



SPECIALIST PROFESSIONAL RECRUITMENT

A GUIDE TO REMOTE ONBOARDING

ROBERT WALTERS

A guide to remote onboarding

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues, businesses have acted quickly, requiring employees to work from home to mitigate risk of the spread of the virus. While we don't yet know the full impact that COVID-19 will have across Ireland, sectors looking to hire now face the challenge of onboarding talent remotely. While growing your team remotely may be a new concept, both hiring and onboarding can be done with the right technologies and organisation in place.

Tech-enabled solutions are allowing businesses to continue to screen, interview, and hire talent in times of uncertainty. But have you thought about the next steps to ensure your organisation is ready to onboard staff remotely?

Experts at Robert Walters have devised a guide to onboarding your staff from home, to ensure your new recruits can add value and be embedded into your organisation from the get-go.



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Why are businesses continuing to hire?

Think long-term

In spite of the immediate crisis, we're seeing many employers are taking a long-term view, considering why they needed a specific skill set pre COVID-19. The expertise and experience that a candidate can offer help businesses to remain competitive and boost bottom line.

Business-as-usual approach

With remote working allowing organisations (as much as possible) to maintain 'business as usual' operations, those still engaged in the recruitment process (and employing the right digital tools) are finding it's still possible to hire and onboard talent to make headway and stay resilient.

Skills shortages prevalent

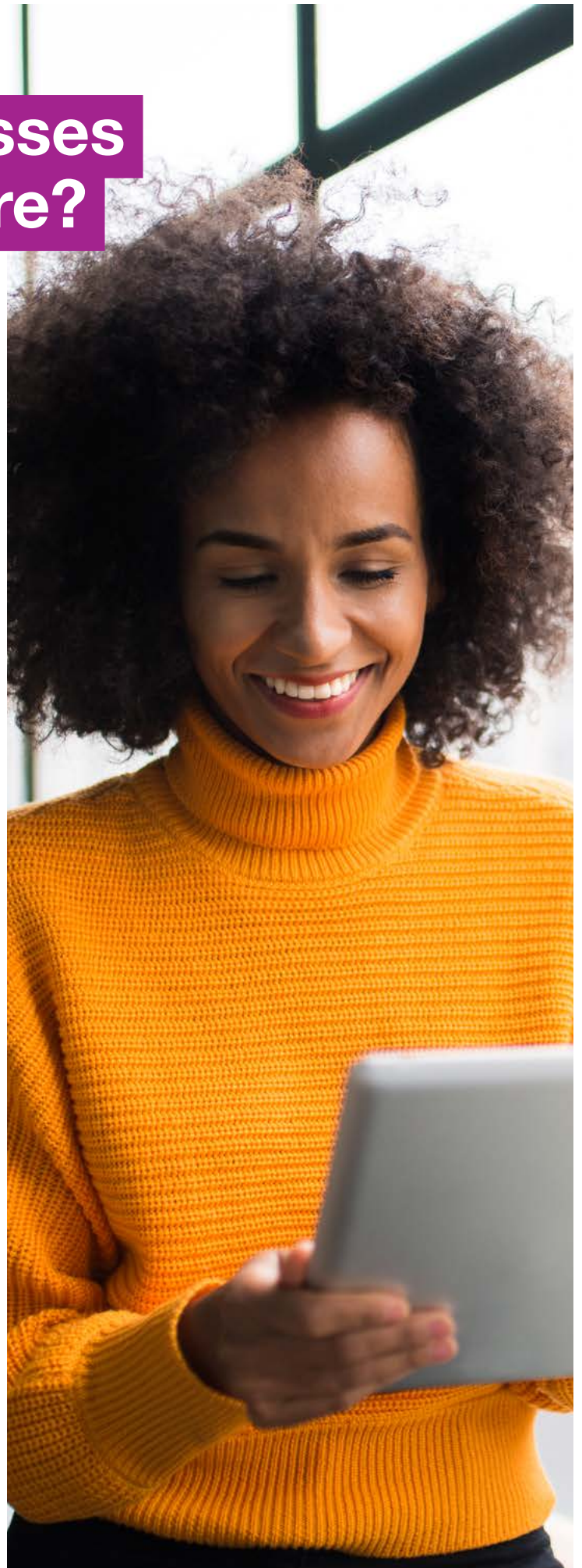
Businesses are capitalising on skilled talent that has been 'freed-up' due to the immediate effects of COVID-19. When the job market stabilises once we move past the crisis, we predict skills shortages will be just as prevalent. Now is an opportunity to onboard specialist talent in short-supply that can choose between multiple employment offers.

