



Creating a Virtual Onboarding Journey with impact

How to keep candidates excited about your brand and work-ready for day one.

Meet & Engage

Introduction

There's one aspect of the recruiting journey that often gets overlooked – that piece of the puzzle is onboarding. In this report, we'll share the practical steps to show you exactly how this can be achieved.

Timeline for Onboarding is a flexible solution that can be fully-customised to your employer brand enabling you to build personalised social-style candidate journeys that feel intuitive, relevant and inspiring to different talent audiences.

Timeline gives you the power to schedule and automate employer brand content, share training and development videos, connect new hires with existing team members, run live virtual events and so much more – all on a seamless and easy-to-use platform that integrates with your existing ATS or HRIS.

This report is a must-read for anyone that wants to:

- Reduce reneges and get new hires work ready
- Save time, resource and budget
- Design a virtual onboarding experience to engage remote workforces



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What Makes A Good Onboarding Experience

The idea of formally welcoming a new joiner into the business apparently stems from the rather severe sounding concept of ‘organisational socialisation’ that was conceived in the 1970s. The term ‘onboarding’ dates from the early 1990s. However, it wasn’t really until the early part of this century that the term started to get much use, and only really in the last decade or so that it’s cemented itself into the HR psyche.

During that time, there’s been plenty of research to evidence the benefits of good onboarding; Glassdoor found that a strong onboarding process can improve new hire retention by 82%, whilst those with weak onboarding programmes lose the confidence of their candidates and are more likely to lose these individuals in the first year.

So, if onboarding as a principal isn’t a new phenomenon, why did a survey conducted by Gallup find that only 12% of employees thought their company did a good job ‘welcoming them aboard’? Perhaps we should be asking what onboarding an offered candidate should aim to do? There are three key areas we should focus on:

- We should inspire and excite them about the business they’re joining, to reinforce the decision they made to accept the offer was the right one.
- We should inform and reassure them about what’s required of them and by when, so they feel confident they’re completing and sharing what they need to.
- We should introduce and get to know them, so they start to feel a part of their new team and our community before day one.

The Five Principles of Good Onboarding

1. First impressions matter

Just as your new employee wants to make a good first impression, you need to do the same. Establishing an environment that's inviting and inclusive will set the tone not only for their onboarding experience but also their first few weeks and months in the job. Sharing a welcome message to all new joiners from a senior business leader is a great way to make that formal introduction, particularly if this is a video message. At Meet & Engage, we often see these welcome posts getting the most likes when included in a client's onboarding journey using our Timeline for Onboarding technology. If you don't have an onboarding platform, then why not share this via email or even create a 'hidden' page on your careers site to direct your new employees to.

2. Keep up the selling

53% of global professionals surveyed by LinkedIn* stated that receiving explicit background on their new company's culture and values, whether through an employee handbook or an informal conversation with their line manager, is very useful. It's highly likely your candidate will have done their research into your business during the recruitment process, most probably engaging with your careers and corporate websites. As they'll be hungry to learn more, now they know they'll be joining you, it's a good idea to share new content specifically curated for them during their onboarding. Sharing the same old videos simply won't cut it. Nice examples include demonstrating your culture and values through employee quotes and stories, maybe produce video content from recent joiners to talk through how they found their first few weeks and months. Think about what anxieties new joiners usually face and look at ways you can provide information and support that helps alleviate these.

3. Staying in touch

When a candidate accepts their offer of employment you can bet their excitement and engagement levels are at their peak, so the worst thing that an organisation can then do is go silent. Keeping in touch can take on many forms but the most effective are the ones where you're present. This might be informal online introductory calls with their new teams, or a coffee with their line manager – not only will this help build and nurture their new working relationships, but they'll also help your new joiners be more productive sooner. Where individual contact isn't always an option, then consider online chat events that can be scheduled on a regular basis with new joiners being invited to attend. Meet & Engage's Live Chat is often used as part of our clients' onboarding activity to allow these cohorts to connect with the business and get their questions answered.

4. Building a community

This is particularly relevant for those businesses who hire in large volumes with a common start date (early careers for example), where there's value in connecting your new joiners before they start. Not only will it allow them to get to know each other prior to joining, but it might also benefit them practically with things like relocating etc. Social media can be a useful tool with many organisations setting up Facebook or WhatsApp groups. At Meet & Engage, we have Channels which is embedded into our Timeline for Onboarding technology; different threads can be created to allow users to post messages and interact with each other, with new messages being flagged on their Timeline dashboard. The client can also use Channels to promote a message to a wall post so it appears as content in the candidate's Timeline feed.



