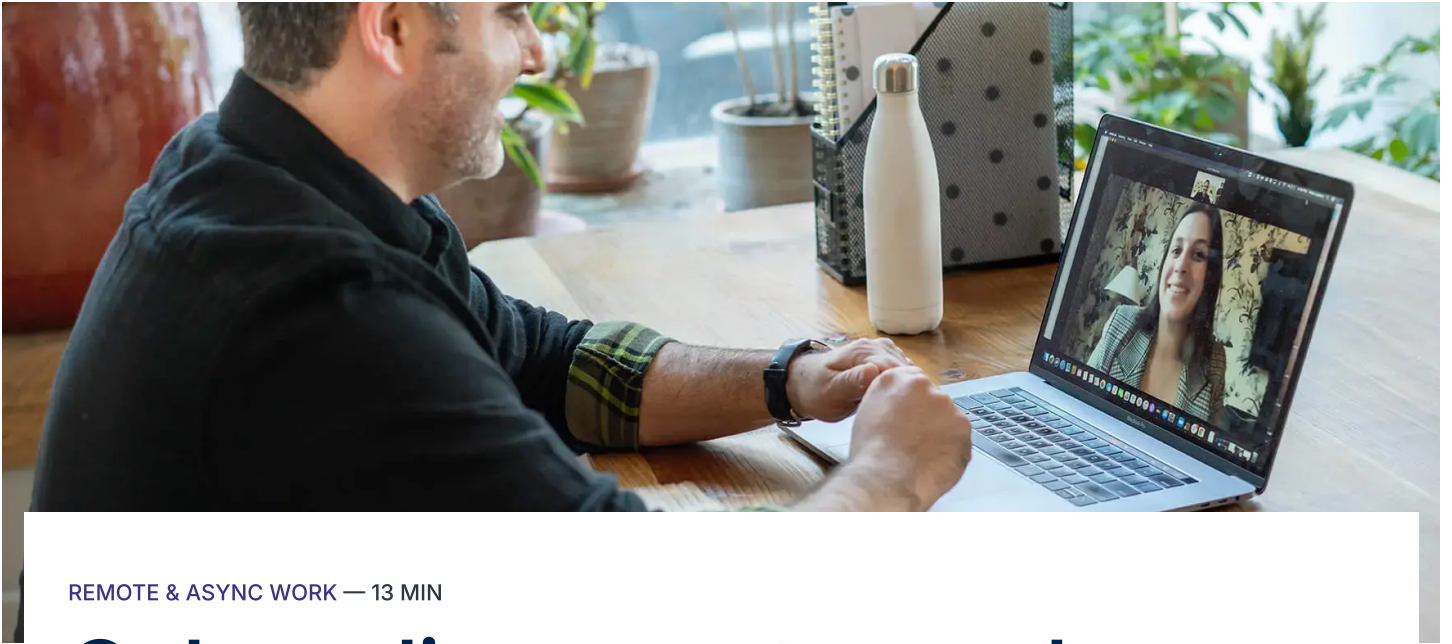




REMOTE & ASYNC WORK — 13 MIN

Onboarding remote employees: processes, tactics, and advice from experts

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Onboarding remote workers isn't like onboarding people in an office. Not exactly, anyway. You don't have to provide a tour of the building or share secrets about which break room is usually the quietest. Instead, your job is a bit more complex: You must make your new employee feel informed, supported, and welcomed, all without ever meeting in person.

Fortunately, you have all the tools you need to make that happen. Despite the absence of an office, onboarding remote workers really isn't all that different from onboarding employees in person. It's just a matter of preparation and perspective.

In this article, we'll share some tips on how to onboard remote employees that will make life easier for you and your new employees.

What is remote onboarding?

"Remote onboarding" refers to the steps taken to familiarize new hires in an organization who work remotely rather than in the office. New hires are virtually given all the information, resources, and tools they need to succeed in their roles.

