

Employment Lifecycle Series

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Now that you have bedded down your recruitment processes (with the tips from the first article in our Employment Lifecycle Series – [Getting Your Recruitment Processes Right](#)), it might be time to review and consider how best to design and tailor your induction and on-boarding to suit your business' needs.

This article sets out our recommendations for an effective induction program.



On-Boarding and Induction Essentials

The basics

The obvious aim for any induction program is to ensure that the new starter has enough information and guidance so that they are set up to succeed in the new role. This means that not only will the employee have a good idea of what their role entails, but also who they can go to for support – their peers and managers, the IT team and the HR department.

An effective, structured and engaging induction program is also key to making a good first impression – remember that outside of an interview process, this is likely the first real interaction the employee has had with the organisation – the employee will be assessing how the organisation does things in practice.

The induction program should also foster employee engagement and make them feel valued, ultimately reducing early leavers. This is done by getting both the little and the big things right, such as making sure that an employee is oriented to their workspace and knows where to find everything, but also knows the broader picture of the organisational strategy and objectives and the context of how their role fits into that picture.

Also important at this stage is ensuring that the new employee has returned their signed written employment contract (we will be covering employment contracts in our next article) and that the new employee's terms and conditions are compliant with any relevant modern award.

Feel part of the team

Being the new person at any workplace can be daunting, so helping new starters to feel that they belong as quickly as possible is important. A buddy system is a simple, quick tool to integrate the new starter into the workplace socially, and also provide readily available and practical access to the way things are done in that particular workplace.

Safety and training

From a regulatory and legal risk minimisation point of view, one of the most crucial aspects of induction is making sure that employees are aware of work health and safety risks and are provided with any training that may be required to ensure that they can perform their role safely. Failure to do so could result in a workplace safety prosecution and/or a successful claim by the employee and significant damages being awarded against the organisation – see the example highlighted on the following page.

Similarly, employers should also ensure that new starters are provided with training about bullying and harassment, as failure to do so can result in the employer being vicariously liable for any such conduct by the new starter or a new starter could be left without knowing how to raise a complaint.

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Policies

It is also crucial to ensure that new employees are provided with organisational policies and procedures.

This includes providing them with either hard copy versions or electronic access via a workplace intranet to those policies and procedures, and a process by which those employees agree to be bound by those policies and procedures.

This is important as in the event that a dispute arises, the organisation will be able to show that the employee is aware of their rights and responsibilities in the workplace and has accepted the terms of those policies. One of our upcoming articles will look at policies and procedures in detail.

Vulnerable workers

Employers should be mindful of the needs of each new starter, particularly when inducting workers who, due to their particular age or cultural/ethnic background, may be at greater risk. Vulnerable workers may include young workers, migrant or visa workers, such as those where English is not a first language, and workers re-entering the workforce after a break.

For example, employers should dedicate extra time to training employees who have been on a career break (and not simply assuming that they will recall all of their past training) and should provide safety training and/or safety booklets to employees from a non-English speaking background in their native language wherever possible.

Ongoing

A successful induction and on-boarding program does not stop after the employee's first day or week. It includes structured, strategic support in the weeks and months to come – there is no point overloading the new starter with all the information on the first day!

Setting up staggered check-ins with the HR team and the employee's line manager regularly over the next few months will help both sides identify any issues early and give feedback to not only the employee, but also the company, to encourage integration and engagement.

CAUTIONARY EXAMPLE

In October 2018, a battery wholesaler in Queensland was found negligent for failing to provide adequate instruction and training to an employee who was injured at work.

The employee worked as a delivery driver, delivering vehicle batteries, some of which weighed over 20kgs. As a result of his work handling the batteries and entering and exiting his delivery truck, the employee suffered intermittent back, buttock and leg pain and ultimately injured his spine, requiring surgery.

The Supreme Court found the employer negligent and subsequently liable for damages in the sum of \$320,865.79, for failing to provide on-the-job instruction or training about manual handling techniques of the batteries, and the entering or exiting the delivery truck assigned to the employee.

While this employee was not a new starter, the employer could (and should) have incorporated instruction and training as a part of the induction and on-boarding process, to ensure that the employee knew how to perform their job safely.

Gadens can assist employers review and develop successful on-boarding and induction programs, to ensure that they are not only legally compliant, but also align with best practice.

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