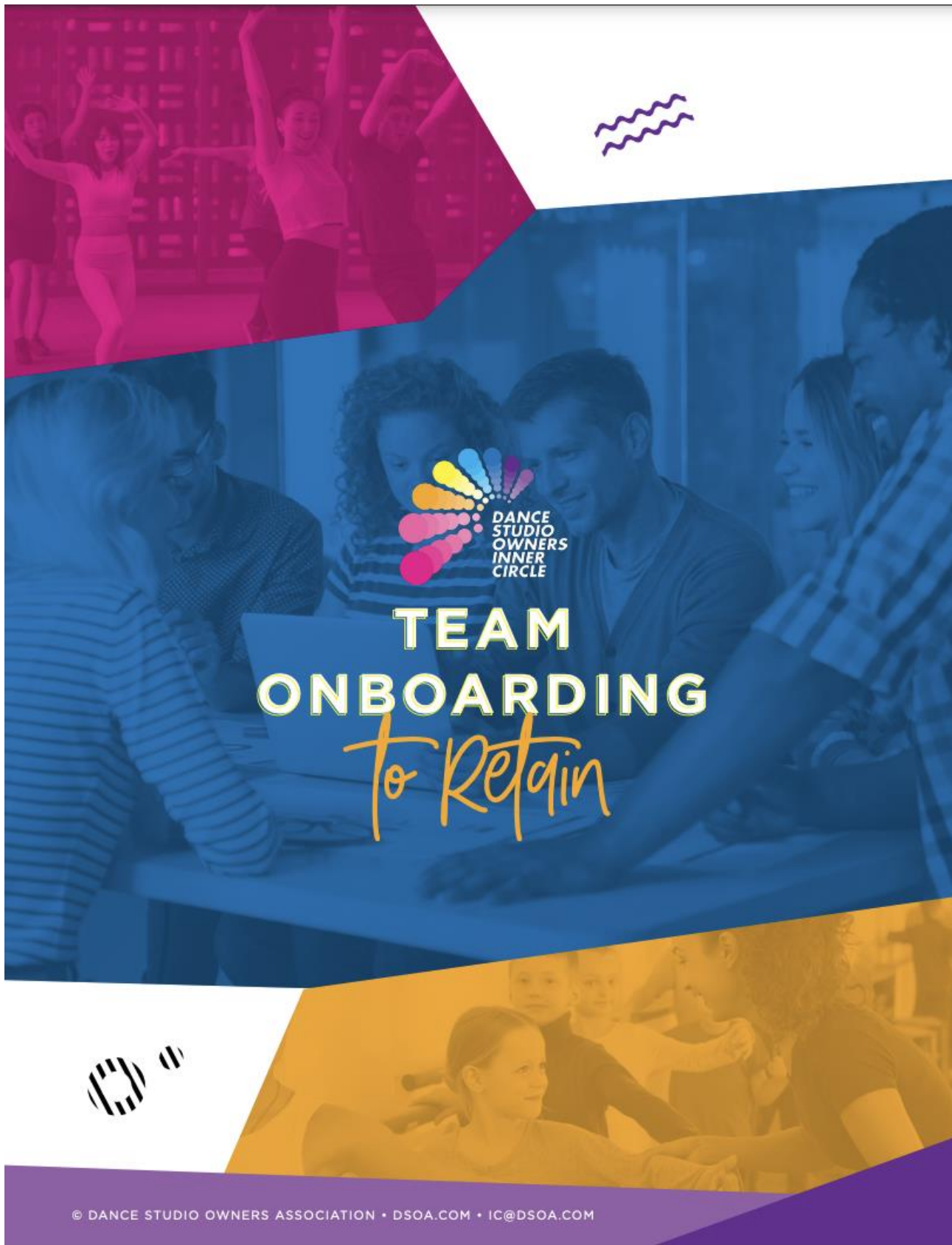




TEAM ONBOARDING *To Retain*



Introduction

Effective onboarding is a key component of a successful dance studio, linking the arrival of new hires and their transition into the studio's community. Different from orientation, which often serves as a surface-level introduction, onboarding goes deeper, creating a sense of belonging and excitement that fosters long-term commitment. By guiding newcomers through the studio's mission and core values, systems and processes, and opportunities, a true onboarding process not only grasps the need-to-know protocols of the studio, but also establishes meaningful connections between staff and the staff with the students. As you step into the CEO position of your studio, it's essential to recognize that exceptional staff recruitment is only the beginning. Your studio's outstanding work environment and quality tuition place you in a prime position to attract top talent, but next-level onboarding is necessary to nurture engagement and longevity among your team members.

