
ONBOARDING AND MANAGING NEW HIRES DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

AN APEX RESEARCH SERIES





2020

A YEAR OF CHANGE AND DISTANCING...

Distancing from traditional business practices; learning to better leverage available remote technology tools for employee training, management and compliance; reengineering business processes and how we operate day-to-day - All without a safety net and done in 120 days or less! It's the new norm for payroll service and software bureaus. The way American companies onboard, welcome and acclimate new employees to the business, as well as methods for managing existing workers now largely working from remote locations rather than in the office, have undergone monumental change. Onboarding automation and employee self-service tools are no longer the domain of large businesses or a luxury for well-monied smaller firms. Today, they're must-haves for every small to medium-sized business that aims to succeed. And with lasting health and safety protocols, plus realization of new time, energy and cost efficiencies, you can bet that after the history-making COVID-19 pandemic ends, this will be the new way business does business. There is no going back!

“IF A COMPANY HASN'T BEEN USING ONLINE ONBOARDING OR LEVERAGING OTHER DIGITAL PAYROLL OR TECHNOLOGY THAT LENDS ITSELF TO EFFECTIVELY MANAGING A REMOTE WORKFORCE, THEY WILL NOW. THERE'S NO EXCUSE NOT TO ADOPT THE MOST MODERN TOOLS AND PRACTICES.”

**- WES MUSCHARA
VICE PRESIDENT OF PRODUCT MANAGEMENT**



While there has been a marked economic fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic, many companies - particularly those in service and delivery-based industries - are hiring. Research from "The Manifest", a business news and advice website, shows that 60 percent of US businesses have hired at least one new employee since the beginning of the pandemic and nearly half - 46 percent - have hired 10 or more. Data from the US Bureau of Labor Statistics reveals that as of August, 24 percent of the country's employees were still working from home because of COVID. That figure is down from 35 percent in May, but still reflects a substantial portion of the nation's workforce.

The move toward a largely remote labor pool means increased reliance on technology that assures a seamless experience for both employers and workers. Topping the list for firms still hiring - and representing a prime opportunity for payroll service bureaus - is digital employee onboarding and learning management software. But it's imperative that it be done correctly.

"You only get one chance to make a good first impression," says Wes Muschara, Apex HCM's Vice President of Product Management, noting statistics showing that 64 percent of employees are less likely to continue with a new job if they have an unpleasant onboarding experience. When onboarding is fully online, you do miss the opportunity for making a positive face-to-face connection. That's where the right tools come in.

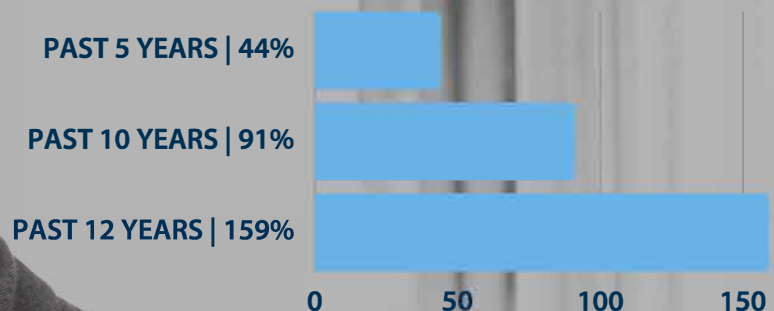
"Great technology bridges that gap," Muschara says. "An effective onboarding platform enables an employer to communicate to new employees information on the company's culture, ideals, expectations - everything that they would normally communicate in-person."