What to include in the remote onboarding process

Successful remote employee onboarding has several key components to help new hires integrate and feel supported.

First, **communication channels must be clear**. Giving new hires detailed instructions on using video conferencing, instant messaging, and email channels sets expectations and streamlines communication between coworkers and managers.

Second, **onboarding preparation must be thorough**. This includes setting up all equipment for new hires before their start date. Provide step-by-step guides and remote IT support for workstation setup to reduce the risk of technical issues early on, as this lets new hires focus on learning their roles.

Third, **hold virtual introductions with team members and stakeholders** to help new hires understand their roles and build relationships. Additionally, providing documentation and training materials gives new hires the tools they need to succeed.

You also need to **provide new employees with access to the necessary training modules, company policies, and procedures** to support their continuous learning as they onboard.

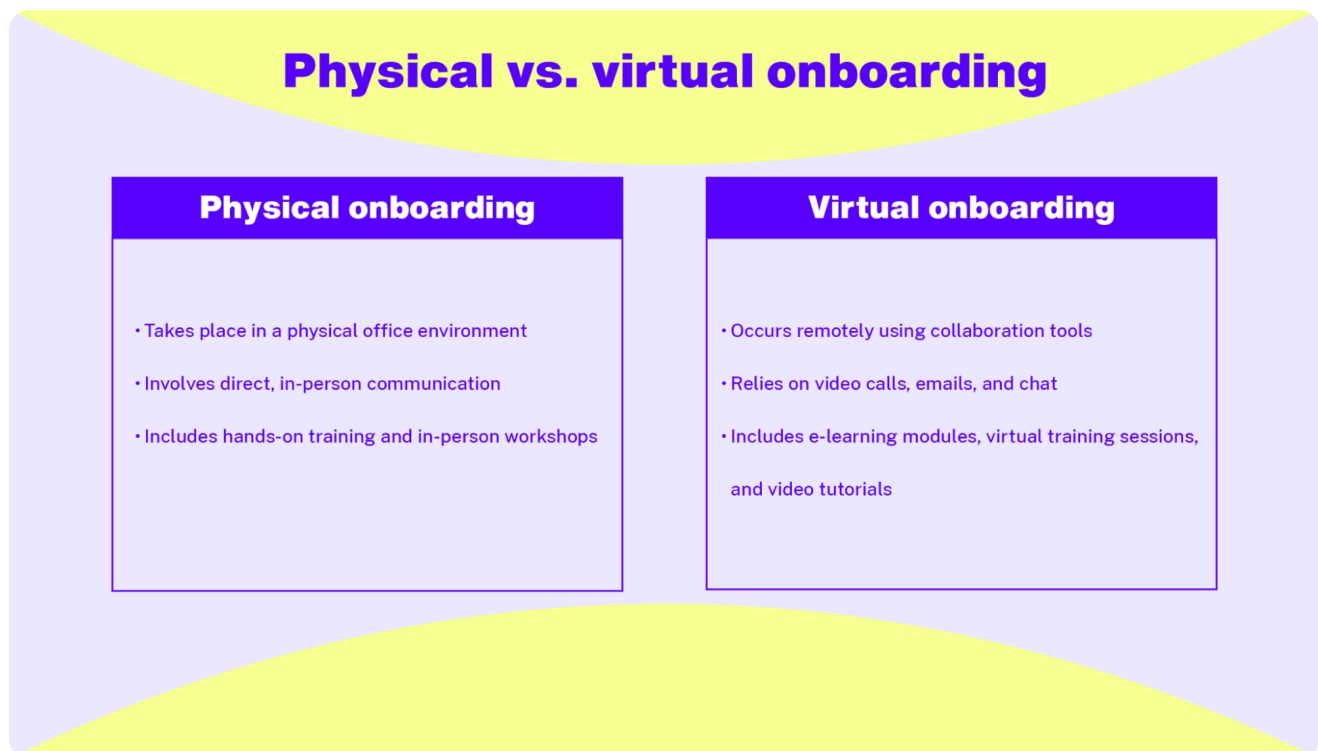
Fifth, **offer continuous support during training** to help new employees start going in the direction they need to acclimate to their jobs and duties.