Goals

By the end of this masterclass, you will:

- Have what you need to implement an effective onboarding process for new hires.
- Understand the importance of onboarding for new hires.
- Understand that when onboarded with care, the long-term retention rates are significantly higher.

Top benefits

The main benefit, which we will be discovering in this handbook, is that when special care is taken with the onboarding process for new hires, long-term retention rates are significantly higher.

Things to consider before implementation

Make sure that you're familiar with:

- The Inner Circle's [Hiring Funnel](#)

This system will guide you through choosing methods that bring the right people to your hiring events and then support you in making the right hiring decision!

Team Onboarding FAQ's

1. Q: What documents should I have for staff members?
 - a. Handbooks
 - b. HR documents

- c. Contract (including code of conduct)
 - d. Local & Federal Forms (W4, I9, etc.)
 - e. Benefits
 - f. Confidentiality Agreement
- 2. Q: Who do I talk to about the employment laws in my state?
 - a. Payroll company ([ADP](#))
 - b. Lawyer - Conscious Counsel
 - c. Online research
 - d. Small Business HR companies ([Bambee](#))
- 3. Q: How should I organize my team HR documents?
 - a. Google Drive and individual staff folders (make these private)
 - b. Dropbox
 - c. Online small business HR company ([Bambee](#))
- 4. Q: How often should I update my HR documents?
 - a. Every year
 - b. Check with your payroll or HR company
- 5. Q: How do I decide what tasks to start with in my 30, 60, 90-day onboarding plan?
 - a. Client facing tasks for admin roles
 - b. Training on main systems (i.e. phone, email and registration)
 - c. Owner expectations for each 30 days (KPI's)
 - d. Work with staff member to create so you are meeting them where they are at

Examples of Team Onboarding Documents:

1. [Employee Benefits Chart](#)
2. [Company Protection Agreement](#) - (In April 2024, the FTC in the USA issued a ruling to ban Non-Competes. This is not effective yet; however, do your research and be mindful of how this will affect your business.)
3. [Sexual Harassment](#)
4. [Non-Harassment](#)
5. [Equal Employment Opportunity](#)
6. [Health & Safety](#)
7. [Use of Communication & Computer Systems](#)
8. [Asana Studio Manager / Director Project Plan](#)

What is Onboarding

Onboarding is your studio's process of welcoming, educating, connecting, and acculturating new teachers, admin staff, retail staff or contractors (for example, your

marketing manager or graphic designer). It is a critical time where you can make a great and positive impact on your new team members, which will help them understand your culture, clarify your expectations of them, and introduce them to your processes. It should also aim to provide them with any resources they will need.

This Inner Circle Onboarding System will:

1. Ensure your new team member feels respected, valued and immediately part of your team.
2. Provide clarity around expectations and the behaviors that are required to be a fantastic contributor.
3. Help your new team members contribute quickly to your studio.
4. Enhance the productivity of your new team member and your team as a whole.
5. Build relationships and networks within your studio quickly.
6. Transition your staff into their role/s, their new work environment, and your studio culture.
7. Maximize this once off opportunity to make a positive imprint of the DNA of your studio.

Onboarding versus orientation

Distinguishing between onboarding and orientation is important in understanding their respective roles in the integration process of new staff into a dance studio. While orientation typically offers a surface-level introduction, often focusing on logistical details and basic information, onboarding goes deeper, creating a sense of belonging and excitement that fosters long-term commitment. Unlike orientation, which may provide a mere overview of policies and procedures, onboarding encompasses a comprehensive journey that familiarizes newcomers with the studio's culture, values, and community dynamics. It involves personalized guidance, mentorship, and support to ensure individuals not only feel welcome but also fully immersed in the studio's collectivity.

Through onboarding, new hires are equipped with the knowledge and connections necessary to thrive within the studio environment, setting the stage for long-term engagement and success.

The studio owner's role in onboarding

The dance studio owner plays the most important role in your studio's onboarding process. The relationship between you and your new team member has a tremendous impact on how long they will stay with you, and your investment in this process will highlight your commitment to new employees, and help them quickly become engaged, committed, and successful members of your dream team.

