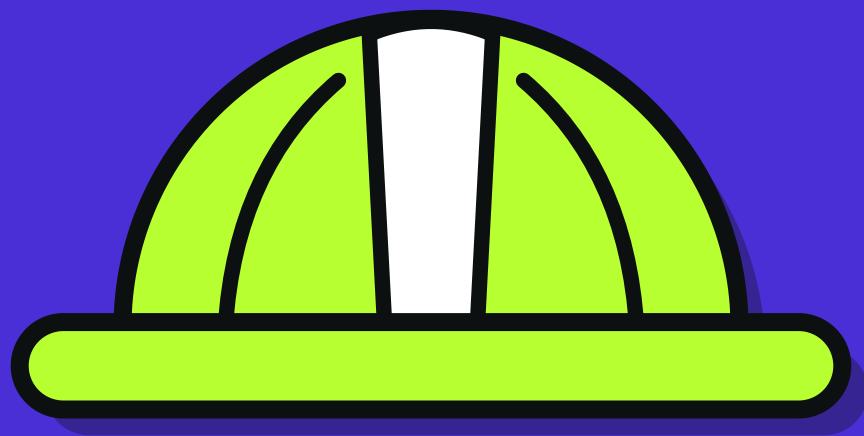


HIRE PEOPLE WHO SHOW UP



J O N S M I T H

THE SMALL SERVICE BUSINESS GUIDE TO **FINDING, HIRING, AND**
KEEPING GOOD PEOPLE



REVOPSFLOW

REVOPSFLOW.COM

The Tech Who Didn't Come Back After *Lunch*

The truck is sitting in the driveway. The customer is looking through the blinds. Your new tech went to lunch and never came back.

You call. Voicemail.

You call again. Same thing.

Now you're pulling your lead off another job, apologizing to a customer, and wondering whether the tools in that truck are all still there. Yesterday you thought you'd solved your staffing problem. Today you're holding a sandwich you won't get to eat.

That's an illustrative composite, like the other owner stories in this book. But the feeling needs no explanation if you've hired under pressure.

You needed somebody. Somebody said yes. You treated that yes like a solution.

Then the real interview happened on the job.

Hiring trouble reaches beyond an empty seat. Your dependable people cover the gap. Training gets rushed. The office promises arrival times the crew can't meet. You spend your evening searching applications when you should be home.

And the next morning, you tell yourself you'll take anyone with a pulse and a driver's license.

That's an expensive job description.

Labor is a real problem. In September 2026, 26% of small business owners named labor quality or availability their single most important problem (NFIB Small Business Economic Trends, September 2026). You aren't imagining the squeeze.

■ THE HIRING SQUEEZE, IN THE NUMBERS

26% of owners named labor quality or availability their single most important problem NFIB, September 2026	45% of owners reported few or no qualified applicants for open positions NFIB, September 2026	23% of home service pros say labor shortages limit growth Jobber 2026 Home Service Trends Report
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But a hard hiring market doesn't explain every bad hire. Sometimes the ad hides the pay. Sometimes the interview rewards a good talker. Sometimes a capable person arrives to find nobody expected them.

You control those things.

Picture a different morning. Your applicant already knows the schedule, pay range, and tool policy. Your interview notes show evidence of safe work and follow-through. The reference call happened before the offer. The new person knows who to meet, where to park, and what happens next.

Your lead has a training plan. Your office has the paperwork ready. You have a date on the calendar to discuss progress before frustration grows teeth.

That doesn't make people predictable. It gives you a repeatable way to make better decisions.

This book follows the hire from the moment somebody hears your name to the moment they decide whether to build a future with you.

In *Your Company Is the Ad*, you'll give applicants something real to inspect: a useful careers page, actual crew photos, honest employee reviews, and social posts that show the work.

In *Job Posts That Pull*, you'll put the terms on the table. Pay. Schedule. Truck. Tools. Growth. Then you'll put that post where suitable people can find it.

In *Interview in 30 Minutes*, you'll use the same questions, a simple scorecard, a supervised ride-along test, and a reference call. The goal is evidence you can compare.

In *The First 30 Days*, you'll prepare the paperwork, assign a buddy, and use scheduled check-ins to catch trouble early.

In *Keep Them*, you'll make pay progression visible, recognize useful behavior, and hold monthly conversations that lead to action.

Our team audits profiles, rebuilds sites, and listens to call recordings for home service businesses every week.

What you promise publicly and what people experience privately need to match. That applies to customers. It applies to employees, too.

You don't need a corporate recruiting department. You need clear terms, a fair decision process, and a first month that feels planned.

Commit to building those pieces before you publish another desperate ad. Use a real opening as you read. Write the role at the top of a page. Keep the same role through every chapter so you finish with a usable hiring process.

Your next hire deserves a clear picture of the job. Your current crew deserves a teammate you chose carefully. You deserve to stop rebuilding the same empty seat.

01

■ CHAPTER 1

Your Company Is the *Ad*

A plumbing owner outside Atlanta needed a service tech. His job post described a professional company with organized dispatch and room to grow.

An applicant searched the business before calling. The website had an old stock photo. The social page showed coupons and nothing else. There was no careers page, no crew, and no clue what a workday looked like.

The owner thought his reputation would carry the ad. The applicant couldn't see that reputation from the employee side.

