Scheduling the perfect first day

An hour-by-hour guide to creating the perfect first day for your new hire

Scheduling the perfect first day

Your new hires' first day is crucial for making them feel welcomed at your company and getting them excited to start their new role. But what exactly does the perfect first day look like? And which bases are vital to cover?

Below, we've put together a schedule for the ideal first day for your new hires. By the hour, you learn exactly which events to plan and why, helping you make the best first impression on them as possible.

You'll also get expert advice from three seasoned veterans in the people team space:

Katie Burke, Chief People Officer at HubSpot

Jess Yuen, Former Chief People Officer at Couchbase and Former Head of People at Gusto

Amanda Bowen, Operations and HR Generalist at Sora and Former People Ops Generalist at Plaid.

Perfect first day

BEFORE	📝 Send a schedule
9AM	☕ Welcome breakfast
10AM	🔧 Tools intro
11AM	🤔 Manager chat
11:45AM	🧘 Break
12PM	🥗 Team lunch
1PM	🎉 Company culture
2PM	🪪 Benefits & I9 chat
3PM	👩‍💻 Intro to product & industry
4PM	🥾 Explore
445PM	🥳 End of day check-in

BEFORE THEIR FIRST DAY

📝 Send them their schedule

Before we dive into our schedule, let's go over a task that should be taken care of prior to your new hire's first day — sending them their schedule.

"New hires are typically anxious and want to know what to expect on their first day, so it can be helpful to present the onboarding program in a timeline format," says Amanda Bowen, Operations and HR Generalist at Sora and Former People Ops Generalist at Plaid.

"When they know what's coming up, the anxiety that they could miss something somewhere eases a ton."

You don't want your new hires to start their first day with a completely blank slate. They'll be in a state of ambiguity, not knowing when the most essential items on their first-day agenda are going to happen, like meeting their manager or getting their laptop.

This can overwhelm and stress them right as they sit down at their desk or open their laptop, which is obviously not the headspace that you want them to be in at the beginning of their first day.

Sending them their schedule prior to their start date can help you sidestep this situation. It can also set the expectation of what a successful first day looks like – one where they can take a step back and be a sponge instead of rushing into something, immediately contributing, and feeling like they need to prove themselves.

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Amanda Bowen
Operations and HR Generalist at Sora, formerly People Ops Generalist at Plaid

9AM - 10AM

☕ Welcome breakfast

To instantly make your new hire feel at home, greet them with a welcome chat or welcome breakfast first thing in the morning. It's a fun, light way to begin their day, and it'll ease those first-day jitters.

If your company is remote, set up a welcome chat with your new hire's manager. You can make this chat a casual, get-to-know you rather than one that's strictly business, but towards the end of it, it'd be helpful to run through their schedule with them.

If your company is in the office, meet your new hire at the door, round up your team, and spend the first hour of the day eating breakfast with everyone, introducing your new hire to their team, and getting to know them.

10AM - 11AM

🔧 Get acquainted with tools

After sending a technology survey that your new hires can fill out before their first day, make sure they know how to set up their laptop and other work equipment before they log in.

If your company is remote, you can have someone on hand over Zoom who can walk them through it. Or you can send them documentation or a pre-recorded Loom video that shows them how to set everything up by themselves, which is more interactive and scalable than hosting an in-person meeting on each of your new hire's first day.

If your company is in the office, you should have already set up your new hire's laptop, monitor, keyboard, and mouse on their desk. You could also put some swag and a bag of their favorite snack or candy on their desk to make them feel even more welcome to the team. During this time, have someone show them the basics of their equipment, especially if they're used to different operating systems or hardware.

Next, do a run through of the tools that your team uses to communicate, schedule meetings, store knowledge, and manage projects. You don't want to get too into the weeds during this time frame but you also want to provide a baseline understanding of these tools so your new hires can start reaching out to people and get an idea of what you all are working on right now. We recommend going through these basic tools because you don't want to overwhelm them with their role-specific platforms — they need to train on those.

After this, have your new hires create accounts with each tool or just give them a documented list of them so they can create their accounts on their own time.

11AM - 11:45AM

🤔 Chat with manager

To give your new hires a glimpse of how your team works together, who they should meet and do coffee chats with, and what their day-to-day will look like, do an overview of:

- Who rolls up to who
- Who's in charge of what
- Who your new hire will be working with or needs to reach out to in regards to specific projects
- Your new hire's primary duties

After going over their team structure, make sure to give your new hire an overview of your team's strategy and guiding principles. It could help them come up with ideas about how they can best contribute, which is a big reason why they accepted the role in the first place. This is also a great time to go over what your team's goals are, why you've set them in place, and how you plan to achieve them.

11:45AM - 12PM

🧘‍♀️ Take a break

After back-to-back meetings, it's time to give your new hires a breather, especially since lunch is next on the docket.

During this time, schedule a break block on their calendars so it's clear to everyone at the company that this is a period of downtime, not a blank space to book another meeting.

Let your new hires know that they can just relax and scroll Instagram, grab coffee or a snack, or even do some stretching.

Or if they have any lingering questions about the topics that you just covered or want to dive deeper into them, give them a list of company intranet pages to check out or a list of Slack channels to poke around in.