Use this [template checklist of Team Onboarding Phases 1 – 7](#) to make sure you've completed all the necessary steps to their successful onboarding journey.

Phase 1: 2 weeks prior to your new hire's start date

During the time between hiring a new team member and them starting in their new role, your aim is to show that your studio is a welcoming and organized environment with an engaged staff. You want them to feel 'at home' before they even begin.

Schedule and tasks

1. Send your team member's offer of employment and contract.
2. Set up their access to necessary software and resources (for example, email access, online calendar, Dropbox, Trello, Slack, Azagi, etc.).
3. Call your new team member to:
 - a. Confirm their start date, time, place, parking, dress code, etc.
 - b. Talk them through their access to software and find out if they have any questions around these.
4. Tell them who their Team Buddy is and a bit about them.
5. Remind them to return their contract and acceptance of employment documents if they haven't already done so.
6. Add regularly scheduled meetings, events, retreats, and class schedule to your new team member's calendar.
7. Set up their calendar in full for the first two weeks.

Create a welcoming and supportive environment

This beginning step is crucial for onboarding both new hires in a dance studio, with a focus on long-term retention. When you create a welcoming and supportive environment, your newcomers will understand they are valued. When individuals feel appreciated, they are more likely to engage actively, perform well, and stay connected long-term, benefiting both themselves and the studio community.

- Email your team to introduce them to your new staff member. Include their start date, role, and bio. Copy the new team member on this email.
- Select a Team Buddy who will be your new team member's "go-to" for any questions or processes they need help with when they get started.
- Set up a lunch meeting with yourself or their buddy for the first day.
- Meet with the new team member's buddy, and provide suggestions and tips for helping them during their first week (for example, how to use the sound system, class tips, local places that may interest them, etc.).
- Set up a tour of the studio (either in person or virtual).

- Send your “Welcome Kit” including job description, welcome letter, recent studio newsletter and staff handbook.
 - *Many of these documents can be found on Bambee HR if you don’t have your own templates.*
- Order any equipment they may need (for example, uniform, keys, notebooks).
- Add your new team member to relevant email lists, Facebook groups, etc.
- Set your new team member up for any relevant training or professional development.
- Introduce your new team member to your dance families via email, newsletter, and closed Facebook group.
 - Tip: A video interview via Facebook live (or pre-recorded) is a fantastic way to do this introduction!

Showing genuine excitement:

When you meet a new student, or prospective student, you show genuine excitement. You’re excited that they chose your studio, you’re excited to get to know them and their family, and you want them to feel that excitement, so they stay at your studio for many years.

Are you doing the same for your new hires? Are you showing excitement that they chose your studio as their place of business?

Even though you hired them, you should still want the new hire to feel as excited about starting as your new students do. When a new hire genuinely feels welcomed, supported, and wanted, they will be more committed and dedicated to their work daily, as well as want to be a part of the long-term success of the studio.

Phase 2: Their first day

On their first day of paid employment at the studio, you want your new team member to feel immediately welcome and well-prepared for their new role. They should be clear on what their role is in the studio, and your expectations around their performance.

Schedule, tasks and expectations

1. Clarify their first week’s schedule and confirm the details of any necessary or recommended training.
2. Hold a meeting to review your new team member's job description, outline of duties, and expectations.
 - a. You will also describe how their job fits in and contributes to the studio as a whole. Make time during this meeting to lead a session regarding the

[Vision/Mission/Statement of Purpose](#) and share any current goals that the team is working towards.

3. Review hours of work. Explain policies and procedures for instances such as absences, class cover, dealing with parents, etc. Explain any flexible work policies or procedures.
 - a. Tip: All of these should already be outlined in your team handbook, so you can use this as the reference for your meeting - no need to reinvent the wheel!

Community and culture

- Be available to greet the new team member in person on their first day.
- Introduce your new team member to other staff and their students in the studio.
- Introduce your new team member to their buddy.
- Take your new team member out to lunch - this is an ideal and non-threatening time to get to know them as a person. Ask them about their life outside work and share with them a little about yours. This helps to build a trusting relationship from the beginning.
- Give your new team member their equipment (for example, keys, uniform, notebooks, etc.)
- Remind your new team member's buddy to chat about things like parking, studio access, where things are kept in the studio etc.
- Take your new team member on a quick refresher tour of the studio.
- Show your new team member how to use the required software (for example, Dropbox, Slack, Asana, Azagi, etc.).