5. Ticking off the to-do list

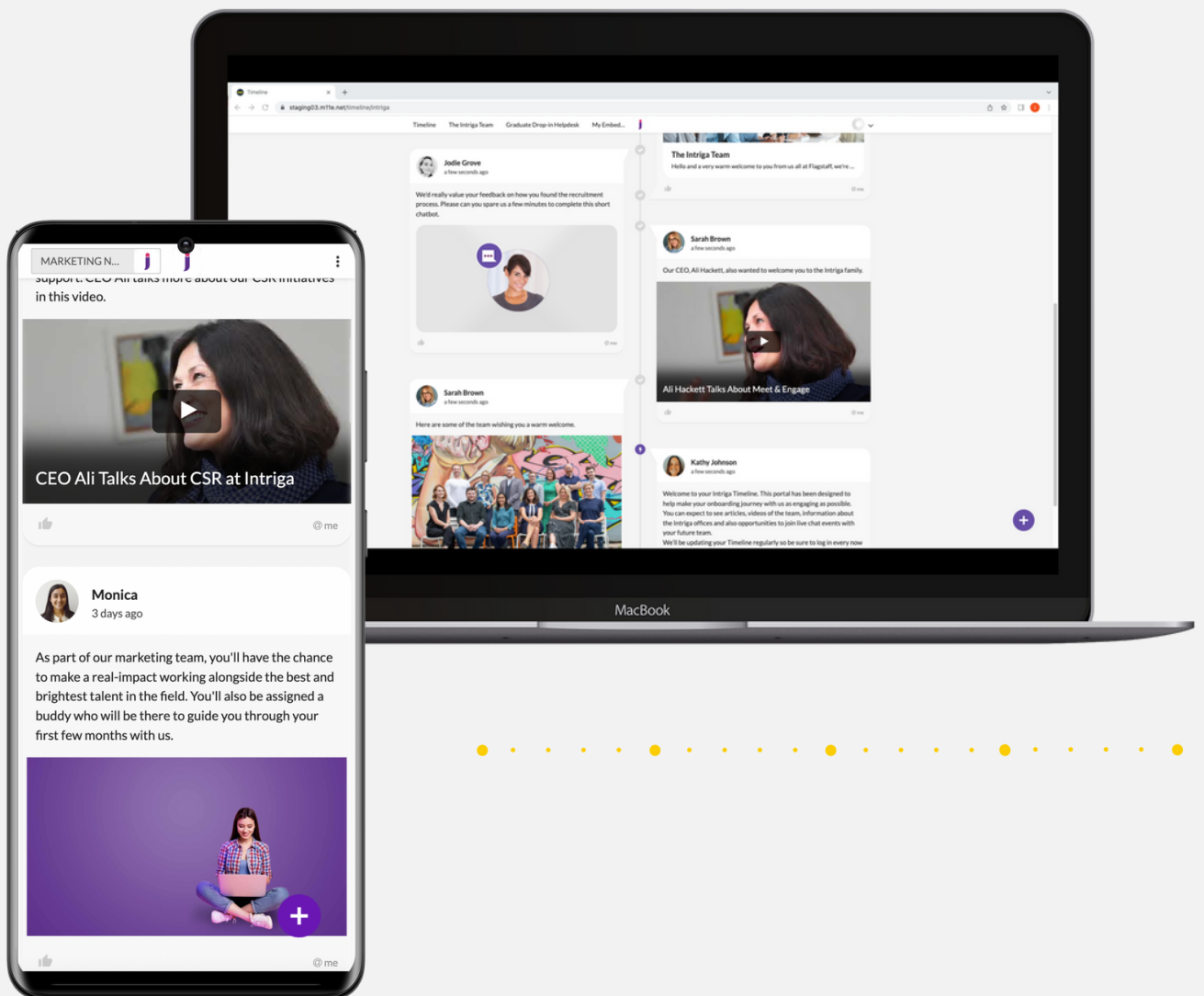
We all know that starting a new job comes with lots of admin tasks. There are forms to fill in, documents to scan and verify, parking permits to receive, tech to take possession of... This can often feel overwhelming on day one so the more that can be completed before a candidate joins, the better. This can also help alleviate some of those anxieties we mentioned – if they don't have a parking permit, where do they park? Having a laptop that's already been set up and delivered before they start will allow them to familiarise themselves with your systems and reduce the usual first day tech faff. Other initiatives could be setting up and providing access to their company email address ahead of them joining or being added to the team's Slack messages in advance. The more you can tick off beforehand, the more productive they'll be from the get-go.



Our Technology: Timeline for Onboarding

Great onboarding should be an extension of your talent acquisition process – relevant, personalised, on-brand. Timeline by Meet & Engage is all about nurture – keeping candidates excited about your proposition and helping them understand more about your business before they join.

Any technology you use needs to live up to candidate expectations, too. With Timeline, there is no app to download, and it works seamlessly across all devices.



Custom branded

Build a custom-branded onboarding platform unique to your employer brand identity.

Build custom nurture journeys

Design custom nurture journeys for different talent audiences that create a personalised user experience.