Contract staff

Despite market uncertainty, the recruitment of contract staff has remained steady, due to their flexibility and ease at working remotely. Without the expectation for a face-to-face induction, contract staff are a speedy hire without you having to make the same financial commitment as a permanent employee.

Embrace new ways of working

Businesses are seeing the opportunity to gear themselves towards a smarter and more seamless way of onboarding staff. Going 'remote-first' can speed up the onboarding process, save training time and develop autonomous, technology-savvy employees.



Keeping new hires engaged

Create an intro video

Give your new hire a personal welcome to the company with a virtual tour of the organisation and introduction to their new team. A lack of face-to-face interaction can be isolating, so use the video to express your enthusiasm for them joining the company and what they can expect to happen during the onboarding period. When starting out remotely, giving new hires a flavour of the business and team will help them to understand the company culture when they are able to set foot in the office.

Be prepared for counteroffers

Almost 41% of professionals have received a counteroffer when accepting a new role, so engage regularly with your new recruit. Research shows the first and last weeks of an employee's notice period are the times when they are most likely to receive a counteroffer from their employer, so pay extra attention during these times.

41%

Almost of professionals have received a counteroffer when accepting a new role

Provide reassurance

In the current climate, security and support are essential to quell anxieties or uncertainties your new employees might have with starting a new role remotely. So be mindful that you'll need to communicate regularly and answer any questions they have about how the onboarding process will work.

Sending regular updates will help to keep your hires engaged and ready to start at home – this could be internal newsletters about what's happening within the department with links to useful resources, as well as updates on projects so they already have an idea of their tasks during their first week.

Embed into the team culture

Impress upon your new hire a sense of community from the outset by getting them involved in the team. Add your new team member to WhatsApp or Skype groups and schedule social video calls to introduce your new starter to the rest of the department.

Any team rituals that you can continue remotely? For example, why not consider sending lunches through a delivery service. Depending on the size of your team, enjoying those meals over a group video chat could be a fun way to welcome a new team member – prioritise small talk and getting to know your new hire, before turning to work chat.



Provide a new starter pack

Something you may have previously left until induction week is providing a new starter pack. But providing useful links to resources such as HR contacts, internal processes, training sessions, how to request leave, FAQs and benefits information, will allow many questions to be answered prior to your new hire's start date.

Want to do something different? Make your new starter pack interactive with short quizzes about the company's key messages and processes – you want your hire to feel they are integrating into your organisation before they go online on day one.

Provide an organisational chart

Remembering names and roles can be difficult even when you are seeing people face-to-face daily as a new starter, so when remote onboarding it is important to help an individual get to grips with the organisation structure and 'who sits where.' The best way to do this is to provide an organisational chart in your starter pack.

Test your technologies

Confirm that all technology you make available to your new recruit is in working order before their first week. Ensuring that video chat technology and email access is in working order will be crucial at this stage. Assign someone in your business with technology expertise to be available to set up systems prior to the start date to ensure your new starter isn't troubleshooting on day one.

Make HR paperwork paperless

One of the most dreaded parts of starting a new role are the hordes of paperwork that new hires are required to sign and return. While many businesses have already transitioned to digital paperwork, a centralised platform such as Gusto can help you to keep all documentation in one place.

You can also send out paperwork digitally using tools like DocuSign or DocHub, but be sure to send them well in advance of your new hire's start date.



Getting your business remote-ready

For some businesses, implementing a working from home initiative could mean navigating completely new territory – so it's important to make sure your business is 'remote-ready' to ensure your current team, and any new hires, are supported to make the transition to a home-based working environment.

