



**ACCELERATE ONBOARDING:  
HOW TO SHAVE  
MONTHS OFF OF  
NEW HIRE TRAINING**

# TOP REP

“I feel the need...The need for speed.” Goose and Maverick weren’t wrong. The world is seemingly moving at breakneck speed. The need for accelerating efficiency and maximizing time is evidenced in every aspect of our lives. Lifehacks, AI, time management tools, the list goes on. When it comes to onboarding new hires in business, getting them “up to speed” so to speak can be tricky. Lucky for you...we’ve charted a course, so you can hit the thrusters and have new hires ready for peak performance quickly. Talk to me Goose, let’s fly.

Hiring and training a new sales rep is a long and expensive process. You expect it to pay off in the long run—but for many organizations, the math doesn’t add up.

On average, [it takes 15 months](#) of onboarding for a new sales rep to reach full performance, and the average tenure of a sales rep is only 18 months. That leaves you with only about 3 months of top performance—and that’s after spending an average \$150,000 to hire and train them.

A short average tenure and a long average onboarding time are a hammer and anvil, compressing peak performance from both sides.

This is clearly unacceptable. But it also presents you with a tremendous opportunity to save time and money—you just have to beat the averages. Bringing sales reps up to speed faster and [retaining them longer](#) dramatically improves the ROI of your onboarding.

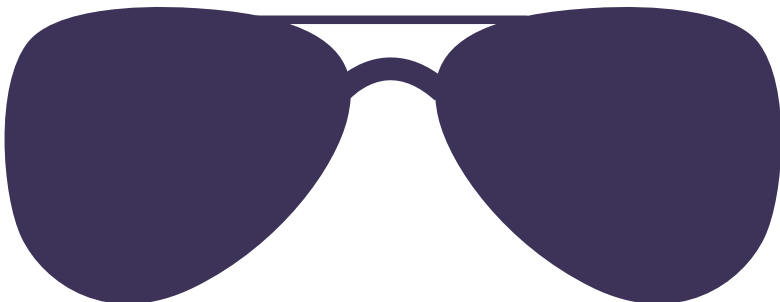




Having worked with thousands of sales teams, we believe that when approached correctly, onboarding should take no more than 9 months at the absolute max, with 6 months being the ideal you should aim for. We also believe that our approach to onboarding will result in better-adjusted sales reps who will want to stick around for the long run.

An accelerated onboarding process that results in sales reps who contribute faster and stay longer is a win-win. Read on to learn how to achieve it.

- Define peak performance for your reps
- Prioritize the success of each new hire
- Optimize your training structure
- Treat the onboarding process as a collaborative effort
- Speed up by slowing down
- Keep training relevant, and equip new hires to learn
- Create a clear plan for each phase of onboarding
- Utilize guaranteed variable compensation
- Clearly communicate all expectations
- Plan for the unexpected



# NARROW YOUR GOALS: DEFINE PEAK PERFORMANCE FOR YOUR REPS

Before you do anything else, you need to establish a clear understanding of what it means for a new hire to be fully onboarded and reach peak performance. Otherwise, you won't have an objective way to determine when the goal of onboarding is completed or gauge whether the changes you've made had a measurable impact.

If you don't already have a concrete definition of what "full performance" means, that's where you need to start. Work with other sales leaders and senior team members to create a list of [quantitative and qualitative metrics](#) that indicate when a new hire has reached the level of performance you expect from your sales reps.

Quantitative metrics have to do with the pipeline, and can include:

- Opportunities created
- Conversion rate
- Close rate
- Phone calls made
- Variable compensation marks met

And qualitative metrics may be things like:

- Level of collaboration
- Attitude
- Work ethic
- Coachability
- Manager's assessment of the employee

Choose metrics that make sense for the specifics of your organization and the kind of performance you want to see from your reps.

Once you've defined the criteria for "full performance," you can retroactively apply it to past employees to gain a sense of how long it has historically taken you to reach that point. And then you will have something to compare against as you track it moving forward, enabling you to evaluate the effectiveness of your efforts to accelerate onboarding.