Meanwhile, his current crew liked working there. They had a dispatcher who answered, equipment that got fixed, and an owner who backed them when a customer became unreasonable.

None of that appeared anywhere an applicant could find it.

The company had useful things to say. It had spent all its effort saying it was hiring.

THE LESSON

Show applicants what working for you actually looks like before asking them to apply.

Why owners get it wrong

You know your shop. An applicant doesn't. They may be deciding whether to leave a job that already pays the bills. A vague promise asks them to gamble with their paycheck.

Start by asking your crew what they would want to know before accepting this job again. Listen without defending every complaint. Their answers tell you what belongs on the page and what needs fixing inside the shop.

RULE

Prove the promise with something an applicant can inspect. A real schedule beats “great work environment.”

Build the proof

1 Publish a useful careers page.

In your website editor, open Pages, add a page called Careers, and put it in the main navigation or footer. Include location, service area, current openings, pay range, schedule, truck/tools policy, training, and application instructions. State who reviews applications. Our rule: have a useful draft live this week.

2 Replace stock photos with your team.

Ask employees for permission, then photograph the morning setup, organized equipment, and a supervised training moment. Add plain captions explaining the work. Remove customer details, addresses, and visible paperwork. Show required protective equipment and safe practices. Use current photos that represent the job being offered.

1 Invite honest employee reviews.

Tell the whole crew they may share their experience on an employment review platform. Keep participation voluntary. Offer no reward, suggested rating, or required wording. Ask permission before publishing a separate employee quote on your site. Read criticism for operational problems you can fix.

2 Show the company on social media.

Publish a real workday post, a training post, and an opening linked to Careers. Treat this as our starter plan, then maintain a manageable rhythm. Explain who does the work and how you support them. Give an office employee responsibility for checking applicant comments and routing questions by phone or email.

Write what people came to learn

A careers page should let a person decide whether the job fits before they send a resume. Lead with the role and terms. Put the company history farther down. Your grandfather's first truck can wait.

Explain your service area in ordinary place names. State whether employees report to the shop or travel directly to jobs. Describe the actual start time, how dispatch handles the end of the day, and any rotating coverage. If those details vary by role, put them under each opening.

Don't advertise a benefit you haven't implemented. “Paid training” should mean scheduled instruction with a responsible trainer. “Room to grow” should point to a role and skills, not a feeling.

Use this copy skeleton. Replace every placeholder with an answer your crew would recognize.

CAREERS PAGE COPY SKELETON

CHECKLIST

- ☐ Role: {job title}, serving {towns or service area}.
- ☐ Pay: {honest range and pay basis}; placement depends on {job skills}.
- ☐ Schedule: {days and hours}; {overtime and on-call expectations}.
- ☐ Equipment: we provide {truck/tools}; you provide {specific items}.
- ☐ Training: {trainer or buddy} teaches {skills} during {scheduled time}.
- ☐ Next role: {role}, earned by demonstrating {abilities}.
- ☐ Apply: email {address} or call {number}; expect {next step}.

OWNER MISTAKE

A polished page cannot rescue a broken promise. Fix the recurring schedule surprise before advertising predictable hours.

Make photos and reviews useful

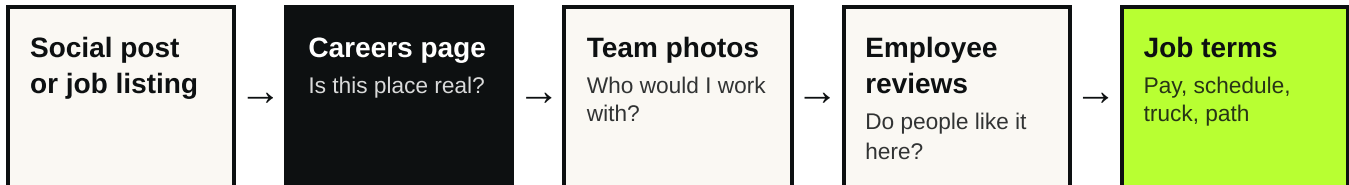
For employee reviews, don't hover over shoulders or collect screenshots as proof of participation. An invitation becomes pressure when the boss starts keeping score. You want independent descriptions of the workplace.

If a review points to an actual problem, handle the work behind it. A public reply can acknowledge the concern without discussing someone's personnel history. Don't turn the comments into an argument with a former employee.

Social posts should continue the same picture. Show a trainer explaining a task, a crew preparing for a job, or a team member describing a skill they learned. Get permission before sharing their words. Keep customers and private property out unless you have appropriate permission.

BEFORE A stock photo, a “We're hiring!” banner, and no explanation of the job.	AFTER A careers page with terms, real crew photos, voluntary employee feedback, and recent posts showing the work.
WHAT AN APPLICANT SEES	

■ WHAT AN APPLICANT CHECKS BEFORE APPLYING



Test it like an applicant

Open the page on your phone. Ask someone outside the company to find an opening and explain how to apply. Watch without coaching. If they have to hunt for the email address, fix the page.

Send a test application yourself. Check that it reaches the person named on the page and that the reply explains what happens next. A beautiful application form that nobody checks is a decorative trash can.

QUICK WIN

Put a phone number or application email beside each opening. Make the next move obvious.

Your next employee is checking your company before you check their resume.

