

When it comes to [new employee induction](#) and the first weeks at a new organisation, having a “buddy” can make a huge difference to the speed at which new employees manage to settle into their role, team and organisation.

Just knowing there is a buddy there to listen and who is genuinely interested in helping, can make new employees feel engaged and supported. So it’s highly recommended that your induction processes include an induction buddy for any new employee. In this article, we consider how to select good buddies and their role through the induction process.

Who is an induction buddy?

A good buddy is someone who is prepared to be a contact and a friendly face for the new employee. A buddy is someone different from the more **formal** relationships of manager, supervisor or HR representation.

An induction buddy is an **informal** source of information on the team and the organisation. This means a good induction buddy is someone who knows how things work across the organisation and they are prepared to share that experience with others.

Who is a good induction buddy?

This means a good induction buddy must have several key characteristics starting with the ability to listen. Often a buddy is the first stop for a new employee who is struggling with something. A buddy needs to be able to listen and allow the new employee to share (and, possibly, even vent!).

A good buddy should also...

- Be committed to being a buddy. This includes being open to feedback. Being a buddy is an opportunity to learn for both parties. The buddy often gets an entirely new view of their team and organisation from the new employee.
- Have good time management skills. Being a buddy is ‘extra work’ on top of your normal role. A buddy who is struggling with their existing tasks will rarely be able to make time for the new employee.
- Have relevant knowledge and experience. A buddy is there to provide inside knowledge – to speak from experience. They should know the answers to most questions and be able to navigate the organisation.

A good buddy will also have several characteristics of a good manager, including the ability

to ask questions, to give considered and honest feedback and to identify learning opportunities for the new employee.

That being said, an induction buddy is not an advisor, a replacement for HR, a new best friend or a confidante. While the role of a buddy is to provide more informal information, the role itself is still a formal one.

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What are the responsibilities of an induction buddy?

Induction buddies are not managing new employees. They are there in the role of a supportive colleague and friendly face. The role of an induction buddy will vary depending on the individual you are working with. It's like to involve some or all of...

- Helping navigate around the team the department and the workplace, including short tours
- Showing how to do aspects of their role, especially those unique to this organisation
- Answering questions. Many, many questions
- Providing general information and informal support
- Introducing them to colleagues throughout the organisation who may be important to their role
- Helping them to understand the formal and informal culture of the organisation
- Encouraging them to ask questions when unsure about any aspects of their role
- Ensuring they are included in social activities and feel part of the team

How should the first buddy meeting occur?

For people who have not undertaken an induction buddy role before, it may seem a bit overwhelming. Don't worry - that feeling is matched by the new employee too!

Here are a few ideas to help establish your buddy relationship and decide on how you are both going to make use of an induction buddy process.

1. Start by arranging an informal meeting or morning/afternoon tea. Holding the meeting outside a typical 'meeting location' can help relax everyone.
2. Then outline your experience, role in the team and why you have been chosen the buddy. Ideally, you would explain that your offered to be their buddy or requested the opportunity to assist new employees. It's nice when you *want* to be there.

3. Then ask about their professional background and experience. You can also ask about their understanding of the “buddy” relationship and how they believe it will (or should) work. This is a good opportunity to clarify expectations they have about you or the buddy role.
4. Optionally, arrange a good time to take them around to understand the layout of the organisation. Even if a manager or HR representative has taken them on a tour, it can be useful to take them again. You will have a slightly different explanation of the workplace, and new employees often benefit from seeing things more than once! This should include practical issues of office or workplace storage, using common equipment like photocopiers and phones, and the location of commonly used items or tools.
5. Finish the discussion by turning to some personal or fun issues. Explain any workplace social events (including the routines around employee birthdays!). Get to know a bit about them as an individual too (but don’t ask too many personal questions!).

You can wrap up this initial meeting by ensuring they know they can ask you anything in regards to work and you will be happy to help. It is important to highlight your willingness to help. New employees are sometimes reluctant to ask for help as they may lack the confidence to bother their new colleagues.

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