

Tool #2: Buddy systems

Supporting your employees from day one

Using a buddy system is a simple and effective way to support new employees as they settle into their roles during their first few weeks or months. A buddy system involves pairing an experienced employee (the "buddy") with a newcomer. The role of a buddy includes answering questions, introducing the new team member to others, and sharing tips on workplace practices to help them settle in. On an ongoing basis, a buddy can be someone who provides support to raise personal or professional issues.

By pairing them with an experienced colleague, you can help them feel welcomed, get trained up, and feel like a part of the team from day one. This approach can boost morale, improve retention, and boost overall productivity.

This system works best for people who are new to the business, particularly for younger workers or those making a career change. A good buddy would be a trusted person that has been in the new person's role before (typically two to five years further in their career).

Buddy system benefits

- Improves your welcoming / onboarding process
- Faster integration into your culture
- Improved learning and development
- Ongoing support and identification of issues
- Increases the likelihood of new hires staying on

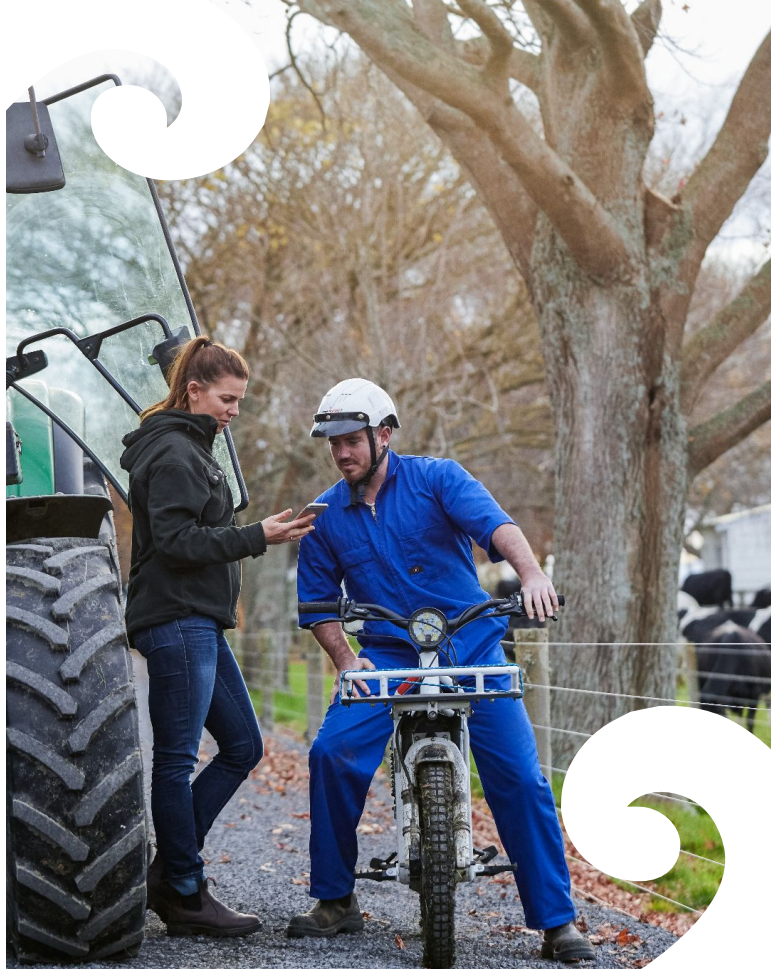
What should I keep in mind when setting up a buddy system?

- **Clarity:** Ensure both the buddy and the new employee understand the purpose and expectations of the buddy system. Have an agreed timeframe for the formal buddy relationship.
- **Compatibility:** Pair buddies who will work well together and have compatible personalities, workstyles and work in the same area.
- **Support:** Provide buddies with the tools and resources they need to be effective mentors.
- **Flexibility:** Be open to feedback and willing to adjust the buddy system as needed.



How can I support buddies to succeed?

Training Materials: Here is a guide you can use outlining how to be an effective buddy.



My role as a buddy

1. To welcome your new workmate and help them settle in as smoothly as possible.
2. To create a memorable and positive experience for your new workmate.
3. To get them up to speed with the basics of getting around as soon as possible.

Principles for buddies

Be approachable and responsive

Make sure your new workmate knows they can come to you with any questions or concerns.

Be inclusive

Make sure to include your new workmate in team activities and events, and help them feel like a part of the team.

Be patient and understanding

Remember that starting a new job can be overwhelming, and be patient with your new workmate as they adjust to their new role.

Encourage and praise

If they've done a good job, say it. Make sure to encourage your new colleague when they do well.

Be a mentor

Share your experience and knowledge, and help your new workmate grow in their role.

Be a friend

Building a positive relationship with your new workmate makes their transition more enjoyable and will be beneficial for both of you.

Buddy system checklist: A list of tasks and topics for buddies to cover with newcomers.

Day one	Week one	Week two – four
<ul style="list-style-type: none">□ Meet new joiner, give them a tour, including toilets, kitchen, lockers.□ Help them navigate any administrative processes.□ Show them where to get tea/coffee/eat lunch.□ Introduce the new joiner to other team members.□ Invite the new joiner to have lunch with you.□ Provide a brief overview of the business culture, values so they know what to expect.□ Share a bit about your personal experiences and insights about working at the business / in the industry.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">□ If possible, coordinate shifts on the same days / times as the new joiner so you can be a familiar face.□ Set up informal check-ins.□ Provide an overview of the new joiner's team: other team members, roles, and responsibilities.□ Have the new joiner shadow you to get the hang of new tasks.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">□ Be available for spur of the moment questions.□ Continue to introduce the new joiner to other team members.□ Provide the new joiner with resources and materials to support their learning and development, such as training manuals or best practice advice.

What's my role in a buddy system as an employer?



Trainer:

Ensure buddies know their role as a buddy and are supported with training materials and a buddy checklist.



Introductions:

On the new employee's first day, introduce them to their buddy. From there, the buddy can give them a tour, introduce them to colleagues, and help them get set up.



Escalation:

Be available for support when issues or questions arise that need to be escalated beyond buddy assistance.



Feedback:

Ask the new joiner and buddy how the system is working and use feedback to improve the process.

What does this look like in real life?



Sam is the newest worker at the dairy farm he has just joined as a milker. He got hired recently to help with the busy season – the team is currently in the midst of calving. Clocking long days and early starts in the midst of winter is starting to take a toll on Sam, throwing off his normal positive attitude.

The challenge

Working on a dairy farm can be tough and often lonely work. Early morning shifts mean that he doesn't get to see his friends often in the evenings, as he has to go to bed early.

Sam is **learning how to do new tasks**, and learning how to manage his time efficiently.

When Sam joined, **most of the team was very busy** and feeling stressed – which was not very approachable.

Buddy support response

The buddy system means **Sam has a mate to share the load with** and someone who looks out for him on the job. His buddy shares tips for shift work.

At the end of the day, **Sam and his buddy have a regular check-in.** They talk about what they accomplished, plan for the next day, and make sure neither of them is feeling overwhelmed. If one of them is, they discuss ways to adjust the workload, prioritise jobs, or find additional support.

The owner of the farm temporarily decreased the workload for Sam's buddy so that he had enough time to support Sam. Having a go-to person to ask questions was helpful, and Sam didn't feel like a bother asking questions because his buddy made it clear that he had time, and was there to help Sam get settled into his daily tasks. He could shadow his buddy to learn how to do tasks.