

Remote onboarding – 5 Steps to Success

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Recruiting and onboarding new staff in line with social distancing is uncharted territory, but using cloud contact centre solutions can get you off to a good start. Thomas Rødseth of Puzzel (<https://www.puzzel.com>) and John Bhairoo of Black & White Recruitment share a five-point plan for success.

According to comparison site Finder, 60% of the UK's adult population is currently working from home (WFH) during the Coronavirus lockdown*. It is a trend that is likely to continue as a result of the ongoing health crisis. At the same time, many companies are beginning to look for fresh talent to push their businesses forward and start planning for the future. As a result, employers will find themselves in the fairly unique position of onboarding new staff members remotely rather than in person or at the office. For contact centres still inundated with customer calls, how do they transform novice agents into fully fledged members of a high-performing team as quickly as possible?

Be prepared

Managers have a critical role to play in creating an end-to-end onboarding process that is welcoming and productive. Nothing is more demoralising than a 'sink or swim' attitude. Therefore, make sure new starters are engaged from the time they accept the job offer by fostering an inclusive environment where new agents flourish and quickly adapt to your contact centre's culture.

Send new employees a welcome email a week or two before they begin with details of what to expect when they arrive, or login, along with mugs, T-shirts and other promotional accessories plus links to videos or a company handbook by way of introduction. In addition, use video to introduce other members of the team. Colleagues could produce pre-recorded introductions sharing something interesting about themselves and what they do, including how they are set-up to work from home (WFH) and fun things such as how their pets are part of the team. Consider buddying new recruits with a mentor who is on hand to answer quick day-to-day questions and illustrate contact centre culture.

In the new world of WFH, access to good IT tools and support is vital. Check whether the new starter has adequate Wi-Fi. If they are using their own laptop or mobile phone, help them understand your IT policies especially when it comes to security. Leave yourself plenty of time when placing IT orders so new recruits can be fully integrated and get off to a flying start.

Make the most of collaborative technology to create an enjoyable and informative onboarding experience. Set up video calls with key people in the business and organise a virtual lunch to welcome them to the team. Face-to-face screen time decreases feelings of isolation and builds trust, but don't overload new agents and remember to ask for feedback so that you can improve the onboarding process for other new joiners.

5 Ways technology can make a difference

When Puzzel surveyed over 100 contact centre professionals, 'IT issues and/or clunky technology' were

major barriers to agent happiness (at 71%) so give new agents the right tools to do their job** from the off-set.

1) One single solution, instant results – cloud contact centre solutions integrate seamlessly with corporate databases, CRM and social media tools so that new agents can find all the information they need to deliver a first-class customer experience quickly and with minimal training. What's more, the latest agent applications are innovative in their simplicity. They bring together all communication channels in one place, providing new agents with a single view of customer interactions and enabling them to receive and respond to customer enquiries by telephone, email, SMS, social media and web chat.

2) Let Artificial Intelligence (AI) do all the thinking – maximise AI learning from the contact centre to provide agents with the real-time knowledge they need to resolve customer interactions without switching applications or resorting to pop-ups. New recruits might be home alone but using chatbots through either speech or text can help them find answers to customer queries and suggested responses quickly and easily.

3) Build confidence with Silent Monitoring - silent monitoring has long been a valued training tool for new starters and most vendors today embed some kind of silent monitoring functionality into their core contact centre solution. This allows managers to listen to agent calls and provide instant feedback to new recruits including both praise and advice to quickly build confidence and take them to the next level of experience, wherever they are located.

4) Make learning fun – incentives, competitions and rewards have always been a popular method of motivation in contact centres. The only difference now is that technology can automate the gamification process, making it a great way of educating and motivating new starters, especially remotely. When all your agents are working from home, shift the focus from individual to team performance for greater inclusivity. Virtual gamification has the added bonus of reducing onboarding time while making learning fun.

5) Workforce Management – combining work with domestic duties is difficult enough for the most confident, seasoned members of your WFH agents so imagine how daunting the process is for newcomers. WFM is a great way to create a supportive environment that minimises stress levels. Use it to build flexible schedules in the early days, ensuring new recruits have enough time away from customer-facing duties to benefit from training and plenty of opportunities to get to know their colleagues via informal online chat or videoconferencing facilities.

Puzzel's partner, John Bhairoo from Black & White Recruitment believes it's hard to replace the energy of being surrounded by colleagues in a contact centre, however, it is possible to recreate a positive atmosphere and culture by using the right onboarding techniques and communication tools.

For more ideas on how your organisation can address remote onboarding and to download a copy of the Puzzel survey "Agent Wellbeing: What Makes your Team Tick?"

(<https://www.puzzel.com/uk/white-papers/agent-wellbeing/>), visit www.puzzel.com

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References:

*<https://www.finder.com/uk/working-from-home-statistics>

**Puzzel survey "Agent Wellbeing: What Makes Your Team Tick?" – published October 2019

About Puzzel

Puzzel is the leading European Contact Centre as a Service (CCaaS) provider. Puzzel offers a native cloud, fast to deploy and easy to use Customer Service Platform for contact centres of all sizes. The Puzzel Platform consists of a fully integrated omnichannel and artificial intelligence enabled Contact Centre solution, advanced email and Ticketing and Workforce Management. In addition customers can personalise the Platform using technology partners from the Puzzel Marketplace. Puzzel was recognized as a Challenger in the 2019 Gartner Magic Quadrant report for Contact Center as a Service in Western Europe for the fifth consecutive year, reflecting its rapid growth, functional breadth, product innovation and commitment to customer service and support. For more information, please visit www.puzzel.com

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