Finally, use an **HRIS tool like [Remote](#)**. This helps to improve team collaboration by integrating workflows and communication across

distributed teams.

What are the key differences between physical and virtual onboarding?

Virtual and physical onboarding have several differences, especially when it comes to resource access and new hire experience. Let's take a look.



Integrating new employees into an organization through face-to-face interactions and experiences in a physical workspace is called physical onboarding. Part of this process involves meeting with managers and coworkers in person, getting a workplace tour, and attending training.

New employees can quickly become part of the company culture by watching how things work and starting conversations on the spot, which helps build relationships and trust. HR and IT teams provide instantaneous access to resources and support, and they are also available to help set up equipment and answer questions.

Virtual onboarding, on the other hand, uses digital communication tools like email, messaging apps, and video calls. New hires must complete self-paced training modules and set up their workstations independently or with help from remote IT.

Although virtual onboarding provides more freedom and self-paced learning, it also requires better time management and self-discipline.

No matter where your team members live, you want them to feel valued. A great onboarding experience creates a lasting impression that employees will carry with them throughout their time with your company. Similarly, a negative experience could make them doubt the company's abilities or sincerity.

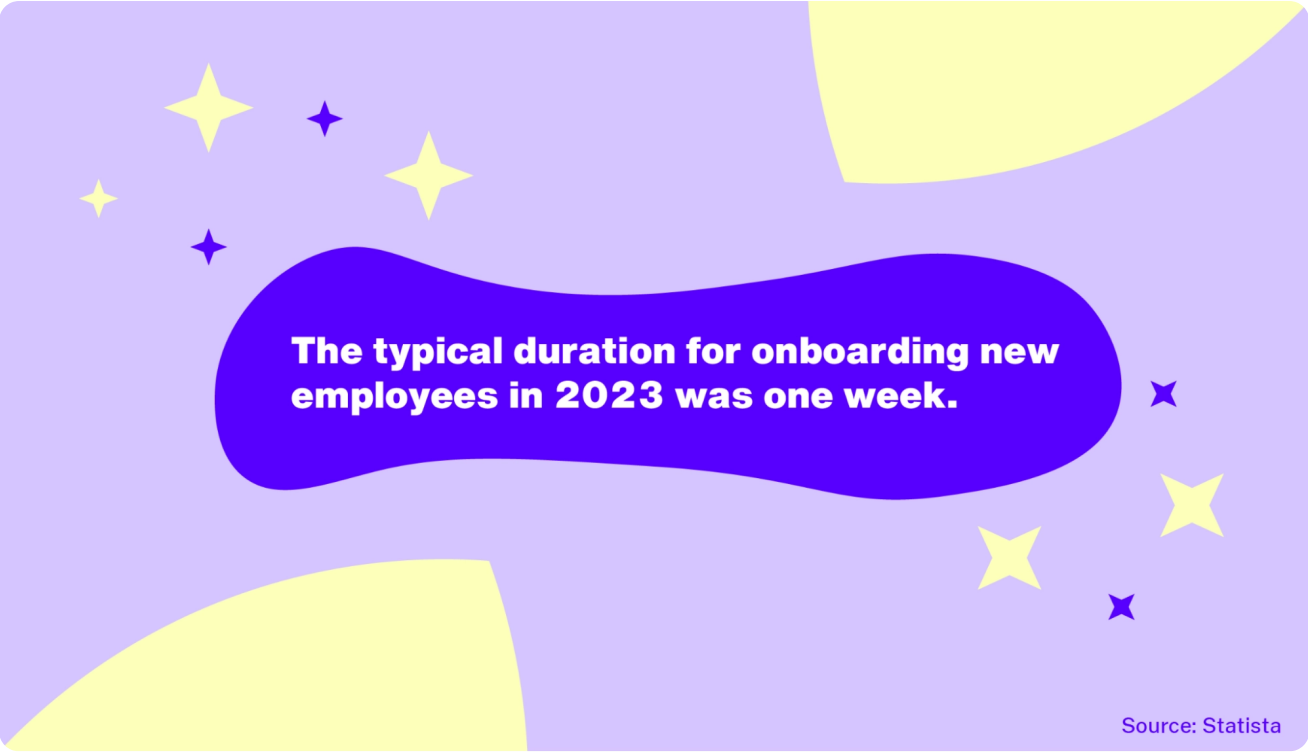
"There are many things that are critical in remote onboarding: having an onboarding plan, using interactive tools like video, or having a training curriculum for new hires," says Cristiane Reis, WhatsApp director of partnerships and business development. "Managers need to understand remote onboarding will possibly take longer than face-to-face, and they need to plan accordingly to help the new employee and the organization to succeed."