Phase 3: Their first week

Now your new team member should have a clear understanding of how your studio works and the systems that apply to their role. They should feel settled in.

Schedule, tasks, and expectations

1. Catch up with your new team member following their introductory meeting/training. See how they are finding things, what they are currently working on, and how you can support them.
2. Explain your staff review processes and how this will relate to their trial period.

Community and culture

- Send them a small welcome gift (flowers, wine, or chocolates).
- Ask their buddy to check-in that your new team member understands and correctly uses their software and is meeting expectations around your studio's systems.

Phase 4: Their first month

By now your fantastic new team member understands their role and meets your expectations. They continue to develop and learn about the studio, build relationships with staff and students, and bring new ideas to the table.

Schedule, tasks, and expectations

1. Schedule and conduct regular one-on-one meetings.
2. Continue to provide timely and useful feedback.
3. Regularly ask for feedback from the team member and be available to answer questions.
4. Discuss personal and professional goals.
5. Plan professional development with your team member in an area that they are interested in or would benefit from.

Community and culture

- Continue introducing your new team member to key people (this may be students, parents, community members, or influencers) and invite them to relevant events (recitals, team retreats, award nights, celebrations, etc.).
- Meet with employee and buddy to review their first month and answer any questions.

Phase 5: Their first 90 days

At this point your new team member is more aware of his/her role and responsibilities, and confidently works independently. They feel welcome and accepted by other team members and studio families.

Schedule, tasks, and expectations

1. Continue having regular one-on-one meetings.
2. Meet for either a formal or informal 3-month performance review.
3. Prepare questionnaire for the upcoming 6-month review to distribute to your team member before the meeting.
4. Start giving your team member new tasks or projects that are challenging yet doable.
5. Start giving your team member new tasks or projects that are challenging yet doable.
6. Work together on creating written personal, performance and professional development goals.

Community and culture

- Have a check-in with the team member and buddy for the last time, as here is when the buddy will ease out of their official responsibility to this team member.
- Take team member out to lunch or coffee and have informal conversation about how things are going.
- Provide information and ask for feedback on continued professional development opportunities that your team member has been involved in.
- Seek feedback on your onboarding system. Do they have ways that could improve the experience?

Phase 6: Their first 6 months

Your new team member is gaining confidence and momentum and producing great work. They may start taking the lead on new projects and are feeling engaged and supported.

Schedule, tasks, and expectations

1. Join the team member for their 6-month performance review.
 - a. Tip - remember to send your questionnaire sheet to your team member at least 2 weeks prior to review so you are both well prepared.
2. Review progress on personal, performance and professional development goals.

Community and culture

- Create an opportunity for your team member to be involved in a project outside of their area of responsibility (for example, this could be costume planning, social media management or hosting a professional development).
- Invite team member to studio events (such as the recital/concert, community events, awards), and introduce them to others.
- Open a discussion about your Team Buddy system and find out how things have been going or if further support has been needed.

Phase 7: Their first year

A year has passed, and your 'new' team member isn't so new anymore! They are 100% engaged in their role and contribute to the studio's culture and goals. They are confident and autonomous in their role and know who and how to ask when they need support.

Schedule, tasks, and expectations

1. Celebrate successes and recognition of your team member's contributions to the studio.
2. Continue providing regular feedback.
3. Provide feedback during the annual review process.
4. Have a conversation with your team member about his/her experience at your studio with regards to:
 - a. Whether the set expectations have been realistic and met.
 - b. Whether your team member's skills and knowledge are being best used, as well as what has/hasn't worked.
 - c. Where they need more support.
 - d. Plans for the year ahead.

Community and culture

- Support and encourage your team member to apply for a promotion, change of role, or increased hours (where applicable).
- Ask for your team member's feedback and specific suggestions on ways to improve the studio's onboarding experience. Tip: you can do this one-on-one or with a small group of new team members.
- Discuss your team member's professional development goals and offer training opportunities.

What new hires offer your studio:

New hires bring vitality, diversity, and fresh perspectives into the studio. Encouraging excitement among current students and teachers/staff helps create a cohesive welcoming environment where skill-sharing, creativity, and community thrive. Embracing newcomers inspires growth, innovation, and meaningful connections, enriching the studio experience for everyone involved.