Automate content

Schedule and automate employer brand content, training and development videos, documents, links and much more, all within an intuitive and easy-to-use social-style timeline.

Run live virtual events

Run live virtual events for individual persona audiences that answer questions, build confidence and get your new hires work-ready.

Candidate nudges

Automate email or SMS nudges to candidates to tell them fresh content is available for review.

Channels

Connect candidates with hirings managers and ambassadors using our Channel feature. Candidates can communicate directly between themselves and employee ambassadors, hiring managers and recruiters. Channels can be created by conversation topic, such as business area, location, shared housing etc.

Custom integrated FAQ Chatbot

Answer questions 24/7, 365 via an integrated FAQ Chatbot function that can be customised according to your audience's needs.

Seamless and easy-to-use

There is no app to download; Timeline works seamlessly across all mobile, tablet and desktop devices.

Integrates with your ATS/HRIS

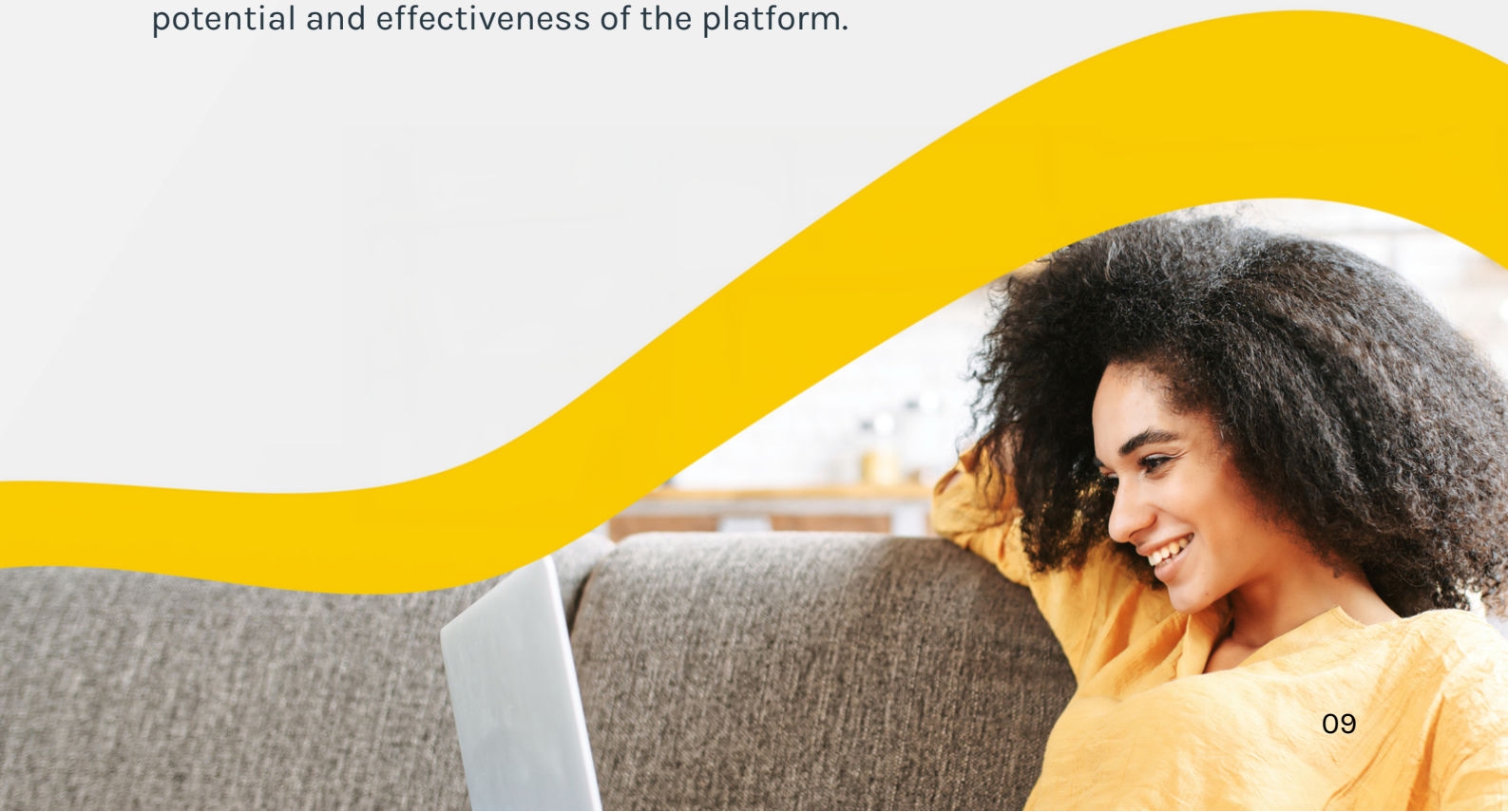
Timeline's code allows you to integrate the platform with your existing ATS or HRIS provider for that extra peace of mind.

