

*Use additional pages if there are more than 4 key competencies to focus on in the first 90 days.*

**FIRST 30 DAYS**

Success looks like ... (What will the new employee have learned or done?)

I or others will help our new employee achieve success by ...

**FIRST 60 DAYS**

Success looks like ... (What will the new employee have learned or done?)

I or others will help our new employee achieve success by ...
FIRST 90 DAYS

Success looks like ... (What will the new employee have learned or done?)

I or others will help our new employee achieve success by ...

ADDITIONAL GOALS AND TRAINING

Other goals for the new employee include ...

I or others will help our new employee achieve success with these goals by ...

Specific training needs or action plans to achieve the goals are ...
Now that you have outlined what success for the new hire will look like during the first 90 days, it is time to create an action plan to acclimate them to their new work environment. The checklist below will guide you through all of the tasks that need to be completed prior to the new hire’s first day.

PREPARING FOR THE NEW HIRE:

___ Create a transition plan for the new employee and those currently handling the tasks of the position. The plan should define a timeline each task will be moved to the new employee, who will be responsible for training, and who will communicate the plan to departments, and colleagues across campus. A clear plan will set the expectations for the employee and assist them in being successful.

___ Telephone request and long distance capability if required

___ Check electronic directory for confirmation of Net ID

___ Personal computer set-up

___ Establish computer system security accounts

___ Order keys and security codes if necessary

___ Order name plate, name tag, and/or business cards if appropriate

___ Add new employee to Outlook Calendars in the work group as needed

___ Set-up vacation/sick time with payroll representatives

___ Prepare work space: set-up, neat, clean, and organized

___ If the employee has requested workplace accommodations, arrange for them in advance if possible

___ Request procurement card and Diners Club if necessary

___ Identify someone in the college/unit to serve as an orientation guide to answer questions (work with HR)

___ Order uniforms if necessary

___ Update internal communications, distribution lists, and email lists with the employee’s contact info

___ Call the employee a day or two before arrival to answer immediate questions and invite him or her to call with new questions

___ Plan a welcoming get-together appropriate to your work group i.e. coffee break meet and greet

___ Send out an announcement to welcome new hire into the organization, briefly describe their role in the organization (see appendix for sample)

___ Plan the new hire’s first lunch, including who will participate

___ Plan your schedule so that on the new hire’s first day you can spend time at the beginning of the day and the end of the day with them

___ As the manager or supervisor, be sure the new hire has the tools and information to complete their first assignment successfully; this will set the tone for productive supervisory-employee interactions to come.
Supervisor Checklist for the New Hire’s First Day

With the work environment set up and the welcoming details in place, use the checklist below to ensure important key procedures, policies and guidelines are covered with the new hire on their first day of work.

FIRST DAY OF WORK:

_____ Greet employee, show them their workspace/office, and where to put their personal belongings.
_____ Introduce them to other staff members in the department and/or work area.
_____ Ensure they have an appointment with the Onboarding Center and a way to get there if they have not already attended one in advance of their first day.
_____ Give a tour of the office and building, pointing out key locations (copier, mail room, fax machine, office supplies, restrooms, break areas, emergency exits, fire extinguishers, vending machines, etc.).
_____ Review office procedures and guidelines (time away from work reporting requirements, personal phone calls, lunch breaks, office coverage, etc.).
_____ Provide them with facility information such as keys and security codes.
_____ Ensure they have all the equipment and tools needed to do the job.
_____ Orientation to computer systems; include log-on, email, security, and calendaring.
_____ Schedule any Right-to-Know training if applicable
_____ Review phone number, phone system, and usage; fax, scanning, and copying procedures.
_____ Complete additional forms specific to the department or position, i.e. confidentiality agreements.
_____ If there is a dress code, review it with the employee. If the position requires a uniform, make sure they have the right sizes, etc.
_____ If planned, have lunch with scheduled participants; if not, make sure new employee knows where they can go for lunch and what most staff generally do for lunch.

Once these items are completed, move on to the next set of recommended activities for the first weeks and first 90 days.
Supervisor Guide for the New Hires First Weeks

**Office Related Information:**

___ Provide information and instructions on office supplies and equipment.

___ Provide safety and emergency information and how to report hazards where applicable.

___ Provide budget, finance, purchasing procedures if needed, including policies and rules for use and information on training.

___ Share unwritten rules, nuances, and traditions with employee (such as how to address faculty, jeans on Friday, birthday celebrations, etc.)

**Job Related Information:**

___ Determine mutual performance standards by reviewing position responsibilities, setting performance expectations and clarifying any misunderstandings. Clarify that expectations are understood by you and the new employee.

___ Discuss your management style and the organization’s culture.

___ Describe success measures for the job.

___ Review your organizational chart and explain how the individual’s work is connected to Cornell’s mission of education, research and community service. The broader pictures will help link their efforts to larger goals and avoid looking at a single set of tasks.