Back at the shop

In the plumbing composite, the owner replaced the stock image, published actual job terms, and showed training with permission from the crew. Applicants could now ask informed questions about the work. His dispatcher stopped explaining the entire company from scratch on every hiring call.

✓ DO THIS TODAY

CHECK IT OFF

- ☐ Ask current employees what applicants should know.
- ☐ Publish or revise your Careers page.
- ☐ Add real team photos with permission and useful captions.
- ☐ Invite voluntary, honest employee reviews without incentives.
- ☐ Publish a social post that shows work or training.
- ☐ Test the application route on your phone.

02

CHAPTER 2

Job Posts That *Pull*

An HVAC owner outside Phoenix kept renewing the same job post. It asked for experience, a strong work ethic, and somebody who could handle pressure.

Pay depended on experience. Hours were flexible. Benefits were competitive. The owner thought that left room for a conversation.

Applicants saw homework.

One candidate called to ask about the schedule. The office didn't know whether the opening included weekend coverage. Another asked whether the company supplied major tools. The answer depended on who picked up.

The owner blamed the job board. His dispatcher pointed out that she couldn't explain the opening either.

So they sat down with the service manager and wrote the actual terms. The conversation exposed a problem before another applicant had to discover it: the owner and manager were advertising different jobs.

They settled the job first. Then they rewrote the post.

THE LESSON

A useful job post answers the questions a qualified person asks before applying.

HARDEST ROLES TO FILL IN HOME SERVICE



Source: Jobber 2026 Home Service Trends Report

Why owners get it wrong

Owners sell the opportunity and hide the hard parts. State the attic work, outdoor conditions, customer contact, driving, or on-call rotation that actually belongs to the role. Pair each expectation

with the support you provide.

RULE

Put the pay range where applicants can see it. Explain what earns placement within it.

Build and distribute the post

1 Write the job terms first.

In a shared document, enter pay range and pay basis, normal schedule, overtime/on-call expectations, reporting location, truck/tools, benefits actually offered, and growth path. Explain base pay separately from any incentive. Ask your accountant or HR pro to check applicable posting requirements before publication.

2 Write a plain title and short post.

Use the trade, role, and location. Lead with pay and schedule. Follow with the work, required qualifications, what you teach, equipment, next role, and application route. Add your Careers page address wherever the platform allows it. Our rule: allow 30 minutes to draft after agreeing on the terms.

The equipment line deserves more than “tools provided.” Say whether a truck stays at the shop or goes home, who buys consumables, and what personal tools the employee must supply. If driving depends on approval under your policy, say so. Don't imply a take-home truck is automatic.

Subject: {trade role} in {location} | {pay range} | {schedule}

Example: Service technician in {city}. Base pay \$26 to \$34 per hour, based on demonstrated diagnostic and repair skills.

Schedule: {days, start time, usual finish, overtime and on-call details}.

Work: {main duties and service area}. Required: {job-related qualifications}. We teach: {trainable skills}.

We supply: {truck arrangement, major tools, equipment}. You supply: {specific personal tools}.

Benefits: {actual benefits and eligibility}. Growth: {next role}, with skills reviewed against a written checklist.

Apply by email to {address} with {simple requested information}, or call {number}. {hiring contact} will explain the interview process. Company details: {Careers page address}.

1 Post where this role belongs.

Publish on Indeed. Email local trade schools and community college programs about their placement process. Ask supply houses whether they accept hiring flyers. Explore [Apprenticeship.gov](https://www.apprenticeship.gov) for apprenticeship resources and connections. Use the same terms everywhere; record each posting and contact in your hiring sheet.

2 Launch a clear referral bonus.

Give employees the same post and a written bonus policy. State the eligible role, bonus amount, qualifying conditions, payout milestone, and who records the referral. Treat all amounts and milestones as your policy choices. Put referred applicants through the same screening process as everyone else.

Give each channel an owner

Posting is the start. Somebody needs to check replies, answer questions, and offer interview times. Put a name beside each channel in your hiring sheet. Add columns for candidate, source, last contact, next action, and decision.

At schools, ask for the placement coordinator or instructor who works with employers. Describe the actual entry requirements and training available. A beginner opening should include supervision. Don't ask a program to send graduates to a job that secretly requires years of independent work.

With Apprenticeship.gov, distinguish exploring a training pathway from claiming you operate a registered apprenticeship. Use the official resources to understand the route and contact the appropriate program people before making that claim.

At the supply house, ask permission before putting up a flyer. Make it readable at a glance: role, pay range, schedule, and application contact. Tell the counter staff where to send questions. Don't leave them to invent the pitch.

SCHOOL OR PROGRAM OUTREACH

SCRIPT

YOU We hire {role} in {service area}. The pay range is {range}, and the schedule is {schedule}.

YOU We can train {skills} with {supervisor}. Applicants need {required qualifications} before starting.

YOU Who handles employer partnerships or graduate placement? May I send our job description and discuss whether it fits your students?

Confirm the program's process. Record the contact and agreed next action.

OWNER MISTAKE

A referral is an introduction, not a hiring decision. Friendship doesn't replace the scorecard.

Make the referral offer easy to understand

Use a policy you can afford and administer. Decide how existing applicants, multiple referrers, and managers involved in hiring will be handled. Have payroll review how the bonus will be paid. Keep the conditions visible before anybody makes a referral.

