



Building a Veteran Friendly
ONTARIO

Onboarding Guide

Canada 

**EMPLOYMENT
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Ontario 

Lessons learned from hiring managers

“We make an effort to understand the challenges that Veterans face. We work with the Veterans in our organization to ‘interpret’ military experience, structure, ranks, and roles into civilian equivalents. We also use them to brief hiring managers who may not have much experience with Veterans. We know they use language and terms that aren’t easily understood in the civilian world, and we help them adjust their resumes and prepare for interviews.”

– **Manager, large enterprise, Veteran hiring program**

Onboarding new Veteran hires

Onboarding new hires the right way, whether or not they are Veterans, is key to long-term retention. Having a clear onboarding process helps you build employee engagement, workplace integration and connection, and productivity from their very first day. The onboarding framework provided below gives you a strong foundation for building and implementing a complete onboarding process.

Why use an onboarding framework?

1

Establishes a foundation for a strong working relationship

2

Prepares new hires for personal and organizational success

3

Sets out specific activities and timeframes

4

Provides structure and clarity to both employer and employee

5

Veterans will expect it—they come from a highly formalized, regimented environment

Don't have a complete, formal onboarding process yet? Consider enlisting the first Veteran you hire to create or document useful tools and templates based on their own onboarding experience. Regardless of their role and rank in the military, they've been trained to add this type of value to the organization they work for—and they're well-suited to the task.

Challenge Factory's work with business owners, leaders, and hiring managers focuses on the direct links between healthy employee careers and organizational success. Check out our action-focused [*Retain and Gain series of career management playbooks*](#) (for small businesses, nonprofits and charities, and the public sector) to access over 40 activities that employers can do with their employees to ensure continued career growth and happy workforces.

Lessons learned from hiring managers

“When we bring in a new Veteran, we make sure they have a buddy for the first few months. The buddy isn't necessarily someone they work with every day. This is someone who can answer questions that are confusing to a newly released Veteran, such as:

- ‘How do I apply for health benefits?’
- ‘How do I deal with unionized employees?’
- ‘How do I communicate with other employees who don't seem to understand me?’

We think of the buddy system as a leadership development opportunity for staff members, and we recognize them for this work.”

– **Manager, large enterprise, Veteran hiring program**

Framework for onboarding Veterans

This framework can be built on and adapted to suit your unique needs.

Step 1: Before the first day

Goal: Ensure the organization and new employee are ready for a good start.

Questions for the employer

- What resources will the new employee require to do their job?
- Has the new employee's direct supervisor learned about military experience? (They may benefit from exploring *The Canadian Guide to Hiring Veterans*.)
- Is it clear how the new employee's role/work will contribute to the success of the organization?
- Who are ten people (i.e., staff, managers, partners, clients, etc.) the new employee should meet in their first three weeks on the job?
- Can you assign someone within the organization to be your new employee's "work buddy" (coach, guide, support) during the onboarding process?

Questions for the new employee to consider before their first day

- What questions do you have about this new role, work environment, chain of command, and expectations (for you and your employer)?
- What might you learn, do, and teach others in this role?
- What information, introductions, tools, and skills do you think you'll need (that you may not currently have)?

Step 2: On the first day

Goal: Create a good first impression and working relationship.

Activities for the employer

- Be prepared to meet your new employee at the time you specified. Anticipate that they will arrive a few minutes early.
- Provide an agenda for the new employee's first day. This should outline how their time will be spent. Include time-blocks for an office or location tour (if appropriate), a coffee break with team members, a session to complete paperwork, lunch with their direct supervisor, and an opportunity to get any equipment set up (e.g., email, software, workspace, etc.).
- Spend time reviewing formal workplace policies. Ensure the new employee understands the formal and informal rules of how your organization operates.
- Schedule a time to review the new employee's learning and work goals. Ask what they want to learn, do, and teach others in the next six months.

Step 3: During the first week

Goal: Get the new employee engaged and productive as quickly as possible.

Activities for the employer and employee together

- Set up and complete any required training (e.g., compliance, safety, job-related, etc.).
- Connect the new employee with their “work buddy” and ensure regular meetings are set up.
- Ensure the new employee knows they can ask questions, and ask them questions as well. In this way, the new employee can fill the gaps in their knowledge and you can mine the value of having a talented set of fresh eyes on your organization’s operations.
- Ensure the new employee is busy. Provide ample work that accurately reflects their role and duties. It’s important that the new employee learns quickly what they’ll need to do to be successful.
- Ensure the new employee meets a new (and different) contact each day. This meeting doesn’t have to be long or formal, but the new employee should have opportunities to meet with the people identified in Step 1 during their first three weeks on the job. Remember to also provide opportunities for the new employee and “work buddy” to connect regularly during these first crucial weeks.

Step 4: Keep it current

Goal: Revisit your onboarding process to see if any changes are needed.

Activities for the employer

Even when you have a strong onboarding process in place, new information and market conditions may require you to make a change. After a period of high volume hiring or at least once a year, gather feedback about your onboarding process by asking your hiring managers (if you have them) and newest employees the following questions. You can send them in an email, create a survey, or set up a one-on-one or group meeting. Choose the method that will best fit your culture.

Questions for the employer/hiring managers only

1. Knowing what you know now, would you change the order, urgency, or supports used during the first three months of a new hire's employment?

Questions for both the employer/hiring managers and new employees

1. What do you remember about the onboarding experience that was challenging?
2. What do you remember about the onboarding experience that was critical to your success?
3. In reviewing the Employment Value Proposition (EVP) for our organization, has the experience of the first three months within the organization lived up to the culture described? If not, why not?

As you review the answers you receive, consider the following: What positive work surprises do any Veteran employees think should have been described upfront? How have the hiring managers used your EVP to guide discussions and decision-making?