Detailed analytics and data reporting

Take advantage of Timeline's data and analytics reporting, so that you can understand the strengths and weaknesses in your onboarding journey.

Concierge service

Our team of dedicated experts are on-hand to help you maximise the potential and effectiveness of the platform.



The Benefits of Virtual Onboarding

Virtual onboarding can provide employers with a host of benefits that impacts everything from employer brand to candidate experience to hiring and retention.

With Timeline's fully-customisable, automated features, employers can take this one step further and build nurture journeys that are unique to specific talent audiences.

Want to share a virtual welcome video from the recruiting team?

Consider it done.

Need to send documents for a new hire to sign and return?

This can easily be scheduled for a specific date and time.

Looking to drip feed employer brand content to get new hires work ready for day one?

Plan and automate this at your own pace.

At a time when many new hires will be joining businesses remotely, possessing these capabilities can set your organisation apart and ensure people feel confident, excited and inspired before day one.

Below we highlight some of the key benefits of virtual onboarding - and show how these can revolutionise your hiring function, elevate the candidate experience and bring your employer brand to life.



Benefit #1: Save time

Hiring teams and recruiters will know that time is a scarce resource. With our virtual onboarding platform, you can reduce unnecessary emails, cut down on paperwork and set up FAQ chatbots that answer questions 24/7.

Thanks to Timeline's automation features, all of these everyday tasks can be fully automated with the candidate in mind. From the user's perspective, everything feels relevant, timely and intuitive.

This means automation doesn't need to sacrifice candidate experience; on the contrary, it can help create a more streamlined, efficient and successful onboarding experience for all parties involved.

Benefit #2: Get new hires work ready

Virtual onboarding is an intelligent and highly-effective way to ensure new hires are confident and work ready before day one.

Our platform allows you to schedule, automate and share relevant documents and employer brand content, so that new recruits have all the information they need, when they need it.

With Timeline, you can even run live events and spotlight key team members and brand ambassadors. New hires, especially those onboarding remotely, will want to feel a connection to their future team, so taking advantage of these features can help inspire confidence and affinity ahead of day one.

Benefit #3: Reduce reneges and save money

Hiring teams know that a poor onboarding experience can cause candidates to drop out of the process.

By implementing a highly-engaging, personalised onboarding journey, employers can reduce renege rates and ensure that new hires feel fully supported through the joining process.

Benefit #4: Onboard talent anywhere in the world

Employers are now in a world of work without borders and physical location. With our virtual onboarding solution, organisations can create a standardised yet highly personalised onboarding experience that brings new talent into the business from all over the world.

Since Timeline is accessible across all devices and requires no download, new hires simply need an internet connection and a smart device to access all the great content and insights that will get them ready for day one. This is a groundbreaker when it comes to the future of hiring and talent acquisition.



How to Create a Personalised Onboarding Approach at Scale

We've put together a complete checklist of how the process works from start to finish using Timeline for Onboarding.

Understanding your audiences

Before you build a virtual onboarding journey, you need to clearly define which audiences you'd like to reach. We recommend breaking down your talent pool into well-defined persona groups, which means that the subsequent onboarding experience can be designed to feel personalised, relevant and unique to the wants and needs of those individuals.

When segmenting your audiences, it's worth researching these individuals to identify their preferences, find out their motivations and understand what may cause them to renege or drop-out.

You can start by asking questions like:

- What are the key motivators for this audience?
- What common questions do they have about the onboarding process?
- What type of content do they prefer to consume?
- At what stage in the onboarding journey do these individuals typically drop-out or renege?

These insights will allow you to populate the platform with content that meets the specific needs of a given audience.

