New-hire ramp time

Prepared for People Ops at a mid-size company. About 4 minutes to read.

Recommendation

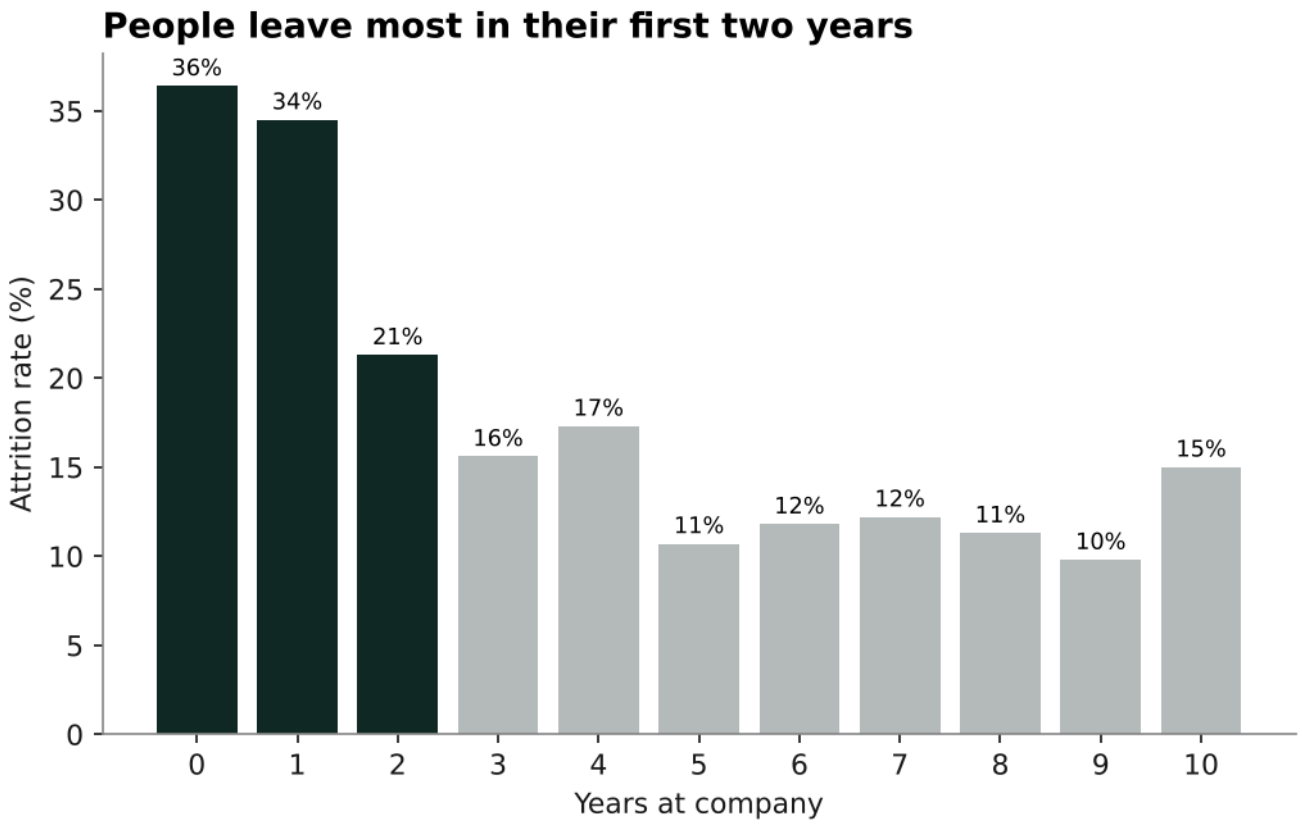
Give every new hire a buddy for their first 90 days, and track ramp time as a KPI.

What to do

1. Assign a buddy before day one. Pick someone who reports to the same manager, since they know the role best.
2. Set a target of nine or more buddy meetings in the first 90 days. At Microsoft, self-reported ramp speed rose with every step up in meetings.
3. Clear time for buddies. Budget about two hours a week for 12 weeks and take that work off their plate.
4. Track the five ramp measures in the KPI table at 30, 60 and 90 days, and report them monthly next to 90-day retention.
5. Watch overtime in the first year. It was the strongest predictor of early exits in the data.

Key numbers

Measure	Value
Attrition in the first two years	30% (vs 12% after year two)
Share of all leavers who were in their first two years	43%
Odds of an early exit with a manager of under a year	2.3x higher
New-hire pay as a share of settled-worker pay, California private sector, 2025	60%
Lost output during a 12-month ramp at a $65,000 salary (assumed)	about $24,400 per hire
Buddy program cost per hire (assumed)	about $1,230
Faster ramp needed to break even	about 18 days



