Building a buddy program_

For onboarding new hires

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THE SITUATION

Whether you know it or not, you very likely already have a buddy system in place. Even in organizations without a formal buddy system, newcomers are shown the ropes by their more experienced colleagues.

In a COVID setting, an effective buddy program can be particularly helpful in easing new hires into their first weeks on the job.

But what does an effective buddy program look like? And what changes can HR make to the process in response to the pandemic?
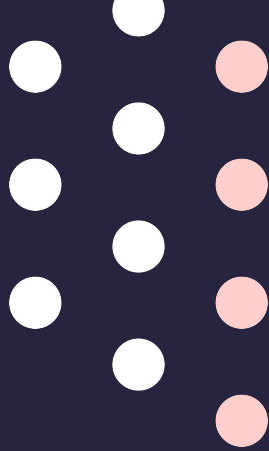
WHAT TO EXPECT

| The WHY	First we'll look at the all-important WHY behind the buddy system.
The WHAT	Next, we'll uncover what you can do as an HR professional to redefine your buddy program and tackle today's challenges.
Putting it to use	Finally, we'll start mapping out a practical buddy timeline with remote-friendly suggestions for those working-from-home.

PART 1: THE WHY BEHIND THE BUDDY SYSTEM

BEST PRACTICE INTEGRATION

SUPPORTS **KEY HR METRICS**
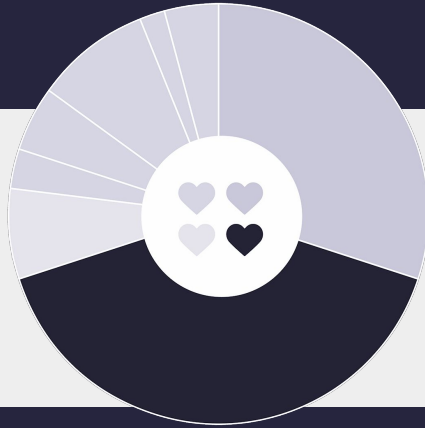
A well built buddy system facilitates an immediate personal connection between new hires and the wider organization, and long-term can help drive employee engagement and time-to-productivity.
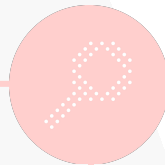
THE COVID WHY_

Even if you already have a formal buddy program in place, most are not set-up to support the current work-from-home reality.

These measures are of critical importance in the COVID environment where many new hires will often be spending their first days and weeks isolated at home.

So, how can we leverage the buddy system to help facilitate more meaningful connection for new hires who cannot meet their new colleagues in person?

BEST PRACTICE INTEGRATION

COMBATS
INTEGRATION
PROBLEMS

365 DAYS

If they don't know, what ELSE don't they know?

A good orientation and induction process can help to foster organizational integration and connection.

PART 2: HOW TO ELEVATE FOR TODAY'S CHALLENGES

First you need to set measurable goals

What are you trying to achieve? Make sure to gear your buddy programs towards that objective.

Is it increased productivity?

Build things like software training and key job aspect introductions into your buddy system.
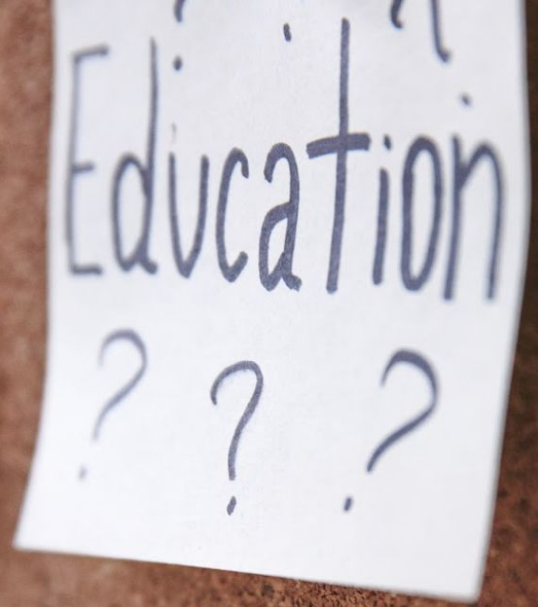
HOW TO ELEVATE_

First you need to set measurable goals

What are you trying to achieve? Make sure to gear your buddy programs towards that objective.

Is it engagement, belonging and ambassadorship?

Be sure to build lots of informal catch-ups, and a company benefit introduction into your buddy system.

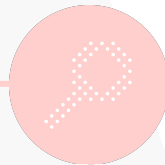# HOW TO ELEVATE_

Then you need to start matching your buddies

Consider the benefits and drawbacks of different buddy system approaches.

Intra-team or Inter-team?

An intra-team approach could better prepare onboardees for their role.

A buddy from another team however can help boost cross-departmental collaboration and positively impact your organization's culture.

MAKING THE RIGHT CHOICE_

Refer to your goals and determine your organizational needs.

If the focus is on company culture or increased collaboration between teams it would be wise to assign buddies from other services.

If you notice you are losing a lot of time getting new people up to speed on internal tools, procedures, policies, etc, it is better to assign a team member as a buddy.

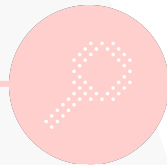**HOW TO** ELEVATE

Then you need to start matching your buddies

Consider the benefits and drawbacks of different buddy system approaches.

Volunteer-based or assigned buddies?

Being a buddy adds to existing employees workload.

While some will be happy to help, others may see it as a burden which could damage the overall experience even if they go about their tasks as requested.