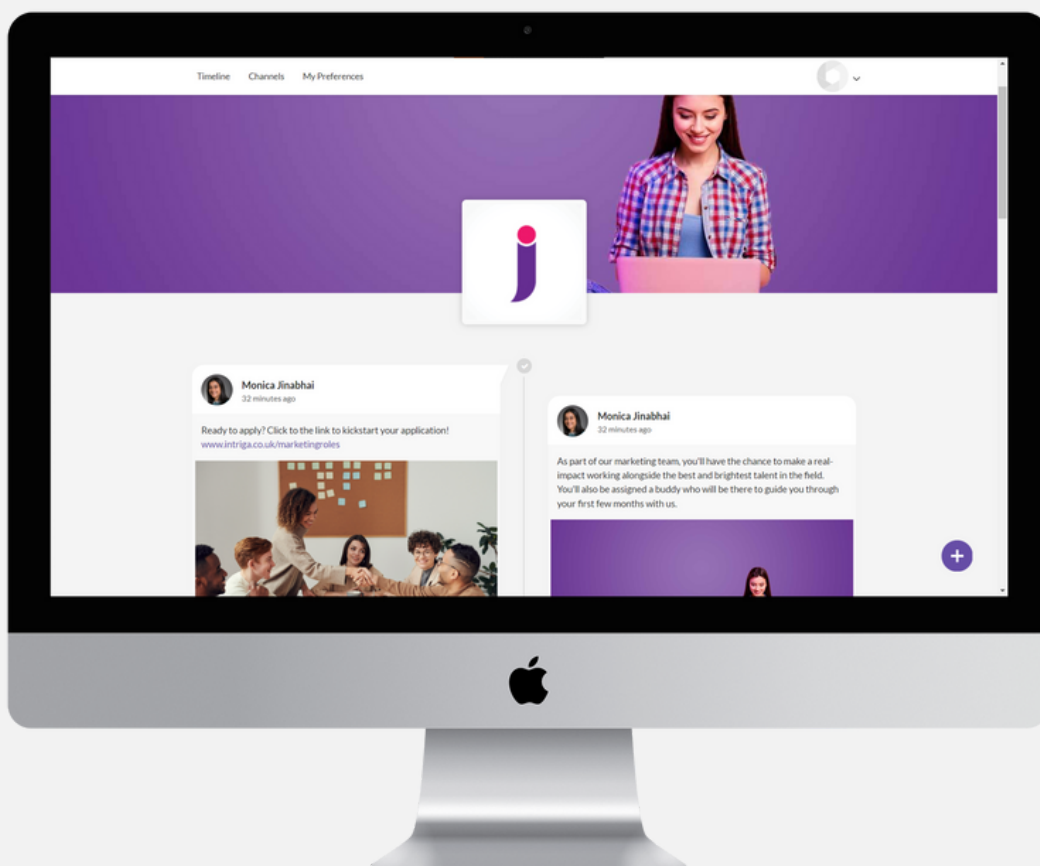
Build your candidate journey

Once you have insights into the specific audiences you'd like to onboard, it's then possible to build specific "nurture flows" for these talent personas. For example, this means that Early Careers hires can be guided through an entirely different onboarding experience than your Tech hires.

This personalisation enables you to serve up forms, documents and content that is relevant solely to that particular audience. You can also install FAQ Chatbots to answer questions that each of your new hire personas commonly ask. What's more, you can even schedule and run live virtual events tailored to these different audience groups.

All of this content can be curated, scheduled and automated, so that hiring teams don't need to worry about sending unnecessary emails, follow-ups or reminders.

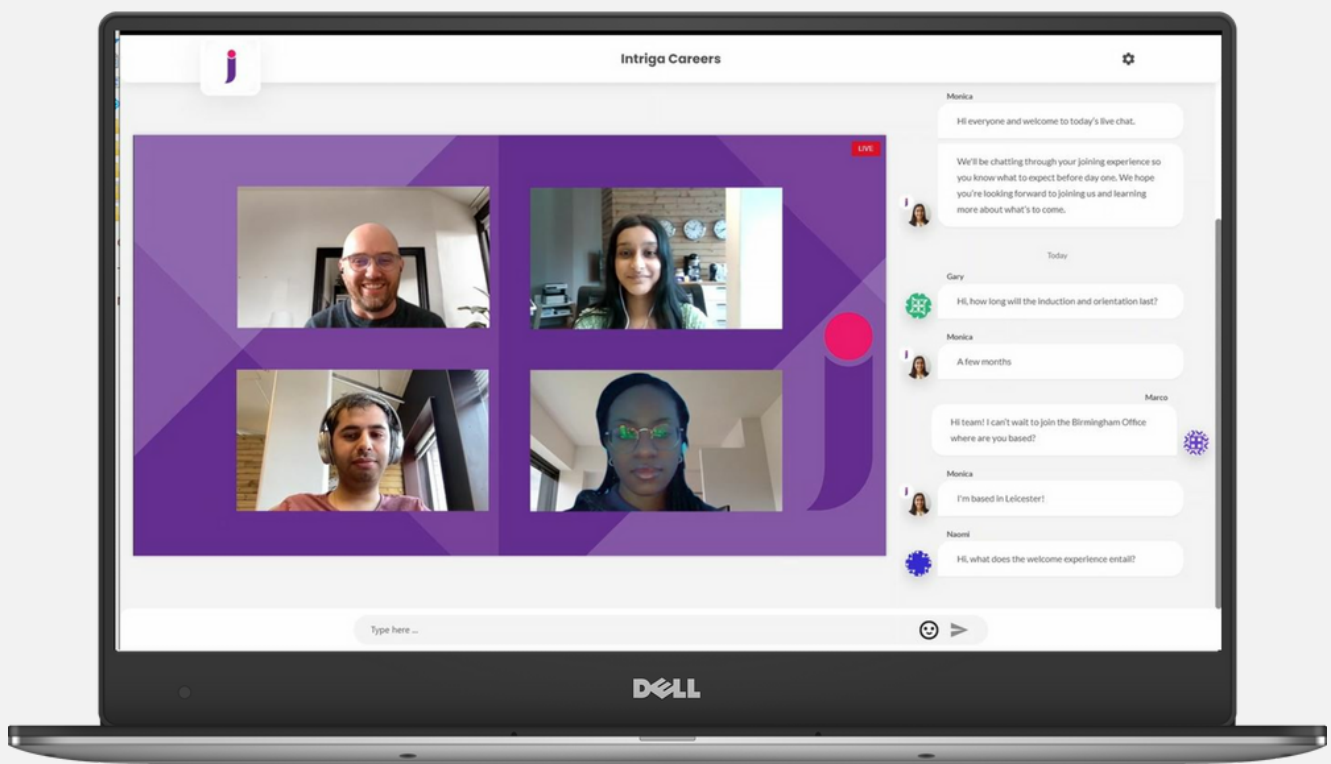
From the user's point-of-view, this content feels fresh, relevant and timely. It's a powerful way to bring your employer brand to life and ensure that the onboarding journey is packed with an equal amount of useful information and inspiring content.