This means investing in the right tech and ensuring teams have all the information at their disposal to thrive when working remotely.

Communication software

Providing the right communication tools is critical to ensure your team members and any new starters do not feel isolated. So think beyond traditional email and ensure you're utilising communication platforms that make your team feel connected. This includes instant messaging (IM) platforms such as Microsoft Teams, Slack and Workplace by Facebook, as well as video conferencing tools such as Skype for Business, Zoom or Google Hangouts.

Such tools maintain a sense of community within your organisation, help remote workers fit into a company culture, and allow co-workers to get to know each other informally.

Employee hardware and working environment

How will your employees perform their jobs, and perform them efficiently and safely from their homes? Think about the core hardware you'll need to deliver to employees so they can carry out the basic functions of their job, such as a company laptop, wireless mouse and charger.

While it's the responsibility of your staff to ensure their homes are work-ready in terms of connectivity and creating an appropriate workspace, think about what you offer in the office - such as back supports, ergonomic keyboards, additional screens and noise cancelling headsets - and touch base with your team to see whether their home set-up significantly hinders them in any way. Offering what you can to your employees will make them comfortable, boost productivity and raise morale.



Employee resource centre

Create a repository of information for your employees that can be accessed remotely – imagine a scaled-up version of your company intranet. When a new remote worker has a question, think about having a search facility they can query before having to reach out to another team member.

A resource centre or intranet can host important process documentation and core files too. Any required employee training - such as health & safety and anti-corruption - should all be accessible online for new users to complete as soon as they have access to the platform.

Project software

One of the first problems associated with dispersed teams is a lack of visibility over shared projects. Rather than waiting for scheduled meetings to keep updated on progress, project and task management software such as Trello, Asana or shared Google Docs allow teams to organise and view work visually, assign tasks to team members and share and record necessary information to complete work.

What's more, managers can quickly and easily oversee projects and track the progress of their employees without having to physically check in.

Best practice guidelines

Clearly outline your remote working process for current and new hires. If your organisation uses multiple communication and project channels, create a short guide to explain how each channel should be used. For example, emails for non-urgent requests, IM for quick questions, phone for urgent queries, scheduled calls for project updates and text when you can't reach a team member by call.

Set expectations around when employees should be online and able to connect. Recommend that employees set aside regular breaks and designate lunchbreaks to ensure your team is available around the working clock.

**Use communication platforms
that make your team feel
connected.**



Mapping out the induction

Your new hire is geared up to start, but what will their first week look like? Providing a structure will be crucial to ensure a smooth onboarding - here's our top tips to map out week one.

Formally introduce

Where relevant, send out an email to the wider company (or appropriate teams) introducing your new starter. In the communication, include some information about the individual's career background, what they will be focussing on in the business, and something personal which people can then use as an e-conversation starter – such as 'dog lover', 'keen traveller' or 'jujitsu medallist' – and crucially, include the new starter's email in the body of the text.

Create an induction timeline

Provide a sense of routine from the outset by sending an itinerary for the first couple of weeks including training sessions, one-to-ones and time to work on specified tasks. The first week is about easing them in and getting them up to speed quickly, so it's important to have some initial and immediate workload, on top of the training and introductions.

Send diary invites for everything you schedule in to help your new hire structure their day.

Schedule team meetings and one-to-ones

Celebrate your new addition to the team with an informal team call. Make this a social call – it's more about putting names to faces and breaking the ice than assigning tasks.

Schedule one-to-ones with individual team members and stakeholders to talk over more specific responsibilities and provide training using screen-sharing technology such as Skype or Microsoft Teams.

Develop a training programme

Think about all the processes you may need to provide training on to support your new recruit in performing their job. This may include things you deal with as they come up in an office setting, such as accessing the company intranet, accessing templates and key files, or bookmarking sites they will use on a regular basis.

Check in regularly

Schedule regular morning meetings between your new hire and their line manager, whether that's you or one of your direct reports, to provide clarity during their first week. Set clear, daily expectations during calls so the employee knows what to focus on throughout the day and can plan out their activities. As time goes on and your new recruit will have built more understanding and naturally will have become more autonomous. As a result, you'll find these check-in meetings will become less frequent, but more productive and efficient.