You can solve issues of time-intensive onboarding by decoupling the need for synchronous work. This is called [asynchronous working](#), and it's something we practice at Remote.

Remote onboarding provides an opportunity to consider details that you might have overlooked in a co-located office. In an office setting, for instance, a recruit could be given some leeway to explore the company culture independently. In a remote environment, culture is more intentionally curated, so you can set the stage for a positive experience from the start.

A step-by-step guide to remote onboarding

Here are the general steps needed to set up an effective remote onboarding process:



The typical duration for onboarding new employees in 2023 was one week.

Source: Statista

1. Start with a welcome call

An introductory phone call is the initial stage of remote onboarding. During the call, introduce the new hire to the team members they'll be working with, go over the onboarding process in general, and answer any questions they may have.

2. Perform a virtual orientation

Orientation should cover the basics of the company's background, goals, and structure. It also gives you a chance to discuss vital company policies, processes, and benefits with the new staff member.

3. Assist with technical setup

Before the new hire starts working, ensure they have access to everything they need, including software, hardware, and credentials.

Provide clear instructions on how to set up their work computer and use company systems and tools. Providing remote IT support during this phase can make the new hire's transition into their role seamless.

4. Provide role-specific training

New employees need in-depth instruction on workflows, procedures, and key performance indicators (KPIs) based on their job duties. Help them get up to speed quickly by giving them access to training videos, online classes, and one-on-one time with more seasoned coworkers.

5. Integrate them into the team

Use virtual meet-and-greets to help new hires get to know their colleagues and encourage them to participate in team meetings. Giving new employees mentors can help them feel like they belong and provide them with ongoing support.

Regular check-ins and feedback from team leads or managers can also help new hires feel supported and connected.

Tips for onboarding remote employees successfully

1. Automate remote onboarding with more self-serve elements

"Considering things have shifted so much in the last 18 months, most HR teams will find that a corporate, customized, hand-holding approach won't scale," says Nadia Vatalidis, head of people at Remote. "This ad-hoc approach to onboarding will struggle to set anyone up for success in the future of work."

Fast growth necessitates automation. You can't scale a company by creating more manual work for yourself. However, increased automation should not lead to decreased feelings of connectedness for incoming workers.

"There is no amount of sugar-coating or shortcut-taking that can cover the tremendous benefit enjoyed by shifting as much of your onboarding as possible to a self-serve mechanism," says Darren Murph, global head of remote at GitLab. "This creates a more inclusive experience, enabling people to onboard, explore, digest, ponder, and propose updates on a schedule that best suits them."

It may be strange to think of remote work as a driver of inclusivity, but that's exactly what it should be. Creating self-serve processes for new employees

allows them to work on their own time in a way that makes sense for their unique life situations.

2. Be selective about the content you include in onboarding

It can be tempting to throw every piece of content you have at a new hire. Resist the urge. A person can only absorb so much new information at once, and when joining a new company, there's usually a lot to learn.

