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## How to Welcome New Employees to the Team

*Actions and words go hand in hand when greeting new hires. Here's how their first day should look like.*

By Laura Calugar

In today's tight labor market, competition for talent in multifamily is intense. Hiring key employees is top of mind for most company leaders, who have been having a hard time filling open positions during the Great Resignation. So [when new employees are finally brought aboard](#), welcoming them and helping them have a smooth transition is more important than ever.

For most multifamily companies, the onboarding process begins long before new employees arrive for their first day at the new job. At **Quarterra Multifamily**—a management, development, construction and investment company formerly known as Lennar Corp. subsidiary LMC—engaging with new associates in advance helps build excitement for the new role, according to Alice Ford, senior HR manager.

“Our recruiting team consistently communicates with new hires in the days and weeks leading up to their start dates, to ensure incoming associates are fully prepared,” she told *Multi-Housing News*. “(It) provides an opportunity to ask questions, connect with our culture and learn more about Quarterra.”

The talent acquisition team at **Birchstone Residential** is also in close contact with new hires before their first day. Nicole Zdeb, company's director of people support services, said that to further assist in a great experience, the HR team provides hiring managers with email prompts with what to prepare in advance of a new hire's first day and how to make sure the new hire's agenda for the first week is valuable, yet not overwhelming.

“New associates are constantly assessing their fit within the organization the same way employers are working to bring this new individual into the fold of the family,” Zdeb said. “It's an exciting and nerve-wracking time for many.”

One way to introduce new employees into the [company's culture](#) is through custom designed onboarding programs. Quarterra has a two- or three-day immersion course that highlights the company's customer service philosophy, teaches sales and marketing skills, but also reviews policies and procedures through games and interactive elements.

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**Standard Communities Chief Strategy Officer Joe Ouellette**

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“During the program, new associates are treated to a nice dinner and introduced to various support staff and supervisors to create networking opportunities for peer-to-peer learning,” Ford said.

Establishing a strong relationship between the new hire and management from the get-go is also important at **Standard Communities**. Managers receive an email for each new hire with some fun facts, an overview of where they came from and their role and responsibilities at Standard.

“As part of the agenda at our quarterly town halls, we engage with all new hires in a ‘Two Truths and a Lie’ quiz,” said Jessica O’Connor, human resources business partner at Standard Communities. “It’s a fun and (hopefully) low-stress way that allows their personalities to come through and [enable their colleagues to get to know them](#) a bit more.”

### **What to give new employees**

Besides company-paid lunches or dinners, swag packs and gift boxes are still a nice way to say “welcome to the team.” To make them feel like they’re officially part of the group, Quatterra greets its new employees with company-branded swag to wear and use, from tote bags, tumblers and flashlights to phone accessories and notepads.

Welcome boxes at Standard also include useful items. Besides water bottles, coffee tumblers and branded pens, new employees also receive company polo shirts and other sporty apparel and backpacks.

Birchstone even encourages company leaders to include personalized gifts in swag boxes.

“We’ve seen Reese’s Peanut Butter Cup ‘flower’ arrangements, welcome balloons or banners, toys, food or pet bed donations to rescue organizations,” Zdeb noted.

In addition, it is not uncommon for Birchstone to send flower arrangements to the spouse of the new associate, just to show appreciation toward those who choose to join the team and their loved ones.

### **Assigning a work buddy or a mentor**

And while candies and gifts are really efficient in overcoming the nervousness that can come with a new job, having a mentor or work buddy assigned from Day 1 can help. Knowing that they’re in good hands and have someone to turn to anytime they have questions, helps new hires find peace of mind.

**Standard Communities** is one of the largest owners of affordable, workforce and mixed-income housing in the country, but one of the company’s longer-term goals is to own more 50,000 units and provide affordable, environmentally sustainable housing to more than 100,000 people by 2030. To do that, Standard is constantly looking for people with diverse backgrounds, experiences and perspectives, that can work together to help transform communities.

“Mentoring is such a valuable tool in those efforts,” Standard Communities Chief Strategy Officer Joe Ouellette told *MHN*. “Standard provides a year-long, structured, yet flexible, learner-centered mentorship program that pairs people based on several factors, including career goals, personal interests and geographic location. We also work to foster connections that allow these kinds of relationships to arise organically, through activities like Lunch and Learns and Affordable Housing 101/201 bootcamps,” he added.

In some Quatterra divisions, new hires are matched with experienced partners in a program that guides and educates rookies through the labyrinth of practices and procedures. “Each Cultural Ambassador establishes regular touch points throughout the year, and is always on-call for their new hire partner, ensuring new associates feel successful and supported in their roles each step of the way,” Ford said.

At Birchstone, having a mentor is seen as a way to [lessen the anxiety](#) often felt when starting a new job. The company’s Learning & Development team will soon launch a new Peer Coaching program that will allow associates to pursue continuous training for their roles and desired career paths. The firm’s high performers will help new hires learn, grow and develop.

### **New employee checklist**

After talking to several multifamily managers about how they typically welcome new team members, we’ve compiled a checklist for onboarding new employees on their first day:

- Welcome the new employees and introduce them to their peers, then offer them a tour of the office
- Introduce new employees to senior leaders to make them feel they’re a valuable addition to the team, all while setting clear expectations and getting very specific about their role
- Make sure the new employees learn from Day 1 about all the benefits and perk your company offers
- Have someone from the IT department explain to them everything they need to know about equipment and system access
- Schedule a team meeting or lunch to make sure everyone connects with the new hire
- Double-check with the HR department and confirm the new associate signed all the necessary documents and onboarding materials
- Don’t forget the little things: smile, be relevant and warm, and show appreciation toward the great people who choose to join your team