

New drivers: Starting off on the right foot

Australia's driver shortage is serious business.

Innovative operators are diversifying their ranks, looking at non-traditional hires to ensure their talent pipeline stays healthy.

But hiring only solves the first part of the problem; once you've got a new driver, you want to make sure they'll stay with your business



Here are some suggestions on how to get new drivers started and excited about being part of your team.

Induction

Day one on the job is critically important - as the saying goes, you only get one chance to make a first impression.



So, make sure every new employee's first day is memorable for the right reasons.

We've put together an induction program that makes them feel like part of your team from the get-go - [see our checklist here](#).

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Mix up information with practical sessions (such as depot tours and vehicle inspections). Introduce them to their new colleagues and ensure the most senior manager available has a few minutes for a 'meet and greet'.

Follow-up

Jobs aren't just about skills and training. It's important to make sure your new hires understand their roles and feel they're accepted as part of the team. Check with their team leader to see how they're travelling.

Also, follow up informally so you can check how they are fitting in.

Are new hires being treated respectfully by their colleagues? It can take a while to find their place in your organisation but a zero-tolerance approach to bullying or harassment is essential.

Finally, make sure the employee understands that they can come to you with any concerns - and that you'll treat your conversations seriously and confidentially. Read here for more [tips to keeping your staff](#).

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Environment

Are you providing a safe, healthy and welcoming work environment?

Especially if you're diversifying your roster, you should ensure that all employees are treated respectfully.

That might mean providing different food options in your canteen, making allowances for flexibility around ethnic or religious holidays, or authorising family leave to care for children or relatives.

Whatever the short-term cost of such measures, the repayment over time - in employee loyalty and tenure - will more than repay it.



Verification of Competency

Ideally, you'll have a step-by-step plan to build your new driver's skills. It may include operational procedures, licences, maintenance, safety training (including first aid) and any other skills necessary.

Verification of Competency is critical for all employees.

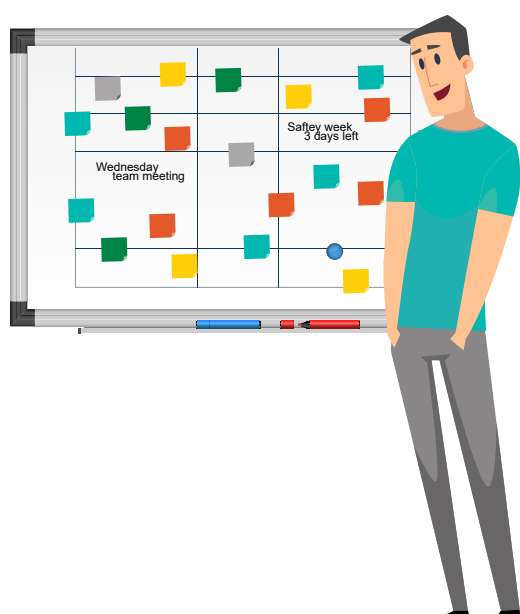
Let new hires know what's expected of them, when they'll be checked and how. See our guide to [writing a driver position description](#).

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Provide support and training as needed and after a suitable time - 6 weeks is usually long enough - this [driver assessment checklist](#) should get you started.

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If the employee falls short, give them the feedback honestly and discuss the next steps (more training and their next assessment).



Compliance

Training and assessment are ongoing for all employees.

Let your new hires know they're expected to stay on top of all their responsibilities - [here's a helpful tip sheet](#) to get them started.

These include monitoring HVNL compliance measures such as work diaries for fatigue management, driver behaviour through telematics, spot checks or site observations of load restraint and mass dimension adherence.

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Feedback

Induction shouldn't be a one-way process.

Just as you should get feedback on a new hire's performance, you should get their feedback on your company.

The key is to be open and respectful; responding defensively to a criticism or suggestion for improvement will only send a message that you're not interested in what the employee is saying.

Take their comments seriously and act on them if appropriate. If you're not going to act on them, then make sure you let the employee know why not. Otherwise they may think the conversation wasn't genuine, or that you simply dismissed their comments out of hand.

See our introduction to [being a good communicator over here](#).

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Probation

Despite everyone's best efforts, sometimes a new hire just doesn't work out.



To avoid problems and disputes, make sure that any concerns are formally documented and addressed.

If you need to terminate someone, even within their probation period, having clear and accurate documentation can drastically simplify the process - [our guide to difficult conversations](#) may help.

[CONVERSATION GUIDE >](#)