Our rule: review source quality weekly while the role is open. Count applicants who meet your stated requirements and move through the process. A crowded inbox can hide a post that's attracting the wrong role.

BEFORE “Competitive pay. Flexible hours. Must be a rock star.”	AFTER An honest pay range, actual schedule, specific equipment policy, required skills, training, and a visible next role.
THE JOB POST	

■ MANY SOURCES, ONE PROCESS

Indeed Trade schools + Apprenticeship Supply houses Employee
 community connections referrals
 college programs

↓ all into



QUICK WIN

Keep one master job description. Update every active posting when the terms change.

If applicants have to guess what the job pays, you've made applying another unpaid job.

Back at the shop

In the HVAC composite, the dispatcher could finally explain the opening without chasing the owner. Applicants heard the same schedule from the ad, the office, and the manager. Some decided it wasn't for them. That saved a conversation nobody needed.

✓ DO THIS TODAY

CHECK IT OFF

- ☐ Get the supervisor's approval on the actual job terms.
- ☐ Publish an honest pay range and schedule.
- ☐ Specify truck, tools, and the next role.
- ☐ Put the revised post on Indeed.
- ☐ Contact local trade schools and community college programs.
- ☐ Check apprenticeship resources and supply-house posting options.
- ☐ Publish your referral policy and assign applicant follow-up.

Want us to run this for you? See the last page.

03

■ CHAPTER 3

Interview in 30 *Minutes*

A roofing owner in Texas liked an applicant immediately. The man knew the trade language, laughed at the right moments, and said he could start right away.

The owner needed somebody right away. Funny how convincing that can sound.

They talked about past employers and difficult customers. They never walked through an actual job mistake. The owner didn't ask what happened when the applicant ran late or encountered an unsafe setup.

After the hire, the crew lead found missing details in job notes and had to repeat safety instructions. The owner said the applicant had interviewed well.

The lead asked what the interview had tested.

That question stuck. The owner had tested conversation. He needed to test judgment, follow-through, and whether the person could learn the work. Those required a different interview and evidence outside the office chair.

THE LESSON

Use the same job-related questions and observable standards so a good conversation cannot stand in for proof.

Why owners get it wrong

Improvised questions produce answers you cannot compare. Write your must-haves before interviewing. Use the requirements from the job post. An apprentice and an experienced service tech should not face the same technical bar. Both should demonstrate safe judgment, honest communication, and a willingness to ask for help.

Our rule: the interview lasts 30 minutes. That limit covers the conversation, not the separate ride-along or reference calls. Put all parts of the process in the invitation so nobody mistakes a chat for a final offer.

RULE

Score evidence immediately after each answer. Write what the applicant did, not whether they seemed like your kind of person.

Run the decision process

1 Prepare the five-question scorecard.

Copy the questions below into one page per applicant. Write your scoring anchors and required skills before interviews begin. Our rule: reserve 5 minutes for the job terms, 15 for the questions, 5 for applicant questions, and 5 for scoring and next steps. Score briefly after answers; use the final minutes to total scores and explain next steps.

2 Ask for specific examples.

Ask each candidate the same questions in the same order. Follow with “What did you do?” and “What happened next?” Keep questions tied to the role. Explain the real schedule and essential duties. Record unanswered questions as unknowns that require follow-up rather than filling the gaps with a good impression.

FIVE-QUESTION INTERVIEW SCORECARD

AREA	ASK THIS QUESTION	LISTEN FOR
Reliability	Tell me about a time you couldn't meet a work commitment. What did you do?	Early notice, ownership, recovery
Safety	Describe a task you stopped because it seemed unsafe. What happened next?	Stop, assess, involve supervisor
Skill	Walk me through a recent task like this role's main work.	Ordered steps, checks, honest limits
Service	Tell me about an upset customer or teammate. How did you handle it?	Listening, clear communication, follow-through
Coachability	What correction changed how you work?	Specific feedback, changed behavior

Make the scores mean something

Our scoring rule: give each answer 0, 1, or 2 points. Zero means no usable evidence or an answer that contradicts the standard. One means partial evidence that needs verification or training. Two means a specific example that meets the standard. The total is out of 10.

For a new entrant, accept relevant examples from school, volunteer work, or another job. Don't demand trade experience for a role you advertised as trainable. Ask a practical scenario if they lack an example, and label the answer as hypothetical.

Our decision rule: 8 points earns consideration for the next stage, not an automatic offer. An unresolved safety concern or missing required qualification stops advancement until resolved. The ride-along and references still matter. Don't raise someone's score because you need them Monday.

OWNER MISTAKE

“Culture fit” is too vague to score. Describe observable work behavior and apply the same standard to every candidate.

1 Arrange a supervised ride-along test.

Give a written plan covering duration, compensation, tasks, supervisor, safety limits, and evaluation criteria. Before scheduling, confirm lawful pay arrangements and appropriate insurance with your HR/payroll and insurance advisers. Get customer permission where needed. Use a controlled demonstration when a field visit is unsuitable. Never assign unsupervised or unqualified hazardous work.

2 Call references before deciding.

With the candidate's permission, contact former supervisors who observed relevant work. Ask the same core questions below. Record their relationship, dates, examples, and any limits on what they can discuss. Do not contact a current employer without express permission. If an employer only verifies dates, mark other evidence unknown.