MAKING THE RIGHT CHOICE_

There is no right or wrong answer here but you could consider these other helpful
tips to ease the negative impact on your existing staff:

Incentivizing the process
Implementing a double-buddy system

HOW TO ELEVATE

Finally you need to set and align stakeholder expectations

One of the most important things you can do when building a successful buddy system is to set clear expectations for your existing staff members who are acting in the buddy role.

This is even more important in a remote setting.

ASK YOURSELF THESE QUESTIONS_

Can the buddy partner deliver the new hire's welcome pack?

Does your buddy partner understand their buddy's role in your organization?

Will your buddy partner provide an office tour (or in COVID times - a WFH tour)?

Can your buddy partner provide introductions to other key organizational stakeholders?

Will your buddy partner need to provide any formal on-the-job training?

Is your buddy partner aware of your organizations 'unwritten rules'?

ANSWER THESE QUESTIONS FOR YOUR BUDDY PARTNER_

✓ **When** should I reach out to my new hire buddy?

✓ **How** often should I connect with my new hire buddy?

✓ **What** is my new hire buddy's first-week schedule?

✓ **Who** is responsible for setting up my new hire buddy's laptop and other tech?

✓ **Who** should I contact if I have any concerns about my new hire buddy?

✓ **When** do my buddy duties finish?

18

HOW TO ELEVATE

Finally you need to set and align stakeholder expectations

To be an effective buddy, you need to know exactly where your responsibilities begin and end, and where you can go for more information.

Any ambiguity here could lead to your new hire being neglected in the crucial early stages of their onboarding.

PART 3: BUILDING EFFECTIVE STRATEGY

BUILDING AN EFFECTIVE BUDDY TIMELINE_

For happier, healthier employees be sure to map a successful buddy timeline with our hot tips!

Connecting your buddy pairs **before your new hire starts** is an excellent way to ensure your recruit is fully prepared for their first day.

They'll have the opportunity to ask any pressing questions and be able to get the 'lay-of-the-land'.

This is particularly helpful in the current climate as your organization may be in a state of flux.

We recommend building **three new hire buddy 'check-ins'** into the preboarding phase.

Introducing...

The first check-in should be a brief call or email to let the new hire know who their buddy will be.

🕐 2 weeks out

Checking in

The second check-in can be a little more in-depth, perhaps a video-call and open Q&A.

🕐 1 week out

Are you ready?

The final check-in should aim at ensuring the new hire has everything they need for their first day.

🕐 1 day out

The first day is where the buddy system really shines
- **even in a remote setting.**

It's important to make a strong first impression, set the tone of your organization's culture, and make your onboardee feel like they are a valued addition to the team.

We recommend three buddy check-ins during the first day in the beginning, middle, and end of the day.

Coffee catch-up

An informal video call to chat through the first day schedule, run through Q&A and prepare for the day ahead.

🕐 30min

Midday connect

An informal video call to chat through the first day schedule, run through Q&A and prepare for the day ahead.

🕐 15min

Afternoon wrap-up

Bookending your new hire's first day with buddy catch-ups will strengthen the buddy relationship and give your existing employee the chance to see that the day went as planned.

🕐 15-20min

The first week of onboarding is a very important time for an onboardee to **feel welcome and like a part of the family.**

Leverage the buddy system in this time to further develop the new hire organizational connection with activities that are facilitated by the buddy partner but involve a wider range of stakeholders.

Introduce yourself

Ask your buddy to help your new hire film a short "introduce yourself" video for the company Intranet or Slack.

Virtual happy hour

Encourage your buddy to set-up a virtual happy hour to wrap your new hires' first day or week maybe with a custom drink?

Quickfire icebreaker Zoom Q&A

Have your buddy organize a small group video call and ask each other some unconventional ice breaker questions.

Ask your buddy-pairs to schedule an informal **30min catch-up each week for the first 90 days** of the new hire journey.

This will allow for a consistent connection and let your new hire know that there is always someone there for them.
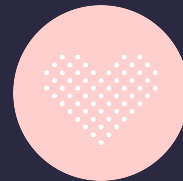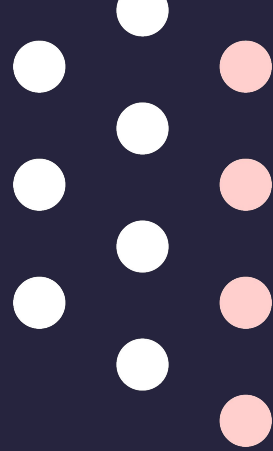
You did it!

You put your newest hire through a **comprehensive buddy system.**

They're happy, connected to your organization, and have a new best-friend to boot!

ANY QUESTIONS?
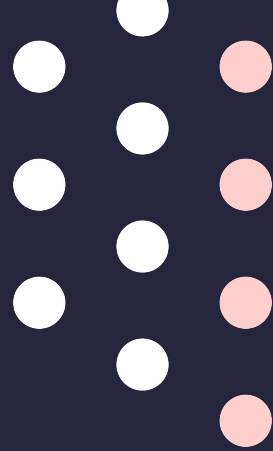
THE TAKEAWAY

The buddy system is a tried-and-true part of the HR landscape, but to ensure your system is remote-ready, some changes need to be made.

Remember to set clear expectations, start early, and get creative with your buddy program. Think about incentivizing the process to get buy-in from existing staff, and be sure to provide a feedback mechanism so HR can have some oversight.

Above all, don't let your new hire slip through the cracks!

THANK YOU_

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