

# Tips for onboarding and retention

Gen Z is entering the workforce and they've got some unique expectations and priorities. For SMEs, creating a solid onboarding process and building long-term retention strategies can make all the difference in attracting and keeping fresh talent. So, we're here to help with some tips designed to help improve your onboarding approach, using insights from our latest survey.

**Remember!** It's important to address generational preferences, but under the age discrimination laws employees have to be treated equally regardless of their age. These are some of our top tips designed to improve the experiences for everyone, while addressing the general preferences of Gen Z from our survey.

## Your onboarding tips

### 1. Creating a welcoming introduction

#### Prepare the essentials

- ☐ Have their workstation set up before their first day – or if they're remote, make sure all their equipment is there before they start.
- ☐ Share a clear schedule for day one, so they know what to expect.

#### Provide a welcome pack

- ☐ Include practical items like tools and resources specific to their role, and personal touches like a company-branded item or a handwritten welcome note.

#### Assign a buddy or mentor

- ☐ Peer support makes a huge impact on first impressions and early experiences, so pair new hires with a colleague who can guide them through their first couple of months – **and 35% of SME owners recommend providing mentorship or career guidance to boost Gen Z performance.**

## 2. Communicate clearly

### Set clear expectations

- ☐ Even if you went through it in their interview, outline their responsibilities, performance goals and how their role contributes to the company mission – **51% of Gen Z employees feel their employer doesn't fully understand their needs, so this can go a long way to make them feel seen and heard.**

### Explain career pathways

- ☐ Again, even though you might have gone through this in their interview, take the time to reiterate growth opportunities like mentorship, training or promotions early on.

## 3. Make the mission relatable

### Show the big picture

- ☐ **Just over 1 in 5 Gen Z employees want to feel connected to a purpose** – share your company's mission, the community impact of your work and their role in achieving this.

### Highlight shared values

- ☐ Show how your organisation values sustainability, inclusivity or other causes

## 4. Use technology

### Make onboarding digital-friendly

- ☐ Provide access to tools like online onboarding portals or interactive video training – **in our research, 56% of SME owners identified Gen Z's confidence with technology as a key trait, so lean on this.**

### Provide flexible training options

- ☐ Offer learning modules that they can access on their own time, and supplement it with live sessions if possible for personal interaction.

## 5. Build early relationships

### Schedule one-on-one check-ins

- ☐ Regularly meet with your new hires during their first 90 days to make sure you're understanding their needs, challenges and wins.

### Emphasise team-building

- ☐ Gen Z employees value socialising and a community feel at work, so think about arranging a small, informal gathering or coffee morning with the team to build rapport in a low-pressure setting.

## You've hired them, onboarded them

- now let's look at how to keep them.

## 1. Foster career growth

### Provide learning and development opportunities

- ☐ Offer workshops, skill training or certification programmes.
- ☐ Encourage cross-team exposure to show pathways for growth.

### Set milestones and celebrate them

- ☐ Acknowledge achievements, from small project wins to anniversaries to keep everyone motivated.

## 2. Prioritise flexibility

### Highlight hybrid or remote working options

- ☐ 60% of Gen Z value remote working options, so if you can, make sure you're thinking about offering hybrid or remote working arrangements – but if you can't, make sure you're offering flexibility wherever you can.

### Respect work-life balance

- ☐ Creating a culture where employees feel supported to live their lives, unplug after work and unwind can boost loyalty.

### 3. Focus on values and inclusion

#### Promote an inclusive environment

- ☐ 43% of Gen Z employees value a fair, diverse and ethical workplace, so encourage open and honest discussions about diversity and inclusivity and make sure all employees feel seen, heard and respected.

#### Prioritise corporate responsibility

- ☐ Highlight your business's efforts in social responsibility. Gen Z employees are more likely to stay engaged when they feel their work aligns with ethical values.

### 4. Build on the open communication in onboarding

#### Carry out regular feedback sessions

- ☐ Create a culture where feedback is given and received freely – listen to what employees need and make them feel heard in key business decisions where appropriate.

#### Remember that transparency matters

- ☐ Keeping people informed about company updates, challenges and successes builds trust and engagement and helps everyone feel part of one team.

### 5. Recognise efforts and provide perks

#### Reward contributions

- ☐ Recognise outstanding work in team meetings or through small gestures like a thank-you email or gift card. 36% of SME owners recommend building a supportive and inclusive company culture, and this is a great way to do it.

#### Offer non-monetary perks

- ☐ Flexible hours, wellness days or opportunities to pursue passion projects can go a long way in employee satisfaction.

## 6. Watch out for red flags in retention

### Keep an eye on burnout

- ☐ Uncheckable workloads and pressure to overperform are some big drivers of dissatisfaction. Make sure you're monitoring workloads and encouraging work-life balance – but be careful not to micromanage.

### Track turnover trends

- ☐ 40% of SME owners identify retaining Gen Z long-term as a challenge, so if you notice a lot of people leaving, this might signpost some deeper issues that need addressing – make sure you carry out exit interviews and analyse them to find the causes.

## Build a workplace where everyone thrives

Investing in tailored onboarding and retention strategies geared towards Gen Z is more than just meeting a new generation's expectations – it's about building a workplace where everyone thrives. Focusing on inclusivity, flexibility and opportunities for growth means you'll create an environment where young talent feels motivated, valued and empowered to succeed.

## Not got a new hire to onboard?

Head over to our job description template to see how to create job descriptions that dazzle prospective employees!