Test work you can actually judge

Our suggested ride-along format is a paid 2-hour supervised assessment, subject to your advisers' confirmation. Explain that format before the candidate commits. If you need a different arrangement, agree on it first.

Use the same observation sheet for candidates in the same role. Mark each behavior met, needs coaching, or not demonstrated. Choose a repeatable task suitable for the role. A helper might identify materials and explain how they would prepare a work area. An experienced tech might explain a diagnostic sequence using a controlled setup. Don't create a surprise obstacle course.

RIDE-ALONG OBSERVATION SHEET

CHECKLIST

- ☐ Arrives as agreed, or communicates a delay promptly.
- ☐ Follows safety instructions and stays within assigned limits.
- ☐ Asks when uncertain instead of guessing.
- ☐ Handles tools and property carefully.
- ☐ Explains the assigned task in a sensible order.
- ☐ Accepts a correction and applies it.
- ☐ Communicates respectfully with the team and customer.

REFERENCE CALL

SCRIPT

YOU {candidate} gave permission for this call about our {role}. Did you supervise their work, and during what period?

YOU What work could they handle independently?

YOU How did they handle attendance commitments or unexpected delays? Can you give an example?

YOU How did they respond to safety instructions and corrective feedback?

YOU What support would help them succeed in this role?

YOU Would you hire them again for similar work? What informs that answer?

Stay job-related. Record evidence, not gossip. Respect a reference's limits.

BEFORE

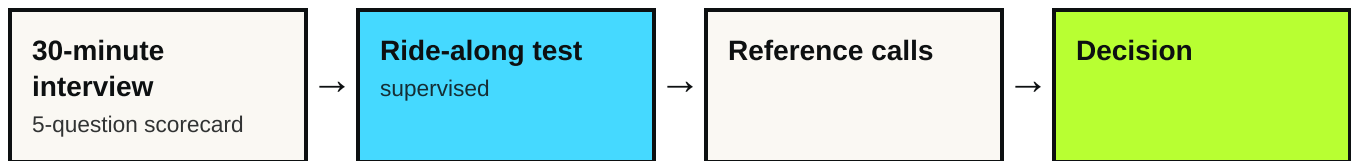
"Great personality. Available immediately. Let's try it."

AFTER

Comparable interview notes, observed work behavior, reference evidence, and a documented decision against the role's requirements.

THE HIRING DECISION

EVIDENCE GATES



↓ unresolved job-related concern at any gate

Clarify it, or decline
never auto-advance

QUICK WIN

Write the decision while the evidence is fresh. Keep the reason tied to the published role.

A good interview gives you evidence you can check after the handshake.

Back at the shop

In the roofing composite, the owner stopped using easy conversation as his main filter. The crew lead helped define the practical task and recorded what applicants actually did. They could discuss trainable gaps separately from unsafe choices.

✓ DO THIS TODAY

CHECK IT OFF

- ☐ Copy the five questions into a reusable scorecard.
- ☐ Set scoring anchors and role requirements before interviewing.
- ☐ Book a 30-minute conversation with a clear agenda.
- ☐ Prepare the supervised assessment and confirm pay and coverage.
- ☐ Obtain permission and make reference calls.
- ☐ Record the decision and the evidence supporting it.

Want us to run this for you? See the last page.

04

■ CHAPTER 4

The First 30 *Days*

A cleaning company owner in North Carolina hired someone who seemed ready to work. The candidate asked sensible questions, supplied references, and accepted the schedule.

On the first morning, nobody had told the crew lead she was coming.

Her shirt wasn't ready. Her login didn't work. The owner was handling a customer complaint, so someone pointed toward a van and told her to follow the others.

By lunch she had heard conflicting instructions about supplies, breaks, and who approved extra work. She didn't know whether to ask the lead, the office, or the owner. Each looked busy.

The owner later described the hire as hesitant. The employee described the workplace as confusing.

Both were reacting to the same morning.

The hiring process had promised organization. The first day delivered guesswork. The owner realized she'd prepared an offer without preparing a place for the person who accepted it.

THE LESSON

A new hire needs a prepared first month, a named teacher, and clear checkpoints.

Why owners get it wrong

Familiar routines are invisible to newcomers. The fix starts before arrival. Put onboarding work on the schedule. Give somebody responsibility for each item. A checklist without an owner becomes office wallpaper.

RULE

The first day should feel expected. Have the person, place, equipment, and plan ready before arrival.

Prepare the month

1

Build the onboarding checklist.

Create columns for task, owner, due date, and completion. Cover employment paperwork, payroll, policies, equipment, access, safety, and training. Confirm current forms, deadlines, and state requirements with your accountant or HR pro. Send arrival details by email before the start date. Our rule: review readiness with the supervisor before the employee arrives.

Use official starting points for paperwork: [USCIS Form I-9](#), [IRS Form W-4](#), and [state new-hire reporting information](#). Use the current instructions. Check with an accountant or HR pro for your state about required timing, state forms, reporting, and record storage.

Form W-4 supports federal income tax withholding (IRS, [About Form W-4](#)). Have payroll handle questions about processing it. Keep sensitive information in your approved secure personnel process, separate from the crew's training sheet.