___ Set priorities. Discuss what is important to overall objectives. This will help the new employee prioritize tasks since they are new to the organization.

___ Explain confidentiality in the workplace, what can be shared and what can’t, how confidential documents are stored.

___ Provide information about meetings and other events on the employee’s calendar (purpose, attendee, what to expect, the employee’s role); debrief with employees following these experiences to answer questions and provide any additional information.

___ Identify training resources and opportunities for the employee and set a realistic plan of action. Introduce the employee to resources such as the professional development workshops and educational benefits.

___ Provide information and time for the new employee to review HR policies, HR philosophy, Campus Code of Conduct, Computer Rights and Responsibilities, Open Doors, Open Hearts, Open Minds Statement on Diversity and Inclusion, Respect at Cornell.

___ Assign the employee something he/she can accomplish relatively quickly and easily to help build an initial sense of contribution and success.

___ Introduce the employee to partners external to the college/unit that will work with them on projects or tasks.

___ Consider developing a glossary of terms and acronyms as a reference guide.
Supervisor Checklist: New Hire’s First 90 Days

___ Provide regular feedback during the 90 days and beyond.
___ Provide formal feedback for non-exempt and bargaining unit staff at the end of their 90 day probationary period.
___ Review and direct the employee to training opportunities.
___ Check if the employee is fully engaged, seeing themselves as a valued contributor.
___ If applicable to the position and department’s needs, provide guidance on identifying appropriate flexible work options to assist the employee’s effectiveness and efficiency.

Questions to Ask During New Hire Check-in Meetings

- How is your job going?
- Is it what you expected when hired?
- Any surprises? If yes, what...
- Has the training been helpful?
- What training would you add?
- Has your buddy been helpful?
- Any changes you would suggest for the buddy program?
- Do you have all the work tools you need?
- Do you know where you stand in terms of your progress since you started work?
- How are your relationships with your co-workers?
- Is there room for improvement in the department?
- (For new hires that have relocated) Are you making connections in the local community?
- (For new hires that have relocated with families) Are you aware of the resources available to support your family members’ adjustment? (i.e. Career Life Services, Dual Career Program)
- Do you feel you’ve been able to address your work-life needs since starting this job?
- Was Onboarding Appointment helpful? Everything OK with your benefits and pay?
- Any questions/anything unclear?
Next steps – A Retention Strategy for 90 days & Beyond

Once you have completed the checklists and the check-in meetings during the first 90 days, you will have provided a strong orientation experience for your new employee. This builds a solid foundation for supporting the overall retention of your new hire and is just the beginning. Managers play an integral part in Cornell’s ability to retain highly talented employees. The retention interview is a powerful tool for managers to assess employee engagement, plus identify and address retention issues faced by our most talented employees, before it’s too late and we lose talent.

The following are steps to follow to increase your chances of retaining your employees. These are applicable not just to new hires, but any employee on your team.

**STEP 1: How do you know if you have a retention issue? Begin by checking statements that are true for your unit. (Check all that apply):**

- Your staff includes a large number of employees eligible for retirement.
- Your unit has a high turnover rate.
- Your unit has difficulty attracting and maintaining diversity.
- Your new employees leave more frequently than your more experienced employees.
- Your unit experiences a high rate of employees transferring to other departments.
- Your staff has one or more people who are displaying behaviors of disengagement (i.e. stopped going to lunch with others, they keep their doors closed more often, less focused during meetings, they have stopped sharing ideas or contributing to team efforts.)

If you checked any of the previous statements, then your unit may have a retention issue. Please proceed to step 2.

*For improved understanding of the workforce data for your unit, consult with your HR representative.*

**STEP 2: Once you’ve identified the potential retention issue(s), now you need to identify the highly talented employees who are the most vulnerable.**

Use the Retention Chart to help identify the greatest retention risks within your unit. Focus your efforts on the most valued employees who are most vulnerable. For best results, complete the Retention Chart on a semiannual or annual basis, especially when you have a highly recruited new hire.
Follow these easy steps to complete the Retention Chart:

1. Place your employees into the appropriate section of the chart using the definitions below it.

2. The employees listed in box 4 present the highest concern. The employees in boxes 2 and 3 may also present a retention concern but on a lower level.

RETENTION CHART

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Low Exit Factor – less likely to leave the university</th>
<th>Low Impact</th>
<th>High Impact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>High Exit Factor – more likely to leave the university</th>
<th>Low Impact</th>
<th>High Impact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. **Low Exit Factor/Low Impact** – an average performer that is not interested in leaving your unit or the university. Their exit would have a low to moderate effect on the unit because a replacement is foreseeable.