Below are key benefits you can point out to your current students and staff about why newcomers are so important and exciting for the studio:

1. New hires bring fresh perspectives, ideas, and approaches to the studio.
 - a. New hires may offer innovative solutions to existing challenges and contribute new insights that can help drive the studio forward.
2. Each new student or new hire brings a unique set of skills, experiences, and expertise to the studio. This diversity enriches the collective knowledge and capabilities of the student body and staff, making it more versatile and adaptable to changing demands.
3. As new hires acclimate to their roles and responsibilities, they often bring a surge of energy and motivation that can boost overall productivity and efficiency within the

studio. They may also introduce more efficient workflows or processes that improve operational effectiveness.

4. Introducing new hires can boost excitement and enthusiasm in the studio. Positive interactions and collaborations among staff and dancers can strengthen morale and build camaraderie.
5. New hires allow the studio the opportunity to invest in succession planning and talent development initiatives.
 - a. By bringing in new hires with growth potential, you, the studio owner, can groom future leaders and ensure continuity in key roles within your studio.

Connecting onboarding to long-term retention:

Proper onboarding sets a strong foundation for new hires and equips them with the necessary tools and knowledge to succeed within the studio. This leads to higher satisfaction, engagement, and a clearer path for growth, ultimately increasing long-term retention rates.

Here is a brief review of what should be included in your onboarding process for new hires:

1. Provide comprehensive training for staff and faculty to ensure they have the knowledge and skills to effectively engage with students and provide high-quality instruction that fits your expectations.
2. Ensure that all staff and faculty members understand and embody the studio's culture, values, and mission. Consistency in messaging and behavior helps create a cohesive environment where everyone is working towards the same goals.
3. Equip staff and faculty with strong communication skills so they can effectively interact with students, address concerns, and provide constructive feedback.
4. Foster a collaborative environment among staff and faculty members, where they can support and learn from each other. A positive team dynamic translates into a more positive experience for students.
5. Offer opportunities for staff and faculty to continue their professional development through workshops, training sessions, and other resources. Investing in their growth and development not only improves their skills but also demonstrates that the studio values their contributions.

Investing time and resources into strategic onboarding procedures aimed at retaining students and staff is worthwhile. By pre-planning and implementing the IC's Hiring Funnel and Team Onboarding Processes, studios can expect a significant return on investment!

WINS:

WIN: I just completed a 71 (!) step general employee onboarding process in Asana, built as an SOP so it can be used again and again (and so that my team can onboard people with little input from me). All the info is there! It clarifies who should be completing the task, when the task should be completed between 'before they start' to 'one year anniversary', and all the details on how to do it with templates and step by step instructions. It also includes the 'why' behind a lot of the steps so that my team is behind the idea of it all and won't skip steps. It has accountability because it is in Asana with deadline dates. This is for general onboarding, all office team members, and then there are other asana SOPs for specific job descriptions. The shell came from the IC onboarding process and then I went deeper with insights from our speaker, Joey Coleman, at the July retreat. This was a long process to create but I believe it will really contribute to my team's retention and connection with our culture! A Q1 milestone complete! happy to share if anyone would like to see the structure. (loom video in comments)



Olivia Mode-Cater, Cortney King and 37 others

56 comments

Team recognition that helps student retention!

This is brilliant.

Each year American Airlines sends me a few of these recognition slips that I get to use during the year.

And THEY ARE EFFECTIVE for a few reasons.

1. I'm always looking out for great service. Alex laughs at me because I get so excited to catch someone doing an awesome job and I'm thrilled to give them the certificate. When I do give them out, it cements a great experience in my mind associated with the airline. Means I'm coming back (customer retention).

2. The staff know customers have these so that may change the way they show up (some of them it definitely doesn't 😊) but each one I give out I love seeing the joy on their face! It's recognition for a job well done without the involvement from their supervisor. This would certainly help with staff retention!

Practical application for your studio.

1. Every new family gets two certificates to hand out during the season when they enroll. Current students the first week back of season.

2. Once given to the team they bring it to their manager or you and they get to spin a wheel for a prize or select their own prize or you could do something where their certificates add up. 5 = massage, 15 = XYZ.

Keep it easy. Doesn't need to be complicated.

You're families will love it and so will your team ❤️