ONBOARDING MASTER CHECKLIST

CHECKLIST

- ☐ Confirm written role, pay, schedule, supervisor, and start details.
- ☐ Assign Form I-9 completion and verification under current USCIS instructions.
- ☐ Arrange Form W-4 and any applicable state withholding forms.
- ☐ Assign state new-hire reporting and verify submission requirements.
- ☐ Set up payroll, timekeeping, and the pay schedule.
- ☐ Explain attendance, leave, safety, reporting concerns, and emergency procedures.
- ☐ Prepare required protective equipment, uniform, tools, and access.
- ☐ Assign the buddy, training tasks, and check-in appointments.
- ☐ Record completion securely; restrict access to sensitive records.

Subject: Your first day at {company}

Hi {first name},

We're expecting you on {date} at {time}. Come to {location}; park at {parking instructions} and ask for {supervisor}.

Your buddy is {name}. You'll begin with orientation, equipment, and supervised training. Your schedule is {schedule}; your pay terms are in {offer document}.

Bring {items specified in our onboarding instructions}. Use {secure process} for paperwork. Call {contact and number} if you have questions or an arrival problem.

We'll explain timekeeping, breaks, safety, and who handles schedule questions before you join the work.

{sender}

1**Assign a buddy with time to teach.**

Choose a patient employee who follows your standards. Explain the training tasks and reduce other demands enough to make teaching possible. The buddy demonstrates, watches the new hire repeat the task, and records what still needs coaching. Name a backup for days the buddy is unavailable.

2**Book day 7, 14, and 30 check-ins.**

Our rule: hold a private 15-minute review at each checkpoint, with nearby working-day adjustments agreed in advance. Invite both employee and supervisor. Compare expectations with observed work, ask what support is missing, and write the next action, owner, and review date. Address urgent safety or payroll issues immediately.

Give the buddy a real job

The buddy isn't a substitute for the supervisor. The supervisor owns performance decisions, pay discussions, and unresolved concerns. Tell the new hire which questions belong to which person. "Ask your buddy" should never become a way for management to disappear.

Start with work the employee can attempt safely under the right supervision. Demonstrate the task, explain why it matters, and ask the employee to show it back. Mark demonstrated skills on the training sheet. Confidence alone doesn't authorize independent work.

OWNER MISTAKE

Your fastest worker may be your worst teacher. Choose someone who explains the standard and has time to watch practice.

Make the checkpoints specific

At day 7, ask whether the real job matches the offer. Check access, supplies, timekeeping, and who answers questions. Have the employee describe the stop-and-ask process for unfamiliar work. Fix basic friction now.

At day 14, review the actual training sheet. Which tasks have been demonstrated? Which still require supervision? Ask the buddy for examples. Agree on a training priority and give it a place in the schedule.

At day 30, compare progress against the role's written expectations. Discuss safe independence, customer communication, teamwork, and the next training block. Explain the pay ladder without promising a raise for simply reaching a date.

CHECK-IN CONVERSATION

SCRIPT

- YOU** What's clearer now, and what still feels confusing?
- YOU** Does the schedule, equipment, and support match what we discussed before you started?
- YOU** Show me a task you're ready to handle and one where you still need help.
- YOU** Here's what we've observed: {specific example}. Our next training priority is {task}.
- YOU** {owner} will provide {support} by {date}. We'll review it at {appointment}.

Let the employee correct misunderstandings. Record the agreed action.

BEFORE

Unfinished setup, changing instructions, and "ride with whoever is free."

AFTER

Assigned paperwork, ready equipment, a named buddy, observed practice, and scheduled day 7, 14, and 30 conversations.

THE FIRST MONTH

THE FIRST 30 DAYS

BEFORE DAY 1	WEEK 1	DAY 7	DAY 14	DAY 30
Prep Paperwork, gear, truck, buddy assigned	Orientation Buddy-led practice, safety, tools	Check-in What's confusing? Fix the plan	Check-in Skills seen, gaps named	Check-in Clear next step on the ladder

After every check-in: one action goes back into the training plan.

QUICK WIN

Book the check-ins before the start date. Put the supervisor's name and purpose in each invitation.

A new hire should spend the first week learning the job, not decoding the company.

Back at the shop

In the cleaning composite, the owner gave onboarding to a named coordinator and assigned a buddy with training time. The employee could identify who handled questions and practice before taking on more work.

The owner stopped calling confusion a personality problem. When a gap appeared, they could trace it to an instruction, a resource, or a skill that needed work.

✓ DO THIS TODAY	CHECK IT OFF
☐ Assign onboarding tasks to named owners with due dates.	
☐ Confirm I-9, W-4, and state reporting with your accountant or HR pro.	
☐ Prepare equipment, access, and the arrival email.	
☐ Name a buddy and backup with time to teach.	
☐ Write the initial supervised training tasks.	
☐ Book day 7, 14, and 30 check-ins.	
☐ Separate sensitive records from shared training notes.	

Want us to run this for you? See the last page.

05

■ CHAPTER 5

Keep *Them*

A pest control owner in Florida thought his dependable technician was happy. The tech handled difficult routes, helped new employees, and rarely complained.

Then he gave notice.

The owner offered more money immediately. The tech asked why the conversation had waited until he was leaving.

That question landed harder than the notice.

For months, the tech had asked what it took to become a lead. The answers were friendly and vague. Keep doing what you're doing. We'll talk when things settle down. You're valuable here.