What kind of content should make the cut? Start by making everything easy to reference. New recruits can't memorize everything, but they can learn where to look for information. By teaching them how to use company documentation, you avoid the struggle of cramming for the test and allow new hires to learn as they go.

Consider providing a list of helpful bookmarks or setting up an onboarding-specific page with direct links to relevant content. Limit "required" content to the absolute essentials and some cultural flavor. Short Loom videos from other employees are a great way to make a positive first impression.

3. Use the onboarding buddy system

"Pair each new hire with an onboarding buddy to answer the typical 'I'm new here!' questions, and invest in onboarding experiences — ideally, bringing new hire cohorts together in person for culture and rapport building," says Darren Murph.

Onboarding buddies help new hires get acquainted quickly by providing a go-to resource for basic questions. Many people feel more comfortable asking a buddy questions about culture, processes, or company norms than they would be asking someone in HR.

In addition to practical answers, onboarding buddies can also provide new perspectives for incoming employees.

"Ideally, you'd want this person to represent another team, culture, and background — someone your new hire won't be working with on a regular basis," says Anastasia Pshegodskaya, senior recruiting manager at Remote. "This helps to get another perspective of the company, get to know people

outside of your team, get comfortable with asking questions, embrace diversity and make real friends!"

4. Establish a culture of ownership early

Not all new hires come from the same background. Even people who have worked remotely in the past may not be familiar with how your company works. Use this opportunity to show them that you value their contributions and trust them to be a positive addition to the team.

"When you hire someone, you should trust them fully from day one," says Nadia Vatalidis. "You have this super unique opportunity for new hires to discover how to work at your organization, how to set them up for success, and how to create a self-enabled environment to ensure no matter who is online when, they need to learn how to find things, how to get help, and have very clear guidelines on how things work day to day."

At Remote, where we handle remote onboarding all over the world, ownership is one of our core values. We don't believe in monitoring employees' work hours or checking in unnecessarily. Instead, we let employees demonstrate their trustworthiness based on their outputs. We have found that people who receive respect from the start tend to do great work.

Common challenges and solutions to remote onboarding

Remote onboarding does come with several challenges. Here are a few:

Time zone differences

Coordinating employees in different time zones is one of the hardest tasks when it comes to remote onboarding. If remote hires or entire remote teams have trouble scheduling meetings, training, and check-ins, you may experience inefficiencies and delays in onboarding.

