

# 3

## Dos and don'ts

This third chapter provides **practical guidance** for people who are directly line managing **young adults** with little experience of professional working life.

It draws on interviews with young adults, line managers and a range of **specialists** within the employment industry to summarise the dos and don'ts for the short, medium and long term.

**Share it widely.**

# Do



## Right at the start...

- Remember they may not have had any **experience** in the workplace. You are responsible for **integrating** them into the working environment.
- Make sure they **know** exactly what they're doing, who they're working with and for how long for at least the first 12 months.
- Manage **expectations**. Give clear **timescales** for career progression so they don't expect a quick promotion.
- Get them to co-create and stick to a set of minimum **standards**. These should be clear about the use of mobiles, punctuality and what levels of absenteeism are acceptable.
- Get your colleagues to buy into their **development**. Their support is just as important as yours.
- Assign them a line manager and have regular **1:1 catch ups**. These should be weekly at the beginning, then move to fortnightly and then monthly. Make sure that line managers are reliable and punctual; avoid postponing, cancelling or reducing these catch ups.
- Make sure there is always an open, neutral route to **communication** with someone they can talk to if they are struggling with something.
- Recognise all the implicit **rules** they won't know. Imagine you were going into a gang situation – you wouldn't know who was at the top of the hierarchy.
- Have an open conversation about **mental health** and the company policy so they feel comfortable to speak to their mentor if they are triggered at work.
- Record their clock in and clock out times: **consistency** is key and you need to demonstrate taking an active interest in their **progress**.
- Talk them through their **journey** to work and work backwards so they are clear what time they need to get up and leave the house to get there on time.
- Consider that if they are a parent, they may need extra **support** to cover child care costs and have **flexible** working hours.
- Let them know about food and facilities. It's important for them to know what's **available** and what they have to provide.
- Give them **clarity** about the type of clothing to be worn at work and the appropriate use of mobile phones.
- Tell them about any **procedures** and **support** that can be offered around travel and expenses.
- Make sure you are **understanding** when you are setting tasks. What seems like a straightforward task to you might not be so easy for them. They may not have had the same **experience** or education.

# Do



## A few weeks in...

- Take the time to find out their **personal** situation – do they have a child they need to look after? Are they having family problems? Do they have concerns about their safety? Are they religious? Are they fasting at the time of the work placement?
- Keep them **motivated** with varied and exciting work.
- Keep in touch with their coach or previous training programme to talk to them about how they're getting on and get **advice** on any issues you may have.
- Make sure they have at least 15 minutes with their **mentor** twice a week to talk about what they have learnt and ask any questions.
- Praise for a job well done and show that you **believe** in them.
- Make them feel part of the **team** by making sure they have people to sit with at lunch and inviting them to work **socials**.
- Encourage them to keep a **diary**. It not only consolidates their learning, it also helps them start to write in a **business** language, teaching them that they can't use words like 'lol' or go into detail about unprofessional behaviours or actions.
- Find out what they're really **interested** in. Be forensic and identify their top three **talents** and interests. It's not charity, it's talent spotting.
- Try not to make assumptions about the **behaviours** you see. Instead, try to understand why they behave that way and what you can do to **support** them.

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## Medium term...

- Build their **knowledge** from the ground up. It's better to lay the foundations first, rather than realise too late and ask them to take a backwards step.
- Give them **responsibility** and show that you **trust** them.
- Celebrate **milestones** in their careers with vouchers and lunches.
- Mentor them in an **informal** situation. Why not take them out for pizza? It can help them talk more freely about what's going on in their work and lives.
- **Encourage** them to break with bad influences.
- **Teach** them time management skills for managing their time during work.

# Don't



## Right at the start...

- Assume they know anything. Like **industry jargon**, how to greet senior people, when it's acceptable to make personal calls or that they have basic skills like Maths and English.
  - Forget to ask about **religious/cultural practices** that they may adhere to (holidays, dress code, fasting etc).
  - Presuppose that they can **afford** to get to work. Until they receive their pay cheque, it's a good idea to pay for their travel and lunch. Do they have enough money to buy smart clothes for work?
  - Give too many **glamour** stories. Yes directors drive very nice cars, but they have worked long hours and had a hard slog to get there!
  - Over praise at the beginning. It creates unrealistic **expectations** of what working life is like and sets them up to fail later.
  - Be **judgmental** about their personal lives. Often they will worry about being perceived differently to their colleagues.
  - Don't expect a young person to read policies. Make sure you **talk** them through them.
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## In the first few weeks...

- Create made up roles for them. They need to be in a proper job with **responsibility** and a clear career path.
  - Give them lots of **exams**. Often, they may have had negative experience with tests and education. It's not the best way to build their **confidence** and **motivation**.
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## Medium term...

- Change the team they're working in. Stability and **consistency** is key as many of them have experienced a lot of upheaval or broken promises in their life.
- Let them think they will receive different **treatment** from any other employees.
- Think that they'll be the **finished product** in 6 months time. It takes constant and long term **mentoring**.