Meanwhile, helping new hires had become part of his job without a clear title, training plan, or pay discussion. The owner saw a reliable person who needed little attention. The employee saw more responsibility with no visible next step.

The counteroffer couldn't answer all of that. The owner needed a way to discuss growth before somebody arrived with a resignation.

THE LESSON

Give good people clear ways to progress and regular proof that you notice their work.

Why owners get it wrong

Dependable people get more responsibility and less attention. Pay matters. So do workable schedules, maintained equipment, respectful supervision, and the ability to raise a concern without becoming the problem.

A pay ladder won't fix a supervisor who humiliates people. Recognition won't replace a promised raise. Monthly meetings won't help if you forget every action afterward. Build a retention routine around things you're willing to do consistently.

RULE

Make the next step visible before somebody asks for the exit. Write the skills, responsibility, and pay terms together.

Build the reasons to stay

1 Write a simple pay ladder.

Create a page with role levels, actual pay bands, required skills, evidence needed, and the person who approves advancement. Match it to your job posts. Review affordability and applicable pay requirements with payroll or your adviser. Explain placement to current employees before using it to recruit.

2 Recognize useful work specifically.

Name the action and its effect: careful job notes, a safe stop, a clean handoff, patient training. Ask each employee whether they prefer private or public thanks. Our rule: review examples during weekly crew preparation and recognize them promptly. Never reward speed in a way that encourages unsafe shortcuts.

EXAMPLE PAY LADDER STRUCTURE

LEVEL	EVIDENCE OF READINESS	PAY FIELD TO COMPLETE
Trainee	Follows safety instructions; completes assigned work under supervision	{approved trainee range}
Independent technician	Demonstrates required tasks, documentation, and customer communication within authorized scope	{approved technician range}
Lead	Meets technician standards; plans work and coaches others effectively	{approved lead range}

Put an actual number behind each level

The table is a structure. Finish it with pay ranges your business can honor. Write whether the range is hourly or another pay basis. Explain any incentive separately so nobody confuses possible earnings with guaranteed base pay.

Use job requirements and demonstrated ability to explain placement. Review current employees alongside incoming offers. If you're advertising terms you won't explain to the existing crew, settle that problem before the ad goes live.

Define how a skill gets signed off. “Can diagnose common faults” needs an assessment and a qualified reviewer. “Ready to lead” needs evidence of planning, communication, and teaching. A full tool bag doesn't prove those things.

Our rule: when an employee is working toward the next level, name a practice opportunity and review date. If progress stalls, record the missing skill, needed support, and next review date. Don't leave the employee chasing “soon.”

OWNER MISTAKE

More responsibility without a clear conversation feels like a moving target. Explain the role, support, and pay before expanding the job.

1 Hold monthly one-on-ones.

Our rule: schedule a private 20-minute conversation with each employee every month. Ask about obstacles, workload, the manager's support, and progress toward the next skill. Review last month's commitments first. Record a short action list with owners and dates. If a meeting moves, reschedule it before ending the conversation.

Recognition that sounds like you were there

Tell the employee that their complete notes helped the office answer a customer's question. Thank the buddy who slowed down to demonstrate a task correctly. Recognize the person who reported damaged equipment before it caused a bigger problem.

SPECIFIC RECOGNITION

SCRIPT

YOU You stopped when the equipment didn't look right and called the supervisor before continuing.

YOU That gave us a chance to address the problem safely. That's the judgment we expect here. Thank you.

Describe an actual event. Ask permission before sharing the example publicly, and protect customer and personnel details.

Make the monthly conversation useful

Open the previous notes before the meeting. If you promised a replacement tool, find out what happened. If you promised training time, check whether it appeared on the schedule. The employee will notice whether your promises count as much as theirs.

Ask what part of the job creates avoidable friction. Listen for recurring overtime surprises, missing supplies, unclear instructions, or a supervisor who is hard to reach. These are operating problems you can assign and fix.

Then discuss growth. Ask which skill the employee wants to build and whether that matches a real business need. Agree on practice, coaching, and evidence. If no lead opening exists, say so. Don't invent a promotion to get through an uncomfortable meeting.

MONTHLY ONE-ON-ONE

SCRIPT

YOU

Last month we agreed on {action}. Here's what happened. What still needs attention?

YOU

What's making your work harder than it needs to be?

YOU

Is the workload or schedule creating a problem we should address?

YOU

Which skill do you want to build next? Let's compare that with the pay ladder.

YOU

I'll own {manager action} by {date}. You'll practice {skill} with {support}. We'll review {evidence} on {date}.

Record commitments. Handle urgent concerns when raised rather than waiting for this meeting.

BEFORE

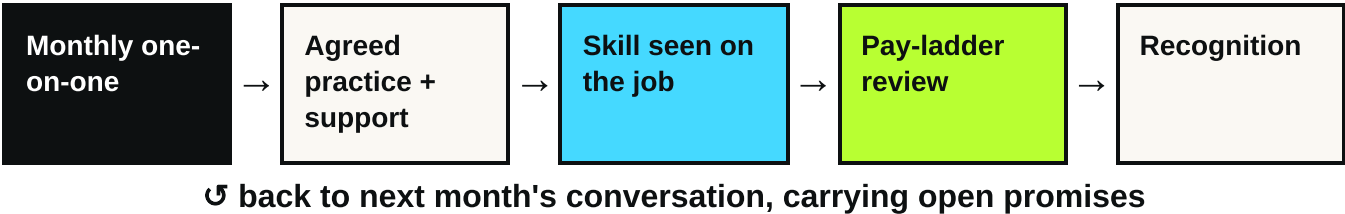
Extra responsibility, vague growth promises, and a pay conversation triggered by notice.