REMOTE 2020 & BEYOND

In early 2020, just before the COVID-19 pandemic hit, 4.7 million people were working remotely in the US full-time, while some 43 percent of the nation's employees were working remotely at least part time, according to research by leading flexible workspace provider, IWG, and Gallup. In fact, remote work has been steadily on the rise for over a decade and undoubtedly is here to stay far post-pandemic. Here's why:

- In a Future of Work survey of company managers, 78 percent of the respondents listed “flexible schedules and telecommuting” as their most effective non-monetary ways to increase employee retention.
- 83 percent of workers in that same global survey reported that the ability to work remotely at least part-time would seal the deal if they were deciding between two similar job offers
- Gallup research found that 54 percent of office workers would leave their current job for one offering more flexibility.
- 85 percent of businesses say that implementing flexible work locations have made their company more productive.
- 77 percent of employees say that working remotely will help their company lower operating costs.

GROWTH IN REMOTE WORK IN THE US





NEW NORMAL = OPPORTUNITY

"Electronic onboarding in this COVID environment is the new normal," says Misty Blakesley, Apex HCM's Director of Sales & Account Management. "More businesses are adopting remote work environments, so it's important that your payroll service bureau is able to support employer clients who are embracing the trend, whether for the first time or boosting existing remote operations."

Make no mistake - The trend represents massive opportunity for savvy payroll service bureaus to meet an increasingly pervasive need and to ensure they not only survive but thrive during a historical upheaval in the way the entire world does business.

"Solutions like Apex HCM's Employee Onboarding, HR On-Demand and Learn are in greater demand down market than they've ever been," Blakesley says. "Until now, smaller employers with 25 or fewer employees typically would opt out of software and services like these, believing they just didn't need them. But the unexpected, sea change shift to remote work means businesses of all sizes must learn how to better communicate electronically with employees in multiple ways - and quickly! There is significantly increased need and growing demand for these types of services even with the smallest employers."

But echoing Muschara, Blakesley also points to that initial impression being a highly consequential moment for an incoming employee.

"Considering the high financial, time and energy cost that goes into finding and attracting new talent, it is imperative that an employee's very first experience with a company is a favorable one."



WHAT'S AT STAKE

According to the Society for Human Resources Management, even in normal (i.e. pre-pandemic) times, an effective and engaging onboarding program has always been a must. It takes an average of eight months for a new employee to become fully productive, yet 22 percent of staff turnover occurs in the first 45 days on the job - a potentially pricey issue, as the cost of losing an employee in the first year can be up to three times that person's salary. SHRM research shows that a well designed and implemented onboarding program assures employers key benefits, including:

- 91%** of first-year workers retained after the 12-month mark
- 69%** higher likelihood they'll stay put for 3+ years
- 60%** year-over-year improvement in revenue
- 63%** year-over-year improvement in customer satisfaction
- \$79,000** average ROI improvement per year

To that end, "Make sure your payroll service bureau partners with a software provider who also offers thorough training - one who doesn't just offer a product, but helps you to understand how to use it, how to position it and how to take advantage of key features such as white labeling, an increasingly popular option that allows your employer clients to enjoy consistent branding when welcoming and managing new and remote workers."



GET ONBOARD

With Apex HCM's proprietary, market-leading employee onboarding platform, your PSB's payroll and human resources clients can welcome new hires and fully manage the collection, signing and processing of employee information online - no matter whether your recruit is across town or across the country. Five top benefits are centered on safety, efficiency, ease of use, quality of personnel and cost savings.

1 **SAFETY:** Remote employee onboarding and management allow for the safety and health of all your employees, recruits, clients and anyone else who normally would frequent your office during the interviewing, hiring and conventional onboarding process. No in-person meetings and no physical exchange of documents eliminate any risk of the spread of COVID or any other seasonal bug.

EFFICIENCY: Remote onboarding involves all documents to be exchanged, completed, processed and stored online. Resumes, applications, offers, contracts and confidential banking, payroll and personal information all are stored in the cloud, making them easier to access both in the short and long term, yet secure. Not to mention, it's also an eco-friendly and cost-efficient solution.

2

3 **EASE OF USE:** Employees onboarded and managed remotely can submit all necessary documentation, plus complete their work from wherever they happen to be. Whether operating from a home office or the corner coffee shop, all processes can be completed faster, easier and more efficiently than. Study after study shows this makes for happier, more productive and more loyal workers.