# HOW TO ACCELERATE ONBOARDING

With a clear end goal in mind, you're ready to speed up your onboarding process and help new hires reach peak performance as quickly as possible—but not by taking shortcuts. Rather, acceleration happens when you support new hires at every level to ensure their success. Evaluate the current state of your onboarding against each of these areas. Where could you be improving?

## PRIORITIZE THE SUCCESS OF EACH NEW HIRE

Organizations must be dedicated to the success of each new hire. Whether people succeed or fail often comes down to how well equipped and supported they are.

If you throw new hires in the deep end and leave them to figure it out on their own, a lot of them will sink ([meaning high turnover](#)). And those who do manage to swim to the other side won't be nearly as efficient as they would have been with proper coaching. It may seem like a path to retaining “only the best,” but the reality is that some of your best new hires (who could become your best reps over time) simply won't put up with the lack of support and daily friction this method creates.

One of the greatest drivers of a new sales rep's success is the support they receive from their manager, from the other people around them, from the content of the training program, and from the processes put in place to empower them.

## OPTIMIZE YOUR TRAINING STRUCTURE

Organizations must choose whether to onboard a batch of new hires as a cohort, or to stagger hires out and train them individually.

If you have the resources to devote to it, cohorts can be an extremely effective training method. This keeps the process in sequence, enabling you to track progress and performance more effectively, resulting in better data and analytics on the back end. And it allows new hires to learn and grow alongside others who are in the same boat, which can promote teamwork, build camaraderie, and establish relationships that will last for years.

But it's important that no individuals get lost in the shuffle. Whether new hires are trained individually or as a cohort, you must ensure that they each receive the personalized support and dedicated time they will need.

## TREAT THE ONBOARDING PROCESS AS A COLLABORATIVE EFFORT

The best way to ensure that each new hire gets onboarded quickly is to surround them with multiple people who are all committed to their success. Relying on one person to train all the new hires will significantly slow down your onboarding process. It has to be a team effort.

We can use the RACI model (responsible, accountable, consulted, informed) to look at who those people involved might be. While the specifics can obviously vary from one organization to another, this should provide an example of what a full team effort might look like.

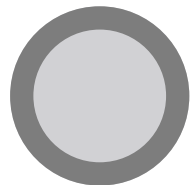
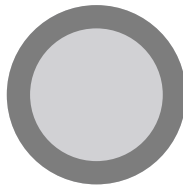
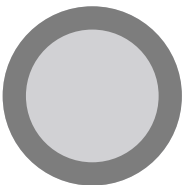
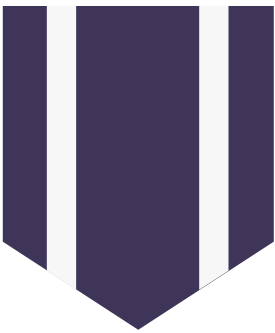
Those **responsible** for onboarding are likely to be the sales enablement professionals. They'll be the ones who get the new hires started in the onboarding program, provide them with needed resources, introduce them to the people they'll interface with, and work alongside them throughout the process.

The **accountable** individual is the hiring manager. If a new hire takes too long to onboard, or if they don't ultimately succeed, that's going to come back on the person who hired them, as it will impact their numbers and prevent their quota from being hit.

Those **consulted** and **informed** may be a little less clearly defined in this context, but they can include such roles as the senior vice president of sales, the sales division head, other sales managers on the team, account executives, sales engineers, and sales development representatives.

Essentially, any individually revealed by the RACI model is worth having involved in the onboarding process. Everyone should collaborate, share their own areas of expertise, and give each new hire every opportunity for success.

Additionally, it can also be extremely helpful to assign each new hire to a mentor. Mentors will typically be senior sales staff who know the ropes of the organization and are willing to share their knowledge and experience with new hires. It's important for any one mentor to only be responsible for a small number of mentees at a time. They need to be able to give their dedicated focus and attention, and the mentees should know that they can turn to their mentor to help them through whatever they may get stuck on.



## SPEED UP BY SLOWING DOWN

A big mistake many organizations make when onboarding new hires is to try to fit as much training in as quickly as possible. You'll even hear some places say things like, "You're going to drink from a fire hose your first week."

