

A Guide To Onboarding In The Indoor Climbing Industry

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The indoor climbing industry witnesses a continual flux of personnel, with staff members transitioning to new opportunities, being let go, or advancing within the ranks, leading to recurrent gaps that need filling.

For facility operators, prioritizing hiring becomes imperative. While selecting the right candidates is paramount, ensuring their proficiency in their roles and fostering effective communication among team members and supervisors are equally crucial. Failure to achieve this can result in inefficiency, inconsistency, and diminished morale.

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Thus, establishing a comprehensive onboarding program is a cornerstone for staff success in this industry. Such a program equips new hires with the requisite skills and tools for their roles and fosters a sense of accomplishment vital for retaining employees. Given these considerations, investing time and effort into crafting, and implementing a robust onboarding program is highly worthwhile.

The Five Key Segments of a Successful Onboarding Program

An onboarding program can be divided into five segments, which, when executed properly, lead to great results.

1: Warm Welcome

The first and often most missed step in the onboarding process is officially welcoming a new staff member. It is tempting to simply jump in and train someone to do their job. However, new hires are much more receptive to training after they feel welcomed and a part of the team. Even the most experienced new hire might feel uneasy entering a new and unfamiliar facility. A warm welcome includes having the new hire's uniform and name tag ready on the first day, as well as making an introduction on internal and external social media channels.

Here are some tips for a welcoming first day:

- Prepare an agenda for the new staff member so they know exactly what to expect.
- Conduct a new hire survey to learn more about them.
- Assign a coworker as a buddy for them during breaks or lunchtime.
- End the first day with a meeting with their supervisor to receive feedback and answer any questions.

2: Culture Training

All onboarding for new staff members should begin with culture. Every employee must know your facility's vision, mission, and values. The new hire should learn a little about this in the interview process, but they learn much more during onboarding. **A strong understanding of why a facility exists and what it stands for, the "facility DNA," is integral.**

It also helps instill purpose. A clear purpose helps employees make the right decisions and understand their roles and contributions within the company. For example, while the hire may "work the front desk," their real purpose is to be the best part of a climber's day. When people find meaning in their work, they will be more engaged and perform better. Culture training is the foundation for all subsequent training.

3: Skills Training

Once new staff members have been welcomed and indoctrinated into the facility culture, it is time to teach them the skills they need to do their jobs. This will vary depending on the specific role but could include belaying techniques, route setting, and administrative tasks. Skills training should be a mix of classroom instruction and hands-on experience. It is essential to provide new staff members with opportunities to practice their skills in a safe and supportive environment.

4: Ongoing Support

Onboarding does not end after a few days or weeks. New staff members need ongoing support as they learn and grow in their roles. This support can come from supervisors, mentors, and peers. It is essential to check in with new staff members regularly to see how they are doing and to answer any questions. Ongoing support will help new staff members feel comfortable and

confident in their roles.

5: Feedback and Evaluation

Regular feedback and evaluation are essential for helping new staff members succeed. Feedback can be formal or informal, but it should always be specific and actionable. Evaluation can help to identify areas where new staff members need additional training or support. It can also help to track progress and measure the effectiveness of the onboarding program.

Following these five steps, you can create a strong onboarding program to help new staff members succeed in the indoor climbing industry. Investing in a strong onboarding program is essential for the success of any indoor climbing facility.

A well-designed program will help new staff members feel welcome, learn the skills they need to do their jobs, and become valuable team members.

Ready to take your onboarding game to the next level? **The Empower Group will be hosting a pre-conference workshop at this year's CWA Summit, diving deeper into these aspects and guiding attendees through the process of crafting customized onboarding programs specifically for their climbing gyms.** Join us to learn effective strategies, share best practices, and create a roadmap for success in welcoming and retaining top talent within your climbing community!

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About The Author



Chris Stevenson, an accomplished speaker with a global footprint, has presented dynamic sessions in over a dozen countries and over half of the 50 states. As a former Power Ranger stuntman and founder of The Empower Group, Chris draws from over 20 years of hands-on experience owning and operating highly successful health clubs, consistently achieving industry-leading net promoter scores. His expertise lies in leadership, communication, employee engagement, and customer service, making him a sought-after authority in various industries, including health and fitness, indoor rock climbing, parks and recreation, the financial sector, security, insurance, and more. Beyond his business acumen, Chris has served as a board member, committee member, and published

author, contributing to his holistic perspective on industry dynamics. When he isn't entertaining and educating audiences, you can find him in the gym, on a snowboard, or cheering for his sons on the football field. Chris has the unique ability to connect with people instantaneously and to present viable, applicable lectures that resonate with every audience.

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