

Hiring: How to Get Started

Where do I begin?

1. **Know what's required.** Make sure your practices regarding hiring and managing your employees are in line with the law. Check out the U.S. Small Business Administration's guidance, "[Hire and Manage Employees](#)," which offers clear, easily navigable information on basic state and federal labor laws.
2. **Identify any "pain points" that are causing low employee morale and productivity, high turnover, or steep costs to your business.** Think through your existing practices for hiring, training, and providing professional development opportunities for workers. Below are a few initial questions to identify areas for improvement:
 - Is high turnover causing my business to lose money?
 - Am I finding it hard to attract employees with the skills my business needs?
 - Have I struggled to hire employees who add to the "culture" of my business?
 - Are my employees finding it difficult to fulfill their job duties?
 - Do I spend too much time explaining tasks and retraining current staff members?
 - Are performance and task expectations clear?
 - Are my employees provided with frequent feedback on job performance?
 - What does a "career ladder" look like for employees within my company, if there is one?
 - Do I make available and communicate with my staff ways to grow within the business or develop new skills?

How do I hire the best people for my business?

As you well know, being a small business owner, finding reliable, talented workers is one of the toughest challenges in operating your business. You can reduce headaches and costs by following some of the HR best practices laid out below:

- **Know the key employee attributes that make your work successful.** Understand what skills and attributes are needed in your business. What do your best workers do that you want everyone to be able to do? Do you need outgoing people, do you need experts in what you sell, or do you need fast workers? Knowing what makes workers successful enables you to better hire for those key attributes.

- **Be transparent about salaries.** If you don't already, consider making public the salary or hourly wage for an open position. [You can increase your chances](#) of finding candidates who are genuinely interested in the role by presenting a realistic picture of what they can expect from the position.
- **Be transparent about the work.** Be clear from the beginning what the job entails. Given you run a small business, your employees may need to help a customer pick out the best jewelry for Valentine's Day—and also clean, remove trash, make displays, and stand on their feet for 8 hours a day. Be clear about the best and worst parts of the job from the application and onwards so you can get people who understand what is needed to succeed.
- **Ask for referrals from your current, most trusted staff.** Another consistent way of bringing talented, reliable people on board is to ask your existing employees for referrals. Searching for the right hire among a group of people already vetted by your current staff will significantly increase your chances of getting great people in the door. This method is a great way to engage your employees in building your business, and will show staff that you value their input. Sometimes, referrals can lead to less racial and gender diversity among your employees, so be sure to keep this in mind and have a plan in place to mitigate any such challenges should they arise.
- **Ask early on where employees see themselves in the future.** Learning about employees' goals upfront not only helps you find forward-thinking employees looking to stay with the business long-term, but will also give you insight into the ways your staff members want to grow. Most businesses with successful hiring practices say they ask applicants about their ambitions within the company and beyond in the interview process. While there may be few opportunities for internal advancement, this conversation can help inform training and provide insight into how an employee may fit best within the business' needs.

Helpful Resources

Hiring

- The Society for Human Resource Management's "[Resources and Tools](#)" section offers sample interview questions, job descriptions, and downloadable employee
- See "[Interviewing for Employability Skills](#)" from the U.S. Department of Education for more guidance and sample questions to help you find the right hire.
- **Build a strong company culture.** Your company's culture consists of the behaviors,

attitudes, practices, and overall vision you're fostering within it. Think of it as a set of core values that you hold. When your employees' values align with those of your business, and these values are reinforced by company policy, employees are more likely to feel motivated in their work and less likely to leave for other opportunities. When looking for culture add, consider the following best practices:

- ***Define your culture and make it clear to your staff.***
Take some time to think through what you value, including characteristics you prioritize in your workers and yourself—such as integrity, responsibility, and reliability—and aspects of your business that distinguish you from competitors. Examples include superior customer service, high-quality products, or environmental sustainability. Engage your employees in this process too, to help collaboratively shape what culture can and should look like at your business. Experts stress the effectiveness of writing out a values statement or company mission to share with staff. For more advice on solidifying your values within your business, see "[Build a Strategic Framework Through Strategic Planning](#)" from The Balance, which includes guidance on and examples of values and mission statements.
- ***Evaluate the extent to which your hiring process makes clear your company culture.***
Companies with high retention rates make their values clear during interviews with prospective employees. Determine how effectively you [communicate your company culture](#) during your hiring process by including information about your values as a company in job postings, talking about your business culture during interviews, and demonstrating the culture through your interactions with prospective hires.
- **Increase productivity and reduce turnover through effective onboarding.** Effective onboarding processes do more than just familiarize your new hire to their work environment and responsibilities: they reaffirm your company culture and the value of working at your business. When done effectively, onboarding leads to higher performance, greater job satisfaction, and lower turnover, [among other benefits](#). The most successful onboarding procedures accomplish four main tasks:
 - Giving new hires confidence in performing their job duties; Making clear what's expected from them in their role; Introducing and integrating them into the team of staff members; and Demonstrating the culture of your business and how best to work within it.

For advice on onboarding effectively, see the Start-Up Study Group's [A Step-by-Step Guide to Onboarding New Hires](#), or the Inc.com article, "[3 Ways to Supercharge Your Onboarding Process](#)."

How do I design a strong onboarding process?

Expert tips for designing a strong onboarding process that sets your employees up for success include:

- **Keep your onboarding materials consistent with your company culture.** If you have formal materials that you use when onboarding new staff, make sure they're consistent with the culture you want to foster at your business. For example, if your materials include photos, these images should feature the racial and ethnic, gender, age, and other diversity you celebrate at your company. Indeed, your onboarding should include company culture and values so employees understand what drives the company from day one.
- **Prepare all documents in advance.** Having all necessary paperwork printed, organized and ready to present to your new hire not only takes care of important compliance issues upfront; it also assures new staff members that you've prepared in advance for bringing them on board. For more information on required paperwork, see Fit Small Business's [list of New Employee Forms](#).
- **Plan a simple assignment or project for your employee to tackle on their first day or throughout the first week.** Taking this critical step will help your [employee get immersed](#) in the business right away while getting acquainted with your systems and building confidence.