2. **Low Exit Factor/High Impact** – a top performer who is currently not interested in leaving your unit or the university. Their exit would have a great effect on the unit. These employees may also demonstrate the ability to move into leadership positions. This is an employee that is likely to be approached by another organization. This performer provides stability to the unit and a manager should consider a retention interview to assess their job satisfaction, address any issues, and provide support to maintain employee engagement. Complete an Individual Development Plan.

3. **High Exit Factor/Low Impact** – an average performer who is interested in leaving your unit or the university. An average performer in your unit may not be an average
performer elsewhere. They may excel in another role. Their exit would have a moderate effect on the unit. Consider a retention interview to assess their interest and skills, address any issues, and provide support if they decide to find a better suited position.

4. **High Exit Factor/High Impact** – a top performer who has moderate to high interest in leaving your unit or the university. These employees may also demonstrate the ability to move into leadership positions. This is an employee that is likely to be poached by another organization. Their exit would have a great effect on the unit. Conduct a retention interview to assess their job satisfaction, address any issues, and provide support to maintain employee engagement. Complete an Individual Development Plan.

Someone with **low exit factor** will likely have strong awareness of resources and many connections internally and externally. They feel empowered and have a high sense of community connectedness. They are very engaged. Leaving the university and/or the Ithaca area will be more of a sacrifice for them.

Someone with **high exit factor** will likely have lower awareness of resources and fewer connections internally and externally. They feel less empowered and have a low sense of community connectedness. You may notice that they participate in group activities less and less. They are disengaged. Leaving the university and/or the Ithaca area will be less of a sacrifice for them.

**STEP 3:** Once you have determined the exit factor and impact of employees who are a retention concern, you are ready to begin the retention interview process. After completing the chart, follow these steps to complete the Retention Interview Process:

1. Schedule a one-hour retention interview with each employee in box 4 and possibly boxes 2 and 3.
2. Give employees the Individual Development Plan to complete before the interview.

A one-on-one retention interview can be valuable for you and your employees and help you gauge an employee’s intent to stay. These interviews are designed to help managers gain insight on how to support the retention of highly talented staff and will:

- Help strengthen the relationship between you and your employees.
- Reinforce the university’s commitment to workforce diversity when communicating with highly talented employees from underrepresented groups.
- Get effective ideas about how you can provide a better experience for your team.
• Help provide career guidance for interested employees.
• Retain a highly talented employee and decrease you unit’s turnover.

Conduct the retention interview using the questions below as a guide.

Retention Interview Questions to determine an employee’s intent to stay:

Begin the interview by highlighting the employee’s accomplishments. Explain that they are valued and the purpose of the meeting is to determine if there are additional opportunities to support their career growth at the university.

• What do you like about your job?
• Can you describe a recent good experience or day at work?
• Do you feel you are reaching your full potential in this role?
• Can you describe a recent frustrating experience or day at work?
• Is there something new you would like to learn this year?
• Do you feel that you are recognized for your contributions?
• Do you have all the work tools you need to perform successfully?
• Do you feel that you are aware of unit/department/university happenings?
• How are your relationships with your co-workers?
• Do you feel trusted and respected?
• What are some of the strengths of our working relationship?
• What are some areas that can be improved in our working relationship?
• (For new hires that have relocated) Are you making connections in the local community?
• (For new hires that have relocated with families) Are you aware of the resources available to support your family members’ adjustment? (i.e. Career Life Services, Dual Career Program)
• Do you feel you’ve had a well-adjusted work life since starting this job?

Once you’ve completed the interview, you can move on to the next step in the process — developing a retention focused strategy using the action plan portion of the Individual Development Plan.

STEP 4: Schedule a follow-up action plan meeting with the employee and continue to monitor the plan to assure it is implemented.

Develop a plan to respond to opportunities and issues raised during the retention interview. Actions that may be articulated in the plan might include:

• How the employee can enhance or expand in their current role?
• How the employee can broaden their professional expertise?
• Exploring promotional and/or professional development opportunities.
• Options for developing or mentoring others.
• Providing opportunities for formal or informal feedback.
• Enhancing the quality of life beyond the job.

Monitor the progress of the action plan portion of the Individual Development Plan with the employee.
Appendix

Sample Introduction Email to the Department

Hi Everyone -

I am very pleased to share with you the good news that (name) has accepted the position of (title) in (department), filling the position previously held by (incumbent name). We are very excited that (first name) will begin (his/her) appointment with us on (date). Provide brief background including where they are currently working, title, a bit of background on the type of work they are currently doing and information about education background. (First name) is looking forward to joining our team.

Please join me in welcoming (first name) to (department name)!

Thank you,

(Supervisor Name)
Diversity and Inclusion are a part of Cornell University’s heritage. We are a recognized employer and educator valuing AA/EEO, Protected Veterans, and Individuals with Disabilities.