Live virtual events

Live virtual events aren't just a great way to attract and engage candidates in your pipeline, they're also highly effective at keeping new hires informed and inspired during the onboarding process.

According to LinkedIn, candidates trust a company's employees 3x more than the company itself to provide credible information on what it's like to work there.



At the onboarding stage, you can use this to your advantage by introducing new hires to employees, colleagues and future team members. Not only does this serve practical benefits in the sharing of valuable resources and information, but it also enables you to bring the onboarding experience to life by letting real people tell the story of what life is like at your organisation.

These moments are crucial when looking to build trust and instil confidence, as it allows new recruits to see themselves in the shoes of colleagues. New hires can ask questions, make new connections, build friendships and get to know what everyday life at the organisation consists of – all before they’ve even officially started on day one.

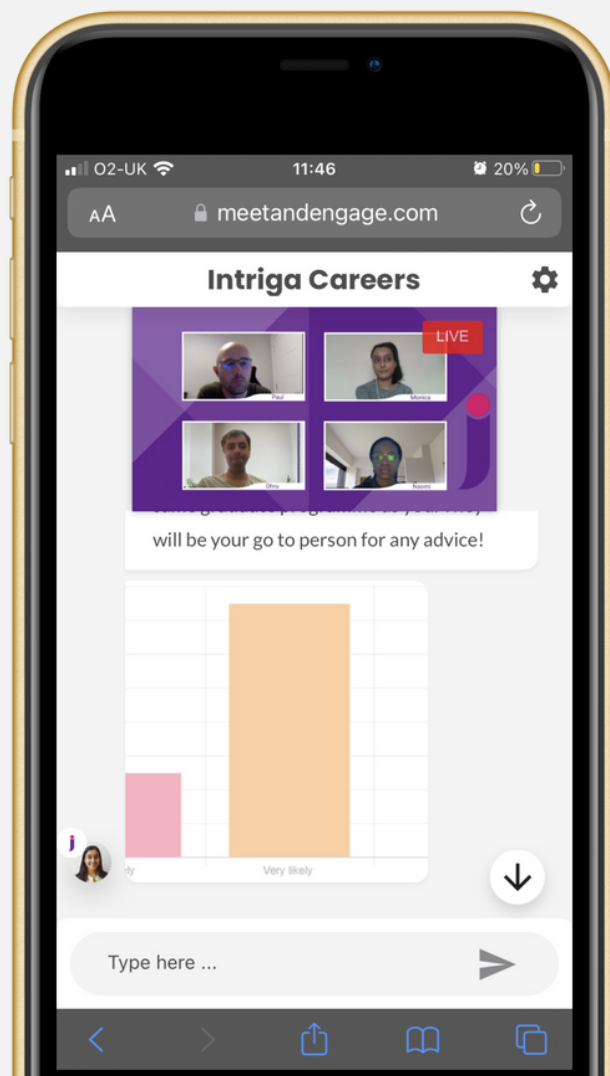
All of these different aspects of the onboarding journey then feed into a continuous evolution loop, which enables organisations to continuously adapt, tweak and enhance the onboarding experience.

Track and monitor your data

Data plays an important role in your ability to benchmark current performance and determine what success looks like. In any onboarding journey, there will likely be key moments where new hires have questions or, in some instances, where people are more likely to drop out or renege.

By tracking and monitoring candidate feedback, it’s possible to improve processes and tailor the onboarding experience to meet the needs of your unique persona audiences.

Timeline has a number of built-in features that enable this, such as NPS score tracking, Chatbot data assimilation, live virtual event reports and smiley face feedback that lets users indicate whether they’re happy with certain pieces of content or aspects of the platform.