12PM - 1PM

🥗 Team lunch

When you're new to a company, it can feel nerve wracking to ask people who already have established relationships with each other what they're doing for lunch (if you ever had to go to a new school growing up, you know how scary this feels). Instead of putting the burden on your new hires' shoulders, put it on your own.

If your company is remote, schedule a welcome lunch where you give everyone on the team a digital DoorDash gift card beforehand or just allow them to expense a meal.

Sometimes, however, virtual welcome lunches can feel like one big awkward silence. So consider starting off the lunch by reading your new hire's bio to the team and using these 30 prompts to keep the conversation flowing, get your team in a good mood, and make your welcome lunches the best part of everyone's day.

If your company is in office, order food and grab a table in the cafeteria or book a meeting room for your team. Or you could take everyone to a local restaurant nearby.

12PM - 1PM

🎉 Company culture

Your culture is your company's operating system. And if you can show your new hires how committed you are to operating in an empathetic, employee-centric way, they will instantly feel like they made the right decision in joining your company.

During this time frame, give your new hires a rundown of your company's:

- Story/history
- Mission
- Values
- Goals
- Decision-making process
- Definition of work-life balance
- Guidelines for communication
- Expected treatment of people
- Traditions

It's also important to document this information in your internal wiki. Your new hires will get bombarded with a ton of knowledge on their first day and won't remember it all. So make sure they know exactly where to find your culture document when they need it.

Last but definitely not least, don't forget to present on and document your company's inclusion and belonging efforts, such as attracting and hiring more diverse job candidates and creating employee resource groups. Everybody comes from a different background and walk of life, so it's important to make your new hires feel recognized and let them know that they'll always have allies at their workplace.

"Covering inclusion and belonging on day one is a must.

Not just at a high level but specifically how the organization is committed to this work, where employees can get additional support and information, and how to learn more and get involved."

Katie Burke
Chief People Officer at HubSpot

2PM - 2:30PM

🪪 Benefits/I9 Overview

Your company's mission, culture, and the type of roles you're offering are the biggest reasons why your new hires join your company professionally. But your benefits package may be the biggest reason why they joined personally.

Make sure to give them an overview of the ins and outs of their benefits such as their deadline to enroll, the exact date their benefits activate, and the main differentiators between each plan you're offering.

Then, show them where they can access any documentation about them. As a result, your new hires will be able to design their life accordingly and not have to worry about a charge or cost that is actually covered by your company.

Additionally, all of your new hires based in the United States need to fill out an I9 to be eligible to work for your company. During this meeting, you can help them fill it out and then collect a hard copy of their employment eligibility and identity documents. In your new hire's schedule, make sure to list the documents that they'll need on hand to fill out their I9.

2:30PM - 3PM

😎 Take a break

Even after all of these overviews, your new hire might still have some lingering questions or may even want to dive deeper into some topics that you just covered. Give them some downtime to explore your internal wiki, email, and Slack to find the answers they're looking for.

3PM - 4PM

👩🏽‍💻 Product and industry overview

Your product and industry are two things that your new hires are hungry to learn about. And giving them overviews on both topics will boost their interest in your product and industry to even higher levels than they were before they joined the company. It will also raise their excitement for working at a company that sells your product and operates within your industry.

During your product overview, give your new hires a rundown of:
- Your target market
- What their problems are
- What they care about the most
- What your product does
- How it solves your target market's problems
- Why it's crucial for them to have your product

You can even ask someone from your product or sales team to pitch in or give an elevator pitch during this session to really highlight the value of your product and get your new hires even more excited about it. Just make sure not to get into the inner workings of your product or how exactly it works just yet. You can cover that during product training, which happens later on in the onboarding process.

During your industry overview, give your new hires a rundown of:
- Your industry at large
- Your biggest competitors
- How your company fits into the larger ecosystem
- Your company's relative strengths and weaknesses
- How you plan to compete against your competitors
- Which parts of the market you plan to take over
- What the vision for your product roadmap looks like

4PM - 430PM

🥾 Explore

Once four o'clock hits, it's best to give your new hires another breather. They just plowed through seven hours of events, where they had to meet a ton of new people and absorb a ton of new information. They're mentally, emotionally, and probably even physically spent.

During this time, let them know that they can just relax. Or if they have any lingering questions about the topics that you just covered or want to dive deeper into them, tell them they can poke around certain Slack channels and skim through some internal documentation.

4PM - 430PM

🥳 End of day check-in

At the end of the day, wrap things up with your new hires with a chat about how the day went.

During this time, encourage your new hires to ask them any lingering questions that they might have and give them an idea of what to expect for tomorrow and the rest of the week.

And, finally, tell them how excited you are for them to be joining the company, that today was probably draining but they did a great job, and that you're pumped to see them tomorrow.

"It's a big deal to switch jobs, and new hires are looking for the reassurance that they made the right decision to join your company.

On day one, help them feel confident that they will be supported, that they will have great impact, and that this is the best place for them during the next phase of their career."

Jess Yuen
Formerly Chief People Officer at Couchbase and formerly Head of People at Gusto

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