

New joiner 'buddy' program template

Overview

This template helps People teams design and implement a structured buddy program that accelerates new hire onboarding, supports early connection and confidence, and fosters a sense of belonging.

Unlike informal intros or short-term onboarding tasks, a well-run buddy program strengthens engagement, culture, and retention from day one.

1. Define the program objectives

Goal: Clarify what your buddy program is for and how you'll measure success.

Checklist:

- ☐ Support social connection and reduce new joiner isolation
- ☐ Provide informal guidance on company culture and norms
- ☐ Help new hires navigate tools, systems, and day-to-day tasks
- ☐ Reinforce company values and inclusive practices
- ☐ Create a feedback loop between new hires and the business

Example objectives:

Example #1: To ensure every new hire feels welcomed, informed, and connected during their first 90 days by pairing them with an experienced, trained buddy.

Example #2: To improve new hire onboarding satisfaction scores by 20% by embedding peer-led support in the first six weeks.

Example #3: To help new employees develop a sense of community and cultural alignment through guided peer conversations.

Example #4: To create consistent, scalable support across departments that accelerates role clarity and early performance.

2. Select and prepare buddies

Goal: Choose employees who are credible, approachable, and prepared to offer support.

Checklist:

- ☐ Set eligibility criteria (e.g. 6+ months at company, strong culture ambassador)
- ☐ Invite volunteers or nominate with manager input
- ☐ Create a buddy training guide or short onboarding
- ☐ Clarify buddy expectations (e.g. 1 hour/week for 4–6 weeks)
- ☐ Provide recognition or incentives (optional but encouraged)

Example criteria:

Buddies must have been with the company for at least 6 months, have manager approval, and attend a 30-minute orientation session.

3. Design the buddy structure and timeline

Goal: Create a clear structure for the buddy relationship, including touchpoints, time commitment, and communication expectations.

Checklist:

- ☐ Set a formal buddy period (e.g. first 30, 60, or 90 days)
- ☐ Outline suggested cadence (e.g. weekly 30–45 min check-ins)
- ☐ Provide a meeting guide or conversation prompts for buddies
- ☐ Clarify communication tools to use (e.g. Slack, Zoom, in-person)

Example structure:

The buddy program runs for the first 6 weeks of the new joiner's onboarding journey. Buddies are expected to meet for 30–45 minutes each week, either in person or via Zoom, depending on location.

- **Week 1:** Introduction and orientation – help the new hire understand communication channels, social norms, and how to navigate tools or systems.
- **Week 2:** Social connection – invite the new hire to a team lunch, virtual coffee, or cross-functional meeting to help them start forming connections.
- **Week 3:** Role reflection – check in on their understanding of their role, current tasks, and whether they feel they have what they need to succeed.
- **Week 4:** Informal insights – share personal tips about working with different teams, navigating company culture, and handling typical roadblocks.
- **Week 5:** Career and growth – talk about how the buddy has grown in their role and offer encouragement on building confidence and independence.
- **Week 6:** Wrap-up and reflection – reflect together on how the buddy experience has been and discuss how the new hire can stay connected moving forward.

Buddies are encouraged to supplement structured check-ins with informal moments, such as Slack chats or a walk-and-talk, to create a relaxed and natural dynamic.**

Buddy program runs for 6 weeks with 1 weekly check-in. Buddies are encouraged to meet informally as well (e.g. coffee chat, walk & talk).

4. Align with onboarding milestones

Goal: Make the buddy program a complement to formal onboarding—not a separate track.

Checklist:

- ☐ Sync buddy check-ins with major onboarding phases (Week 1, Week 3, Week 6)
- ☐ Reinforce key onboarding goals (culture, role clarity, relationships)
- ☐ Enable buddies to flag concerns or support gaps to managers or HR

Example alignments

- **Week 1:** Buddy gives a virtual tour of communication channels, key Slack groups, and go-to resources.
 - **Week 2:** Buddy checks in after first team meeting to debrief and answer lingering questions about team dynamics.
 - **Week 3:** Buddy reviews how the new joiner feels about workload, expectations, and overall clarity in their role.
 - **Week 4:** Buddy shares informal norms and tips for working cross-functionally, helping the new hire navigate unwritten rules.
 - **Week 6:** Buddy reflects with the new hire on progress, confidence level, and what support might be helpful going forward.
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5. Equip both parties with resources

Goal: Set buddies and new hires up for success with clear expectations and practical tools.

Checklist:

- ☐ Buddy kickoff guide: role, goals, do's and don'ts
- ☐ New hire welcome guide: how to get the most out of your buddy
- ☐ Conversation starter prompts

- ☐ Suggested check-in schedule template

Example resource prompt:

- Tell me something you wish you knew in your first month here.
 - What has helped you feel most connected to the team or company?
 - What surprised you most about working here—and how did you adjust?
 - If you could offer one piece of advice to a new joiner, what would it be?
 - What tools or resources did you rely on the most in your first few weeks?
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6. Communicate and launch the program

Goal: Ensure everyone knows what the program is, how it works, and why it matters.

Checklist:

- ☐ Announce the buddy program internally (Slack/email/town hall)
- ☐ Include buddy pairing details in the new hire's welcome email
- ☐ Give buddies a heads-up at least 1 week before their assignment starts
- ☐ Encourage managers to support and reinforce the buddy connection

Example internal message:

Subject: Launching our new joiner buddy program

We're excited to officially launch our new joiner buddy program!

Starting this month, every new teammate will be matched with a trained buddy to help them feel welcomed, informed, and connected from day one.

Buddies are experienced team members who will support new hires in understanding our culture, navigating our tools and ways of working, and making early connections across the company.

The buddy relationship will run for the first 6 weeks of onboarding, with regular check-ins and informal chats along the way. This is a key part of how we build belonging and set our teammates up for success.

Thank you to everyone who has volunteered to be a buddy. Your experience and support make a big difference.

If you have questions about the program—or want to get involved—reach out to the People Team anytime.

7. Measure, celebrate, and improve

Goal: Track the program's impact and continuously improve it based on feedback.

Checklist:

- ☐ Send a short buddy program feedback survey to new joiners and buddies (after 30–90 days)
- ☐ Ask managers for feedback on new hire ramp-up
- ☐ Share positive stories or testimonials publicly (e.g. Slack, newsletter)
- ☐ Adjust program structure or training as needed

Example survey question:

- How helpful was your buddy in making you feel connected and supported during your onboarding?
- What was the most valuable thing your buddy helped you with?
- How often did you meet with your buddy, and was that the right amount of contact for you?
- Did your buddy make you feel comfortable asking questions or expressing concerns?
- What would you change or improve about the buddy program experience?

- How helpful was your buddy in making you feel connected and supported during your onboarding?