Case Study

How Royal Mail used Timeline for Onboarding to create an exciting and inclusive onboarding experience for their Christmas seasonal workers

Royal Mail had always held large-scale, face-to-face recruitment events for their Christmas Flexible Worker roles, but in 2020 they moved to an entirely digital recruitment process. This meant that candidates were being asked to do everything online - from applying and having their documents verified to accessing support and completing their induction process.

Whilst the process in 2020 had been a success in terms of attracting, processing, and hiring the numbers needed, the pandemic and uncertainty around jobs and furlough had undoubtedly helped Royal Mail meet their quotes: a situation that was unlikely to be repeated the following year.



A knock-on effect of going completely digital was also the sheer volume of enquiries candidates had during the different stages of the journey, resulting in the Advice & Support team being overwhelmed by incoming emails, hitting 1,000 per day at its peak. This meant delays in getting back to candidates to resolve their queries, which in turn led to a poor candidate experience and a longer time to hire.

Attrition was also proving a concern. Coupled with the increase in consumer online spending and subsequent competition for temporary Christmas workers across the logistics and retail sectors, ensuring candidates were kept warm and engaged once they'd accepted an offer was going to be key. In 2020, a 'Countdown to Christmas' email campaign had been implemented, but it required the team to manually input candidate details, something that was hugely labour intensive for an already over-stretched team.

Going into the 2021 Christmas season, the key areas of focus were to:

- Reduce email enquiries to the Advice & Support team
- Provide 24/7 access to FAQs
- Reduce the people-hours required to input candidate details into current Countdown to Christmas keep warm initiative
- Reduce renege/no show rates from point of offer to day one
- Reduce attrition in first few weeks from day one
- Provide a better candidate experience throughout the process

Working with the Royal Mail Group's Christmas Project Team, Meet & Engage looked at how we could implement our chatbot and onboarding technology to meet these objectives, focusing on each stage of the process to ensure maximum impact for both Royal Mail Group and the candidate.

Breaking the project down, we looked at each stage of the recruitment journey separately. How could we create a positive candidate experience and at the same time reduce the burden on the Royal Mail Group team?

It was agreed that we would introduce the use of chatbots at each stage of the process, and introduce an onboarding platform to replace the Countdown to Christmas keep-warm initiative. Meet & Engage worked with Royal Mail to create:

Holly, the match-me chatbot

- shared key aspects of the role including a 'day in the life' video at the pre-apply stage
- served up via a plugin on the Royal Mail Careers website's Christmas recruitment pages

Robin, the in-process FAQ chatbot

- for anyone at the in-process stage of the recruitment journey
- served up as a full-page plugin via a link within ATS email comms

Nick, the onboarding FAQ chatbot


- for anyone at the post-offer stage of the recruitment journey
- served up within the Timeline platform as well as a full-page plugin

Timeline for Onboarding


- onboarding platform for all those from point of offer accept
- candidates were invited to register via link within ATS email comms

Holly was designed to explain the role of a Christmas Flexible Worker. Robin and Nick were designed to help answer frequently asked questions. Robin and Nick both handed over to an email if the user couldn't find the answer to their question through the chatbot.


Timeline had two distinct flows of content. The 'Pre-start' flow shared content aimed at supporting the candidate through the induction stage of the recruitment journey - sharing links to the Induction Hub, reminding them to watch the videos and complete the survey. The 'Post-start' flow had more general content aimed at informing and engaging users once they'd joined Royal Mail.

 Jules Spencer
3 months ago


Welcome to Royal Mail and congratulations on your successful application! Let me introduce you to your Welcome Portal...