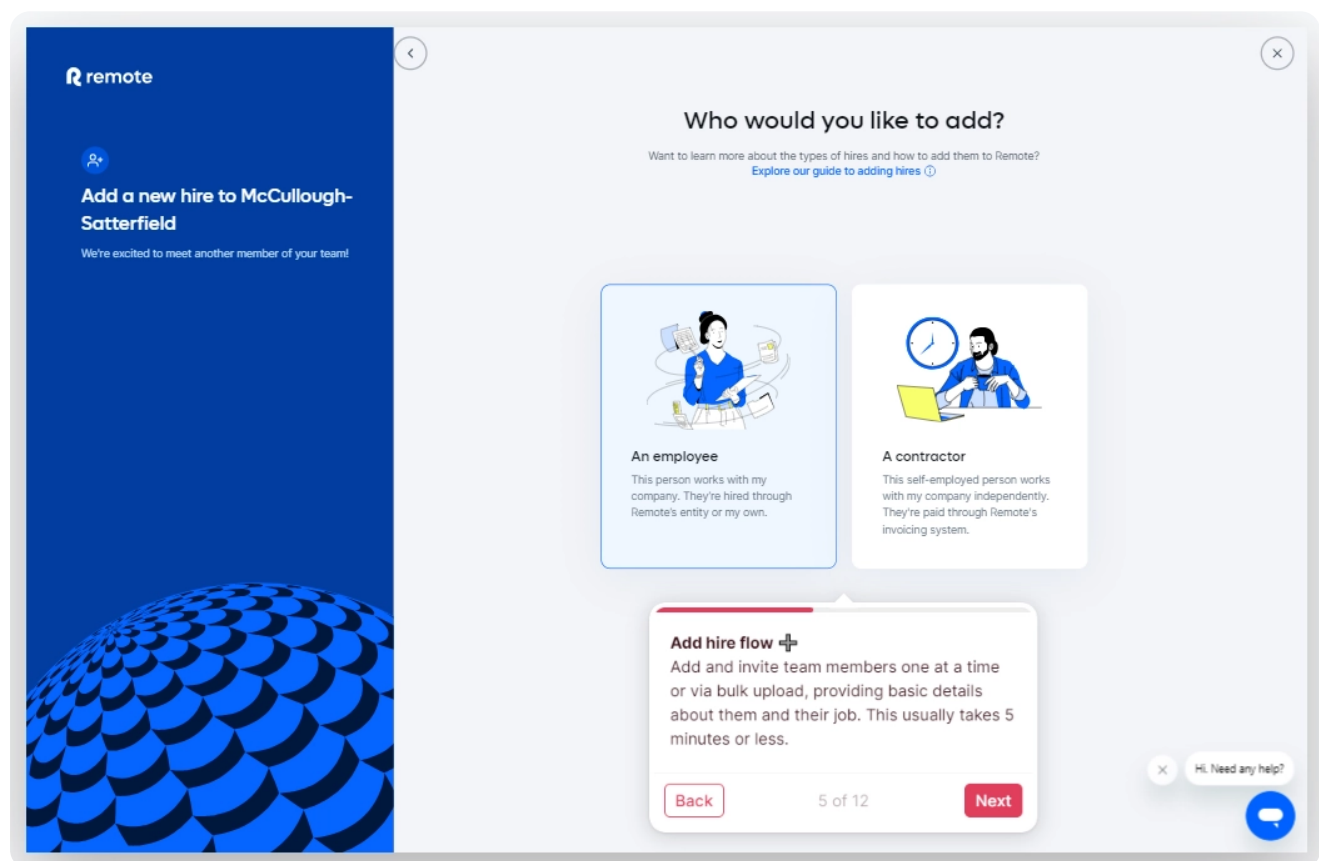
To deal with this problem, offer flexible hours and encourage asynchronous communication. You can schedule meetings and training sessions at different times to accommodate people in different time zones.

Also, embracing collaboration tools that facilitate asynchronous communication, like shared documents and recorded video messages, allows new employees to access information whenever it's most convenient for them to do so.

Communication challenges

Onboarding success depends on effective communication. To make sure this happens, use dependable tools like instant messaging, video conferencing, and project management software.

It's also helpful for new remote employees' mentors or supervisors to check in with them regularly so that they can answer questions and set realistic expectations.



Another good idea is to use an HRIS platform that consolidates all aspects of your onboarding process. Remote, for instance, lets you manage all your new hires in one place.

Let's take a look at a specific example.

[Optymyze](#) efficiently onboarded and managed remote contractors and employees after choosing Remote as their global employment partner.

Remote's platform is user-friendly; as such, it allows contractors and employees to self-serve.

Company culture orientation

The virtual onboarding process can make it challenging for recruits to understand and assimilate into the company's culture. Getting a feel for the company's culture, traditions, and social dynamics isn't always easy when employees can't physically visit the office.