HIGHER QUALITY EMPLOYEES: Switching to an online, remote system allows employers to seek out and hire workers from anywhere. "Limiting themselves to a particular geography means many employers have been missing out on optimal talent acquisition," Muschara says. "Embracing a remote workforce means you can hire the top talent regardless of location."

4

5 **COST SAVINGS:** Companies embracing remote staffing can save money on everything from paper and office supplies to space-related expenses like rent, utilities and insurance to employee perks like commuter transportation allowances and equipment. A Cisco study shows that 89 percent of businesses allow their employees to BYOD (Bring Your Own Device), saving those companies an estimated \$3,150 per employee per year.



VALUE OF HAPPY

I doubt that any area or industry will remain 100-percent remote once the COVID distancing restrictions come to an end," Muschara says. "But I do believe that going forward, more flexible work policies are here to stay." And with good reason. Research overwhelmingly suggests that the option to work remotely is highly valued among employees, and that translates directly to high value for employers. Here's why:

HIGHER PRODUCTIVITY

Data from the TeleworkResearchNetwork shows that open offices (which is what some 70 percent of US offices are) decrease productivity by 15 percent, translating to losses of some \$600 Billion a year due to workplace distractions. While there is no exact figure as to how much more productive remote workers are, when compared to office workers, one survey revealed remote workers were 77 percent more productive than office workers.

REDUCED ABSENTEEISM

Research also shows that remote workers are 52 percent less likely to take time off work when feeling under the weather; 57 percent of remote workers work through illnesses; and 44 percent work on vacation. Of course, savvy employers take measures to assure workers make self care a priority, taking care of themselves while ill or injured and enjoying the critically important physical and mental break that a vacation affords. Still, remote employees tend to remain mindful of small tasks like answering emails or phone calls or completing urgent tasks that can't wait until they're back at their desks.

DECREASED TURNOVER

A Gallup survey revealed that remote employees are more likely to remain with a company longer in part because working from home saves them an average \$5,000 a year on commuting costs, lunches, workwear, etc. They're also more engaged than their office-dwelling counterparts - 32 percent compared to 28 percent, respectively.