Assign a digital mentor

You might want to think about assigning a mentor or buddy in your team to support your new recruit during their first few months at the company. Set aside time for Q&A sessions and ask your new recruit to compile questions for their mentor during the call so they can support with introductory training and tasks.

Working in an office allows time for basic questions to be asked as they arise. A new starter may not feel comfortable with querying their line manager directly, fearing they will take up their time if the question is too trivial. Having a point of contact on stand-by means they can drop them a quick line without any reservation and get a faster response.

Create a feedback loop

Digital onboarding is a learning curve for all parties, so there are bound to be teething issues when implementing it for the first time.

After week one, be sure to ask your new team member what can be improved. Perhaps they could have benefited from a more organised system, or would have appreciated fewer meetings and more down time to get settled in. It's important to take into consideration how different personality types may react to a novel situation, and you won't be able to improve your process if you don't ask.

Be patient


Even if your new hire is accustomed to working remotely, a digital onboarding process will be navigating completely new territory for both managers and employees, so errors and miscommunications are to be expected during the first few weeks. Where a new employee may go wrong, be understanding and ensure they have the support to overcome and learn from any errors.

Prioritise their wellbeing

The most prevalent challenges for remote workers are isolation, loneliness and lack of facetime with co-workers. New employees especially are likely to suffer from this, so make sure the induction includes plenty of time for the new recruit to get to know the rest of the team, and vice-versa.

Your new starter will want to impress and overwork to let their employer know they can be trusted, resulting in the potential to work after hours and be at risk of burn-out. Make sure you instil the importance of unplugging and maintaining work-life balance from the outset. Share how you personally structure your day so your new hire follows suit.





Onboarding remotely: the future of your workforce?

While remote working allows ‘business-as-usual’ operations to continue during challenging times, fully committing to a remote onboarding strategy could provide various advantages to your recruitment strategy in the long-run. Why could going remote-first work for your organisation?

Communication software

Starting employees remotely can cut down on training time and make their transition into the office seamless. With all the tools already available to them and the proper systems in place, new starters can train themselves and get to work from the get-go, without needing to set foot in an office. As well as freeing up cost and resource dedicated to induction training, you’re building a team of autonomous, self-starting professionals.

Improved employee wellbeing

Staff working from home have greater autonomy over their work-life balance, reduced commuting time and cost, and the ability to better manage childcare.

Improve your employment offer

Latest Robert Walters research reveals that 30% of professionals value remote working opportunities in an employment offer, while 55% look for flexi-hours. Adopting remote working permanently could be instrumental in improving employee attraction and retention.



30%

of professionals value remote working opportunities in an employment offer

Increased skills sharing

Investing in the right communications technology provides space for employees to collaborate, share ideas and learn from others. Where your team is based across multiple locations, online webinars and screen sharing technologies allow your team to knowledge-share without having to be in the same place.

Global workforce

In an increasingly global economy, different skill specialisms exist in different locations across the world. This is particularly true of the tech industry, where IT teams are familiar with colleagues being from all around the world. Remote onboarding does not only allow you to access the best talent from around the globe, but also provide the opportunity to foster growth and international expansion.

Develop a high-performing team

To work effectively in the modern workplace, you need to be tech-savvy. Starting an employee remotely allows for autonomous training, from performing basic tasks independently, signing up to new systems and finding resources, as well as sending clear and regular updates back to their team or line manager. Remote onboarding helps you to grow a team of digitally proficient professionals and confident communicators.

Strengthening your business

During this uncertain time, businesses with unexpected workload and critical skills requirements are showing their ability to adapt to manage the hiring and onboarding process remotely. If your business is not typically remote, then having this opportunity to test out remote working and remote onboarding is a great learning opportunity that can make your business stronger in the long run. Remote onboarding certainly has its unique challenges, but by leveraging the right tools, you can ensure your newest team members find cohesion within their new teams and the business.



Contact us

Adapting to an unexpected working climate doesn't come without its challenges, so please don't hesitate to get in touch with the Robert Walters team for help and advice on implementing remote onboarding.

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