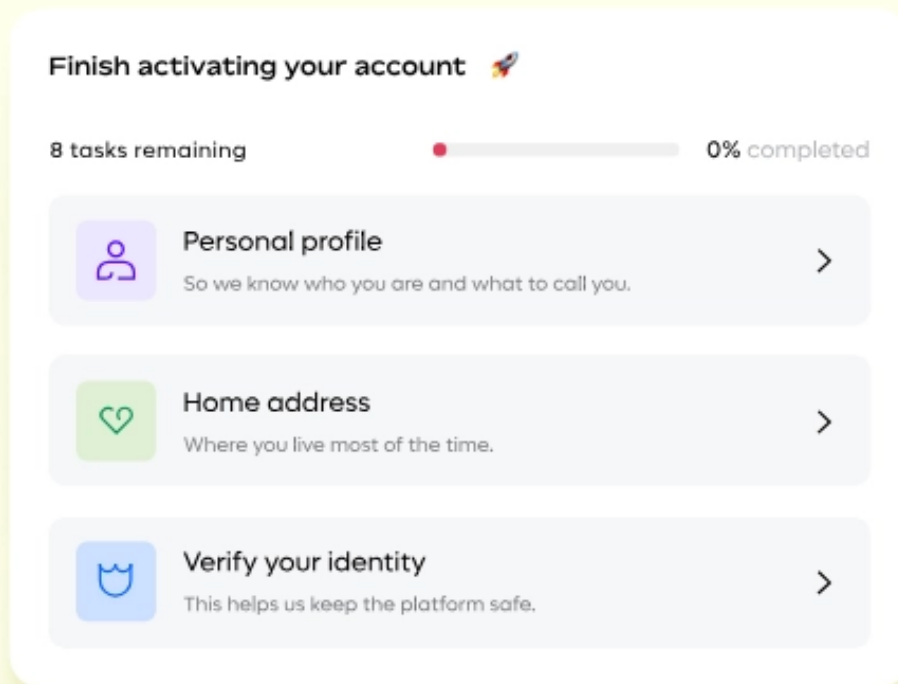
So, incorporate virtual culture-building exercises into your company's onboarding process to help close this gap. You can ease new employees into the company culture through virtual orientation sessions highlighting the organization's mission, values, and history.

Another way to help remote hires immerse themselves in the company culture is to encourage them to participate in virtual social events and casual get-togethers.

Tracking onboarding progress

You may find it challenging to determine whether new hires are meeting training milestones and understanding their roles completely without in-person supervision.

To help with this issue, opt for an HRIS platform that shows employee progress and lets you automatically allocate tasks to new hires. Remote has a self-onboarding feature that lets you easily share training resources with new hires.



Remote onboarding software can make it easier to [monitor new remote recruits' progress](#). This means you can quickly provide ongoing support and constructive feedback to help new hires stay on track.

What changes when onboarding remote contractors?

The only real difference when onboarding contractors is the administrative paperwork. While you may not need to do a full onboarding for a contractor who will only take on occasional projects, contractors who work full-time for your company will inevitably become part of your culture and, therefore, deserve to be included as much as possible.

Make sure your contractors sign all the necessary paperwork related to intellectual property. Different countries have different rules, and what works in one place might not work in another. For more information, check out our guide to [intellectual property rights and remote workers](#).

Otherwise, contractors should go through the same onboarding flow to learn the culture of the company, the contents of the company handbook, and where to find necessary information. If possible, provide contractors with

similar benefits as well, such as health insurance as paid time off, to make them feel valued and respected.

Even for contractors brought on for short-term projects, it's still important to provide opportunities to interact with full-time workers to gain a better understanding of the company. Their onboarding process will likely be shorter but should contain education on the company's culture, work style, and expectations.

Fast onboarding, faster improvements

At Remote, we go beyond [onboarding our own employees](#)—we're here to help your team members get set up smoothly, no matter where they are in the world. We understand the importance of giving your employees an exceptional experience and a lasting first impression of your company. That's why we uphold the highest standards of international compliance and security.

When your team members join through Remote, they're welcomed warmly and gain easy access to all essential payroll and benefits information. Plus, each employee has a dedicated HR manager available to answer questions and provide support.

Ready to scale your global team?

Remote empowers you to grow 14x faster and thrive in international markets by streamlining HR processes. With Remote, you can bring top talent on board in days, not weeks, keeping you competitive and filling key roles swiftly. We manage everything— contracts, [payroll](#), taxes, compliance—so you can focus on recruiting the talent to drive your business forward.

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quicker profits.

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