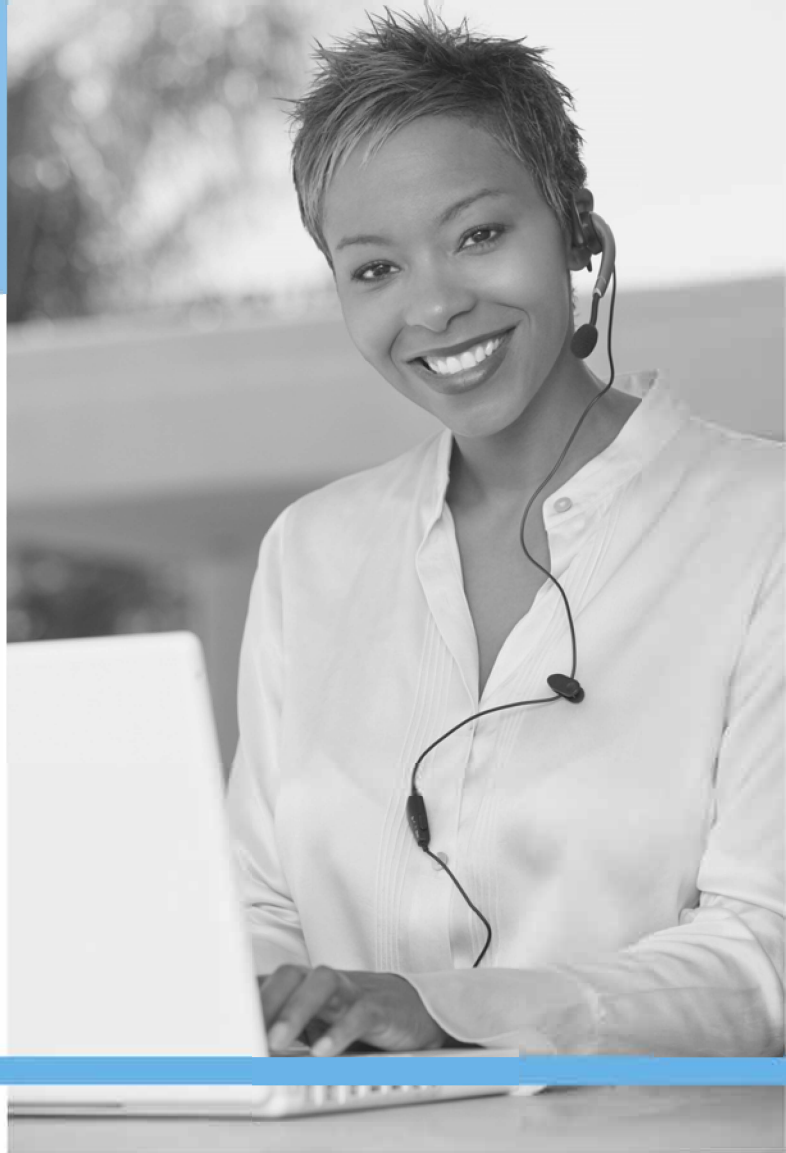
SAFER, HEALTHIER EMPLOYEES

Workplace injuries cost US businesses upward of \$60 billion per year, according to the Liberty Mutual Workplace Safety Index 2017 - Potential costs that don't apply to remote workers. Remote employees also fall ill far less often than do office workers. Further, in a survey of more than 800 employees conducted by Mental Health America and FlexJobs, 48 percent of respondents said their current work-life balance is excellent, compared with just 36 percent of employees without remote work arrangements. These figures are significant, considering the prevalence of stress-borne illnesses and productivity loss.

LET'S LEARN COMPLIANCE

"CONSIDERING TODAY'S ENVIRONMENT, SMALL AND MID-SIZED BUSINESSES ARE LEANING ON TECHNOLOGY EVEN MORE TO MEET COMPLIANCE AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT NEEDS."

**- WES MUSCHARA
VICE PRESIDENT OF PRODUCT MANAGEMENT**



The COVID-19 pandemic has launched a flurry of new legal mandates from local, state and federal levels. Thus, compliance issues are heavy on the minds of many employers, particularly smaller businesses that lack sizable legal departments or high-power attorneys at the ready to advise and, if necessary, defend them.

To help lend peace of mind to payroll service bureaus and their employer clients, Apex HCM partnered with ThinkHR and Mammoth, leading industry experts in HR, compliance and employer insights, to add turn-key compliance training to its product suite.

Dubbed "Learn", this comprehensive learning management system covers a range of issues, both pandemic-prompted and otherwise, from cybersecurity to sexual harassment, and has quickly become an integral part of the onboarding process for employers. It features an exhaustive catalog of more than 300 new and updated courses designed to deliver all state-mandated compliance training via a digital platform, allowing for social distancing requirements and recommendations throughout the pandemic and beyond. Employers and employees can access the platform anytime from anywhere and all courses and certifications can be tracked and managed remotely. PSBs and their clients remain safely in compliance with all industry-specific and state-specific mandates affecting employee rights and issues.

"Learn aids small businesses in not only administering required compliance, training and professional development, but also is a tool for them to track and manage these certifications and courses across their companies," Muschara says.

"Our data shows small and mid-size business employers are increasingly reliant on online employee training," adds Vince Murdica, Chief Revenue Officer of ThinkHR and Mammoth. "With Learn and other critical tools offered in Apex's platform, small businesses can ensure compliance and reduce risk, while driving employee engagement."

MAKING IT WORK

To help assure your PSB clients who are new to remote employee onboarding and management enjoy a seamless transition, Apex HCM offers these tips to deliver:

MAKE NO ASSUMPTIONS

Prior to a new hire's start date, assure that he or she has all necessary equipment and that their tech access is up and running and adequate to handle all online communications necessary to complete their work. Advise on any needed software or browser installations, updates, etc.