AFTER

Visible role levels, explained pay bands, specific recognition, and monthly conversations with completed actions.

KEEPING A DEPENDABLE EMPLOYEE

THE RETENTION LOOP



QUICK WIN

Start the next meeting with what you promised last time. That makes the conversation credible.

Good people need a future they can see and a manager who follows through.

Back at the shop

In the pest control composite, the owner couldn't assume a counteroffer would keep the departing technician. He used the lesson to change how he managed the remaining team.

He published role expectations, clarified training duties, and started monthly conversations.

Employees could ask about advancement without first threatening to leave. The owner could explain the answer with a standard instead of another promise to talk later.

✓ DO THIS TODAY	CHECK IT OFF
☐ Draft role levels with actual pay bands and advancement evidence.	
☐ Compare the ladder with current employees and active job posts.	
☐ Explain who approves advancement and how skills are assessed.	
☐ Recognize a specific useful action in the employee's preferred way.	
☐ Schedule monthly one-on-ones with every employee.	
☐ Write manager commitments with owners and dates.	
☐ Give a growth goal a practice opportunity and review date.	

Hiring *Scorecard*

Score the process you have today. A plan to fix something doesn't earn a yes.

Our scoring rule: each yes earns 1 point; each no earns 0. Total the answers out of 10. This is a working checklist, not a prediction of who will stay. Start with the missing item closest to your next hiring decision.

HIRING SCORECARD	
Your Company Is the Ad	
☐ Does your Careers page show real terms, team photos, and a working application route?	1 pt
☐ Do voluntary employee reviews and social posts give applicants an honest picture?	1 pt
Job Posts That Pull	
☐ Does every post state pay, schedule, truck/tools, and growth?	1 pt
☐ Are posting channels, referral terms, and applicant follow-up assigned?	1 pt
Interview in 30 Minutes	
☐ Do candidates face the same five-question scorecard?	1 pt
☐ Do decisions include a supervised assessment and reference evidence?	1 pt
The First 30 Days	
☐ Are paperwork, payroll, equipment, and state reporting assigned and checked?	1 pt
☐ Are a buddy and day 7, 14, and 30 check-ins scheduled?	1 pt
Keep Them	
☐ Can employees see pay levels and advancement standards?	1 pt
☐ Do specific recognition and monthly one-on-ones lead to recorded actions?	1 pt
Your score: _____ / 10	

Write your total beside the role you chose in the introduction. Circle each no. Assign an owner and a date to the first repair. If you're already interviewing, fix the decision process before making an offer. If someone starts soon, prepare their arrival now.

This week

Our rule: finish the pieces for that role this workweek. Give each task a calendar slot and a named owner.

THIS WEEK MASTER CHECKLIST

CHECKLIST

- ☐ Confirm the role, honest pay range, schedule, equipment, and growth path.
- ☐ Update Careers with real photos; test the application route.
- ☐ Invite voluntary employee feedback and publish a real workday post.
- ☐ Post on Indeed; contact trade schools, community college programs, and supply houses.
- ☐ Explore Apprenticeship.gov; publish referral terms and assign candidate follow-up.
- ☐ Prepare interview scoring, the supervised assessment, and reference calls.
- ☐ Confirm paperwork requirements; prepare equipment, buddy, and onboarding checkpoints.
- ☐ Finish the pay ladder and schedule monthly one-on-ones.

The owner playbooks

- Book 1: Why Isn't My Phone Ringing?
- Book 2: The Leads You Already Paid For
- Book 3: Your Website Is Costing You Jobs
- Book 4: Nobody Answered the Phone
- Book 5: Hire People Who Show Up

Links in this book

Apprenticeship.gov

<https://www.apprenticeship.gov>

USCIS Form I-9

<https://www.uscis.gov/i-9>

IRS Form W-4

<https://www.irs.gov/forms-pubs/about-form-w-4>

state new-hire reporting information

<https://www.acf.gov/css/employers>

Links checked Oct 2026; verify before use. Statistics are quoted from the named sources; stories are anonymized composites, and anything marked "example" is illustrative.

■ THE NEXT STEP

Want this done *with you?*

RevOpsFlow is a marketing team for small businesses, based in Atlanta and working with home service companies everywhere. We build and run the systems in this book: careers pages, social media that shows your crew, and ads and search work that put your company in front of recruits and customers. Marketing that fills both the schedule and the job board. One connected team, one plan, fewer handoffs between the click and the customer.

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Paid Ads Google and Meta ads with tracking set up first. revopsflow.com/services/paid-ads	Social Media 12 on-brand posts a month you approve before they go out. revopsflow.com/services/social-media
AI Agents (FDE) Starts with an audit. Agents trained on your SOPs. A person approves anything customer-facing. revopsflow.com/services/fde-audit	Growth Plan Website, SEO and AI search, ads, and social run by one team. revopsflow.com/growth-package

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