To that we say, "Turn off the damn fire hose!" Unless you're keen on having high turnover, let's reserve fire hoses for putting out fires, and just point your new hires to a drinking fountain.

As counterintuitive or even paradoxical as it may seem, to speed up your onboarding process, you may need to slow things down first.

If you try to teach new hires everything they need to know right away, not only will they not retain the information, but they'll quickly become burnt out from trying. They'll forget things, make mistakes, become discouraged, and derail the whole process.

But if you slow things down to an appropriate pace, you'll make it far easier for new sales employees to really take in what they're learning, absorb your organization's systems and processes, and prepare to put what they've learned into practice.

People learn best when they learn one thing at a time. At any point in the onboarding process, it should be clear to new hires what that one thing is—and how they'll know when they've succeeded.

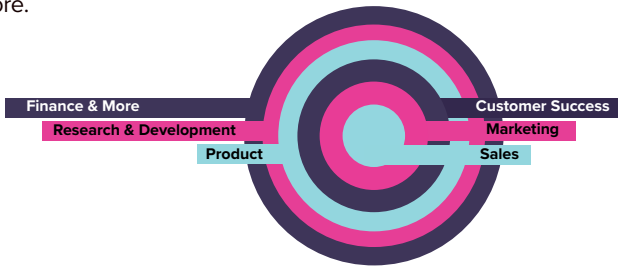




## KEEP TRAINING RELEVANT, AND EQUIP NEW HIRES TO LEARN

Far too often, new employees are inundated with irrelevant onboarding activities filled with overly complicated explanations of things they'll never use. Sales people don't need to know how engineering teams run their SCRUM calls. Learning the inner workings of other departments may be useful context for a veteran employee, but unless it directly pertains to a rep's role, it shouldn't be part of the onboarding.

Instead, start with sales itself. Then move outward to marketing and customer success. From there, you can go into product, research and development, finance, and more.



New hires will need to learn about the product or service they'll be selling. What is it? How does it work? What value does it provide? What problems does it solve? What benefits does it offer? What perspectives will the customer bring? What questions will the customer ask about it?

They'll need to understand the processes that your organization runs on. What sales team structure do you use? What does the [compensation plan](#) look like? Who are the people they should look to for assistance with a given task? What is their own role in the company? In what ways will they work cross functionally?

And crucially, they'll need to know where they can go to find information about all of these things. Helping new hires learn what they need to know is important. But helping them know how to learn is even more important. No one remembers everything they hear the first time, but they should be able to look up a reminder for themselves.

Toward that end, it's important for you to have an easily accessible resource library from which they can answer their own questions. It should include things like recordings, sales transcripts, reference docs, copy decks, FAQs, and anything else a sales rep may need to reference.

## CREATE A CLEAR PLAN FOR EACH PHASE OF ONBOARDING

Rather than leaving progress to chance, you should map out the full onboarding process ahead of time. Expect this to take a lot of work, but it will be one of the most important things you'll work on. Make sure it's specific to your business and broadly applicable to all new sales hires, but also flexible enough to be catered to specific roles and responsibilities.

Break the onboarding process down into time increments, starting with weeks, then moving out to months, quarters, and years. For each increment, define your expectations for what a new hire should have accomplished. Set clear goals and specify how success will be determined. Then make sure to conduct check-ins at each interval to see whether appropriate progress is being made.

For week one, consider it a write off. No, seriously. Remember to turn off the fire hose and adjust your expectations about how quickly things should move.

That first week should be all about letting new hires become familiar with the company, meet the team, fill out their HR paperwork, and settle in. Don't try to throw new information their way beyond the most cursory introductions. Just give them a chance to feel comfortable in their new environment and reach a place where they will be best able to ingest their training. Their check-in for the first week should be as simple as knowing the company's mission.

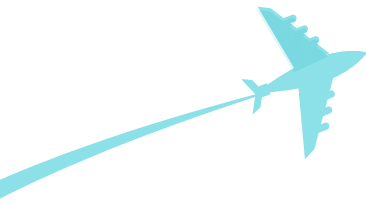
The second week should be more in-depth. They should start to learn about the different departments and what they do. You might have a different department leader come in each day of week two to talk about their roles, their responsibilities, and their team. Additionally, week two will begin to introduce the new hire to the responsibilities of their own role. The split between the company as a whole and the individual's role should be about 50/50.