WELCOME

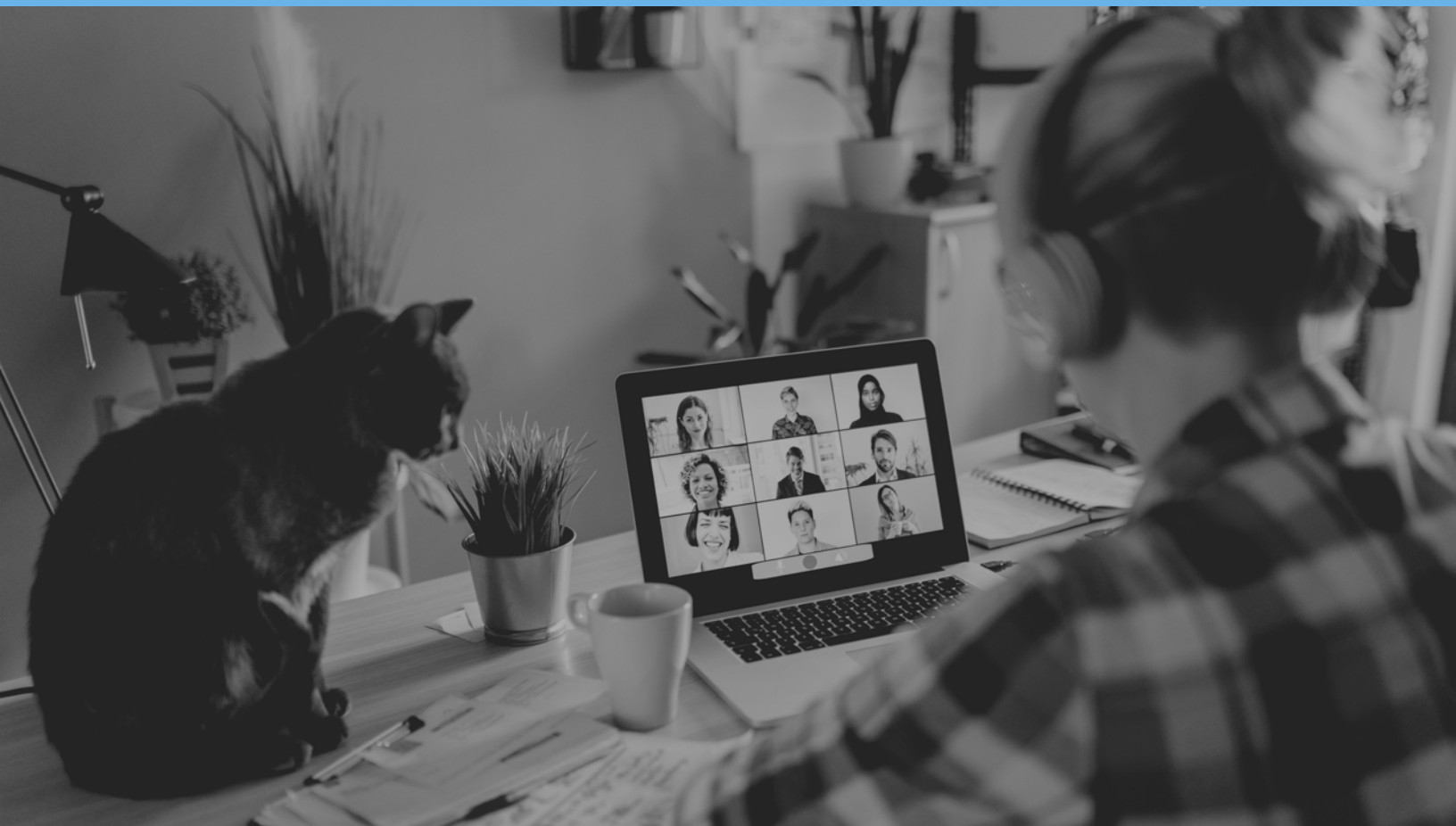
Make sure new hires are properly welcomed. Send information on company culture and invitations for recruits to sign up for newsletters, attend upcoming virtual events, etc. Assign a fellow employee to check in with a new worker and help them learn the ropes, from basic job function how-tos to nuances of working with management to both individual-level expectations and overarching corporate goals.