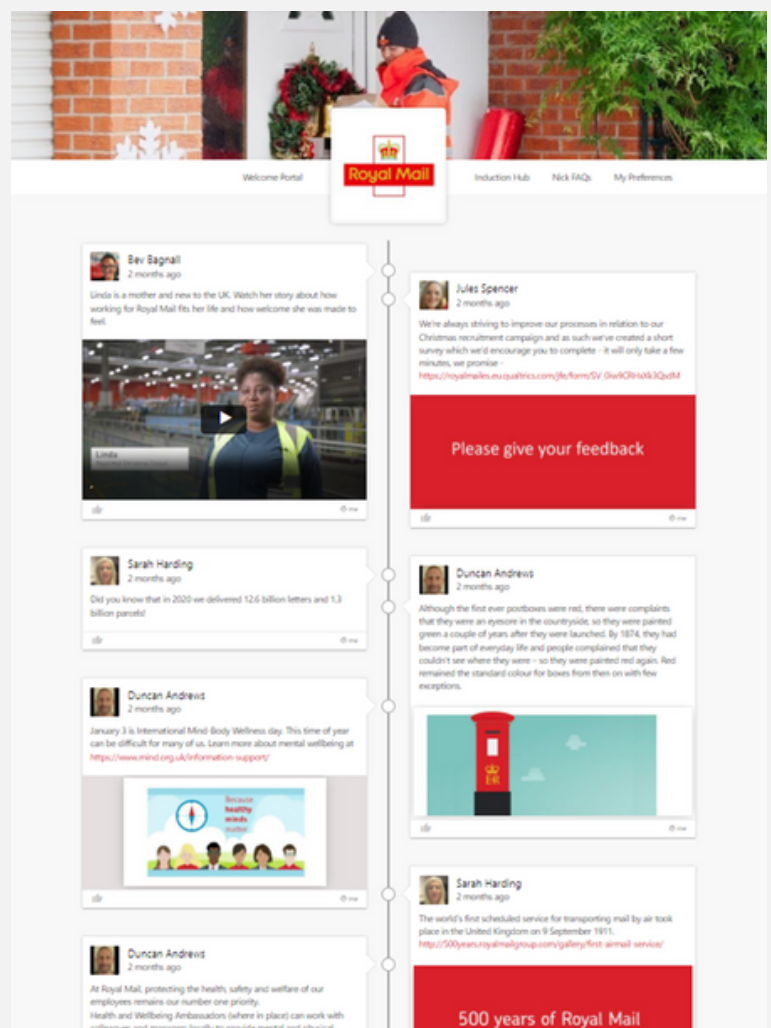
Like me

 Sarah Harding
3 months ago

As you'd expect, the volume of parcels goes up a lot over the run up to the festive season, and typically, you'll spend most of your time processing them. Although, things can change from day to day, so we'll need you to be flexible and we may need you to switch between letters, parcels and other teams around the centre.



Like me



The screenshot shows a user interface for a Royal Mail employee portal. At the top, there's a navigation bar with 'Welcome Portal', the Royal Mail logo, 'Induction Hub', 'Nick FAQs', and 'My Preferences'. Below this is a vertical timeline of content:

- Bev Bagnall** (2 months ago): A video featuring Linda, a mother and new to the UK, with the text: "Linda is a mother and new to the UK. Watch her story about how working for Royal Mail fits her life and how welcome she was made to feel."
- Jules Spencer** (2 months ago): A text post with a red button that says "Please give your feedback".
- Sarah Harding** (2 months ago): A text post: "Did you know that in 2020 we delivered 12.6 billion letters and 1.3 billion parcels?"
- Duncan Andrews** (2 months ago): A text post: "January 3 is International Mind Body Wellness day. This time of year can be difficult for many of us. Learn more about mental wellbeing at <https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/>". Below the text is an illustration of people with a speech bubble saying "Promote healthy minds matter".
- Duncan Andrews** (2 months ago): A text post: "At Royal Mail, protecting the health, safety and welfare of our employees remains our number one priority. Health and Wellbeing Ambassadors (where in place) can work with colleagues and managers to help to create a safe and healthy work environment."
- Duncan Andrews** (2 months ago): A text post: "Although the first ever postboxes were red, there were complaints that they were an eyesore in the countryside, so they were painted green a couple of years after they were launched. By 1874, they had become part of everyday life and people complained that they couldn't see where they were - so they were painted red again. Red remained the standard colour for boxes from then on with few exceptions." Below the text is an illustration of a red postbox.
- Sarah Harding** (2 months ago): A text post: "The world's first scheduled service for transporting mail by air took place in the United Kingdom on 9 September 1911. <https://500years.royalmailgroup.com/gallery/first-airmail-service/>". Below the text is a red button that says "500 years of Royal Mail".

The Results

The Welcome Portal:

- 83% felt more prepared for day one
- 94% registration uptake
- 50% reduction in attrition
- 90% enjoyed their welcome portal content
- x7 average number of visits
- 2mins40sec average time spent engaging

The Chatbots:

- 87,000 chatbot conversations
- 42% of chatbot queries were answered out of hours
- 79% positive smiley face feedback
- 69% reduction in email traffic
- 80% of candidate questions answered by Robin & Nick

Candidate Feedback

“Super, loved it, hope to join next year.”

“The chatbot was excellent.”

“Was a great experience to work at Royal Mail, I will do again if I have the opportunity. Thank you.”

Conclusion

The essence of a great candidate experience is about being responsive, informative and communicative to support a candidate throughout their recruitment journey.

It's about educating on the realities of the role, providing answers to questions when they're needed, and sharing relevant, helpful and fun content to help them feel engaged and connected.

It's about making them feel part of the team before they've joined and making them feel they're valued from the start.

We are extremely proud that this project won the award for Best Recruitment Strategy at the Firm Awards 2022, and is shortlisted for Use of Technology at the RADS 2023. With this project, we were also Finalists for Technology Innovation at the RMAs 2022, Use of Technology at the IHR Awards and Recruitment Technology Experience at the Firm Awards 2022.



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