By the third week, plan to transition into more dedicated training for the individual roles of the new hires. And from there, you can plot out the rest as you see fit, based on the specific needs and requirements of your organization and the sales roles being trained. Build the template by reverse-engineering the path to full performance. What will they need to know and do to reach that point?

## UTILIZE GUARANTEED VARIABLE COMPENSATION

As new hires progress through the stages you've outlined, tie their guaranteed variable compensation to the onboarding climb. For example, they might have 100 percent guaranteed for the first two months, then 50 percent guaranteed for the third and fourth months, 25 percent for month five, and then off to the races from there.

This is important because your hires will need the chance to simply learn, make mistakes, and grow as a new employee without the fear of losing a paycheck hanging over them—until they're fully ready for that stage. You put them on a bike with training wheels, knowing the wheels will come off, but not until it's time.



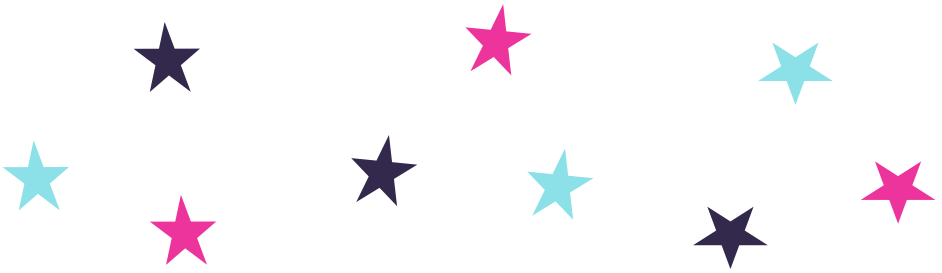
## CLEARLY COMMUNICATE ALL EXPECTATIONS

There should be absolutely no surprises for new hires. Starting with the hiring process and moving all the way through onboarding, your new employees should be given full transparency into everything they will be expected to learn and accomplish.

That includes walking them through the plan you outlined from the start, so they can have a roadmap of what will be coming up at each stage and what they'll have to do. It also includes understanding how their compensation will work along the way, and exactly when the training wheels will start to come off.

New hires should never feel blindsided, because they should always know what to expect next. Beyond outlining the plan with them at the beginning, you can also use each check-in session to remind them about anything important that will be coming up soon.





## PLAN FOR THE UNEXPECTED

Understand that all hires will be different, and you'll need to be ready to pivot your onboarding plan according to the needs and prior experience of the individual.

In some cases, it may let you speed up the process. If they already come from a strong sales background, for example, you should be able to move more quickly through the fundamentals than you would with someone totally new to sales.

In other cases, it may mean spending more time on something you'd have expected them to know. Perhaps you use Salesforce and had taken for granted that experienced hires would already have used it too, but they had instead only used Oracle or Nutshell in their previous positions.

Whatever the specifics may be, your willingness to adjust the onboarding process as needed will go a long way toward helping every new hire succeed.



# FOSTER TRUST AND TRANSPARENCY WITH PERFORMIO

As we've seen throughout this process, the goal isn't just to bring new hires up to speed quickly, but also to do so in a manner that equips and supports them, creating loyal employees who want to stay with your organization. You have the chance to create a culture based on trust and transparency, where your sales reps feel heard, valued, and empowered to succeed.

Breakdowns in trust and transparency are often related to compensation. When compensation and performance data isn't clear and accessible, leaders have a difficult time supporting their teams, which leads to high turnover rates and performance losses.

Sales reps who don't have insights into their performance have to spend time performing homebrewed calculations to see how much they can expect to earn. This shadow accounting doesn't just harm morale and impact trust, but it can also cause major problems when a sales rep's calculations don't line up with what they've actually earned.

[Performio's Incentive Compensation Management \(ICM\) software](#) gives your reps real-time insights into their performance, how far along they are toward their goals, what they can expect, and much more.



WANT TO SEE WHAT PERFORMIO  
CAN DO FOR YOUR BUSINESS,  
*REQUEST A DEMO TODAY.*

Request A Demo