CHECKINS

Schedule regular checkins, including daily, weekly, monthly, 90-day and annual evaluations. Remember that effective employee onboarding is a comprehensive process that can last up to a year. But the payoff is immeasurable. It shortens the learning curve; increases productivity; facilitates compliance with organizational procedures and goals; improves job performance, satisfaction and retention; and boosts an employer's bottom line.

SUPPORT

Assure your payroll and HR clients that your PSB's staff is readily available to answer questions and provide support throughout any employee onboarding process. And know that we here at Apex HCM stand ready to do the same for your bureau to assure you're able to offer optimal service.





Support

WE'RE WITH YOU

Apex HCM understands that we're all new to this pandemic experience. We're consulting and partnering with fellow experts in the payroll and HR spheres to develop new solutions and update our existing suite of leading-edge products to ensure they're fully compliant and 100-percent relevant to today's ever-evolving employer needs. Here's how we're supporting payroll service bureaus and their employer clients navigate a strange new world:



TRAINING: Customized, one-one-one and group training on our entire suite of payroll and HR solutions is available for both payroll service bureaus and their employer clients. We'll show and your customers how to best implement, position and leverage electronic onboarding tools and features such as white labeling.



LIVE SUPPORT: Apex HCM's online user community affords PSB clients access to our complete library of educational videos and reference material as well as our live customer service team. Material is constantly refreshed to assure up-to-the-minute compliance and relevance.



SALES & MARKETING: Competition for remote employee onboarding and other pandemic-relevant solutions is fierce. We help you stand out with custom collateral, promotional and lead generation tools to help you close sales quickly. We also offer you the ability to provide employer clients branded online access and reports.



CONSULTING: With years of payroll and HR industry experience, Apex HCM's expert staff have seen it all and know how to run a profitable, scalable and quickly adaptable PSB business. Unmatched field knowledge affords us the ability to identify and implement the right solutions in any emergency or unfamiliar situation.



CONTINUING EDUCATION: No matter what's happening in the industry, we're constantly working to improve and adapt our products and services with the newest technologies and according to the latest trends, legislation, etc. We provide ongoing monthly training via online courses and webinars to keep PSBs and employer clients up to date on all products, services and customizable features.

Pandemic-proof your payroll service bureau and its employer clients. Call 877-750-APEX (2739) or email info@apexhcm.com to schedule a demo of our Employee Onboarding or other cloud-based payroll & HR solutions.



Apex HCM provides a state-of-the-art software platform allowing our clients to take full advantage of the benefits of cloud computing technology. We help organizations escape the bindings of traditional software, including the hidden costs of protracted implementations, disaster recovery, data security, software upgrades, and everyday IT needs.

Apex HCM is a market leader in licensing cloud-based payroll, benefits and HR technology. More than 300 payroll service firms nationally use Apex's technology as the core of their business foundation. Our highly customizable and comprehensive suite of products and services include payroll and tax, time and attendance, benefits enrollment, ACA, human resources, mobile apps, reports and analytics, employee onboarding, applicant tracking, and other business management tools normally reserved for large enterprises. Apex HCM's cutting edge cloud-based software allows its customers to effectively compete feature-for-feature with larger established firms while dramatically improving their workforce productivity. For more information, please visit apexhcm.com or call 877-750-APEX (2739).

The background of the right half of the page is a grayscale image. The top portion shows a close-up of a glass globe with a map of the world. The bottom portion shows a close-up of a computer keyboard with several keys (G, F, A, V, C) visible.

ANY QUESTIONS?
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