The Importance of a Good Onboarding Program
By Suzette Welling

Onboarding, defined as the action or process of integrating a new employee into an organization, is a largely discussed topic today. Google it, and you will find there are over 27.5 million results. Why has it become such a large part of our culture?

Onboarding is more than just a "warm and fuzzy" PC practice of expecting everyone to like everyone and be singing kumbaya. It is a practice that is very important to your business. Turnover is expensive. Training is expensive. And, in today's market, good, qualified employees are extremely difficult to find. When you are lucky enough to get a great hire, chances are you had to pay a recruiter a hefty sum to find them, and the last thing you want to do is lose them after the investment of recruiting fees, training costs, and the slow productivity while they get up to speed.

The results of onboarding are not just subjective. They are also quantifiable. A good onboarding program has been shown to result in better job performance, greater commitment to the organization, reduced stress, higher job satisfaction, and better retention. The cost of hiring a new employee averages $65k, and it takes an average of 5 months of full-time employment to bring new hires up to full productivity.

So how does one successfully onboard an individual for successful integration into the firm? For starters, onboarding begins well before the employee actually starts their employment. If you wait until their first day on the job, you have waited too

long. Engaging an employee in the onboarding process before his or her first day not only helps them get a leg up on the process, but it can actually mean the difference between them starting and not starting at all. With competition for good people being what it is, it is not uncommon to lose a new hire to a better offer before they even start - oftentimes due to a better offer from their existing employer.

Make sure they are so excited about joining your firm that they wouldn't even consider another offer. You can start by creating an onboarding platform that can be shared with the new hire before their start date. This platform can include instructions for their first week, forms that they need to bring with them, notes on who their peer mentor(s) will be, information on company culture and core values, and even a "who's who" of existing attorneys and staff in the firm, complete with photos so that they have some idea who they will be seeing on their first day. It should also have a checklist for all of the training they will need when they start, and anything else that needs to be completed by a new hire. This checklist will ensure that nothing falls through the cracks in getting them up to speed. A Trello Board works great for this process. It is a free online platform, and you can copy the firm's onboarding Trello Board for each new hire and make it specific to them. The Trello Board can be shared with anyone responsible for the employee's training.

In addition, phone calls to the new hire on at least a weekly basis to make sure they don't need anything and to answer any questions that may have come up for them can go a long way to show you care. When they arrive, having a clean work space that has been set up with any supplies they may need and a computer that is ready for them with their passwords and software ready to go will go a long way to show that you have made an effort on their behalf. We have all been in situations where we inherited someone else's mess - don't let that be your new hire's first day experience. There may be a mess for them to clean up out of necessity, but that doesn't mean they have to be greeted by it on their first day.

Ensuring the successful onboarding of a new employee is not difficult if you have the right systems in place. With a little planning, you can have a platform in place that will ensure every new employee receives the appropriate welcome and training that they deserve.