Ramp time KPI: what to measure at 30, 60, and 90 days

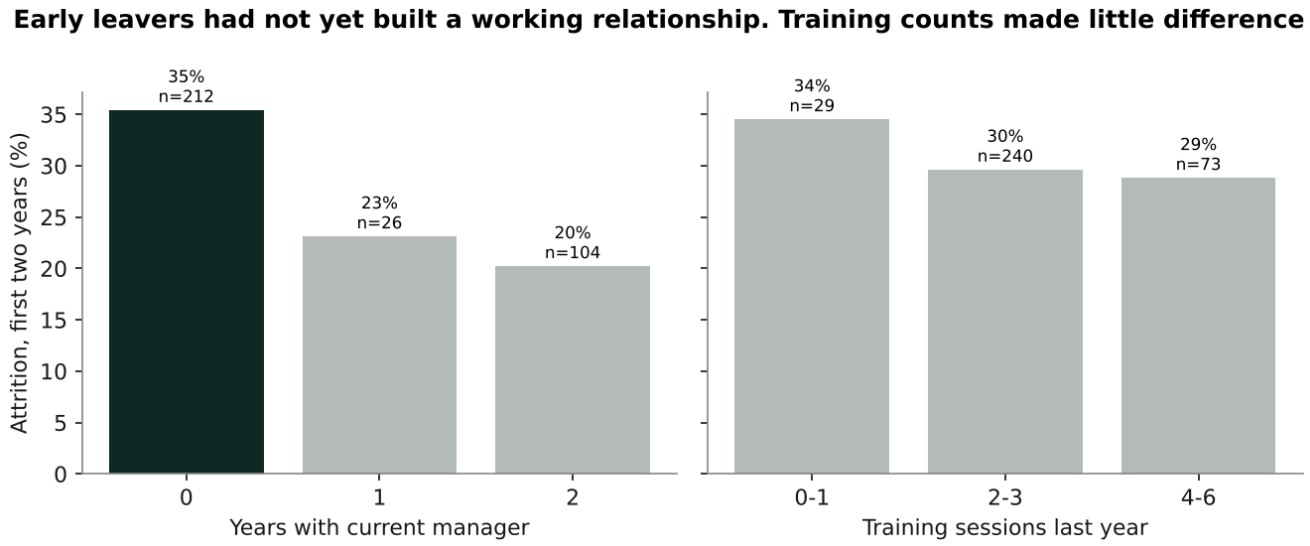
Measure	Day 30	Day 60	Day 90	Where it comes from
Manager readiness rating (1 to 5)	2+	3+	4+	Short manager pulse in the HRIS
First piece of work shipped on their own	Scoped	Shipped	Repeating	Manager pulse
Buddy meetings held	3+	6+	9+	Calendar or buddy check-in form
New hire says they know who to ask	Yes/No	Yes/No	Yes/No	New-hire pulse survey
Still employed	Track	Track	Track	HRIS

What drives early exits

A logistic regression on the 342 employees in their first two years controlled for job level, overtime, pay and role.

Employees with less than a year under their current manager had 2.3 times the odds of leaving (95% interval 1.2 to 4.1, p = 0.007). Their raw attrition was 35%, against 20% for those with two years under the same manager. A new manager stands in for a working relationship that has not formed yet, which is the gap a buddy fills.

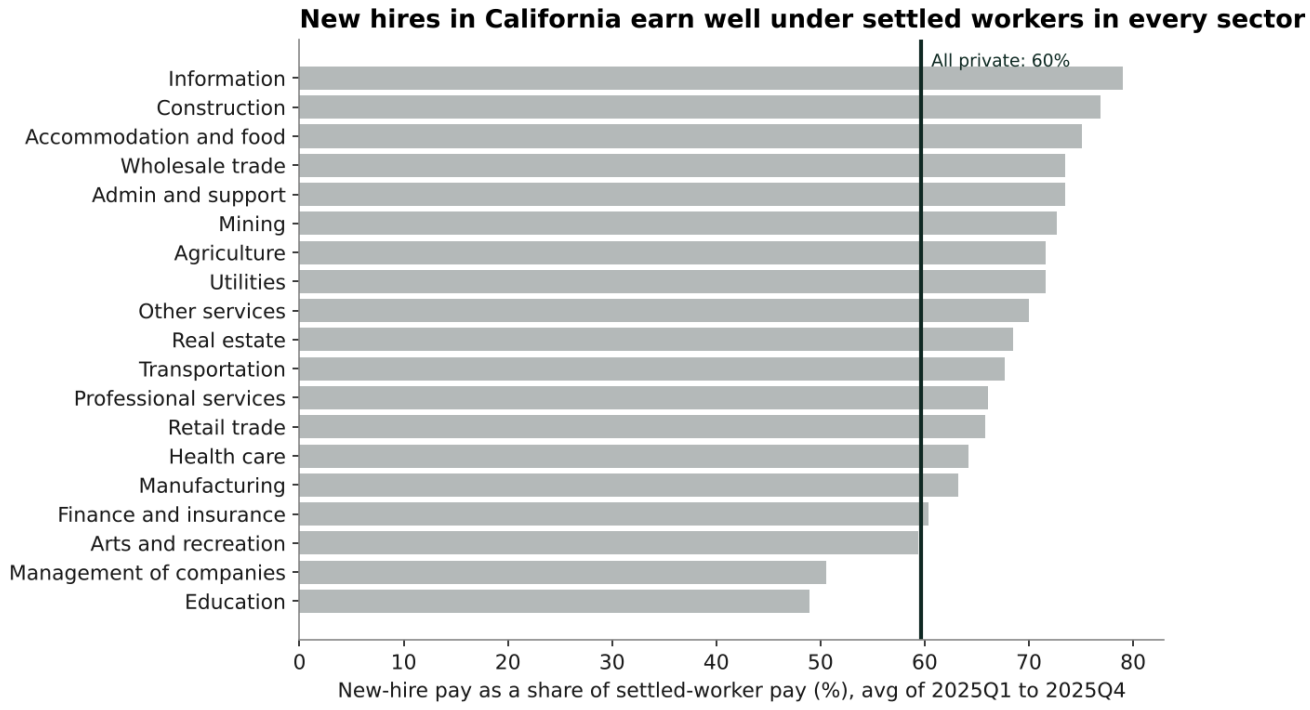
Training sessions showed no clear effect (odds ratio 0.87 per session, p = 0.18). Overtime had the largest effect of anything in the model (odds ratio 6.3).



The outside view from Census data

The Census Quarterly Workforce Indicators report pay for new hires who stayed a full quarter and for all settled workers. Across California's private sector in 2025, new hires earned 60% of what settled workers earned. The ratio ran from 49% in education to 79% in information.

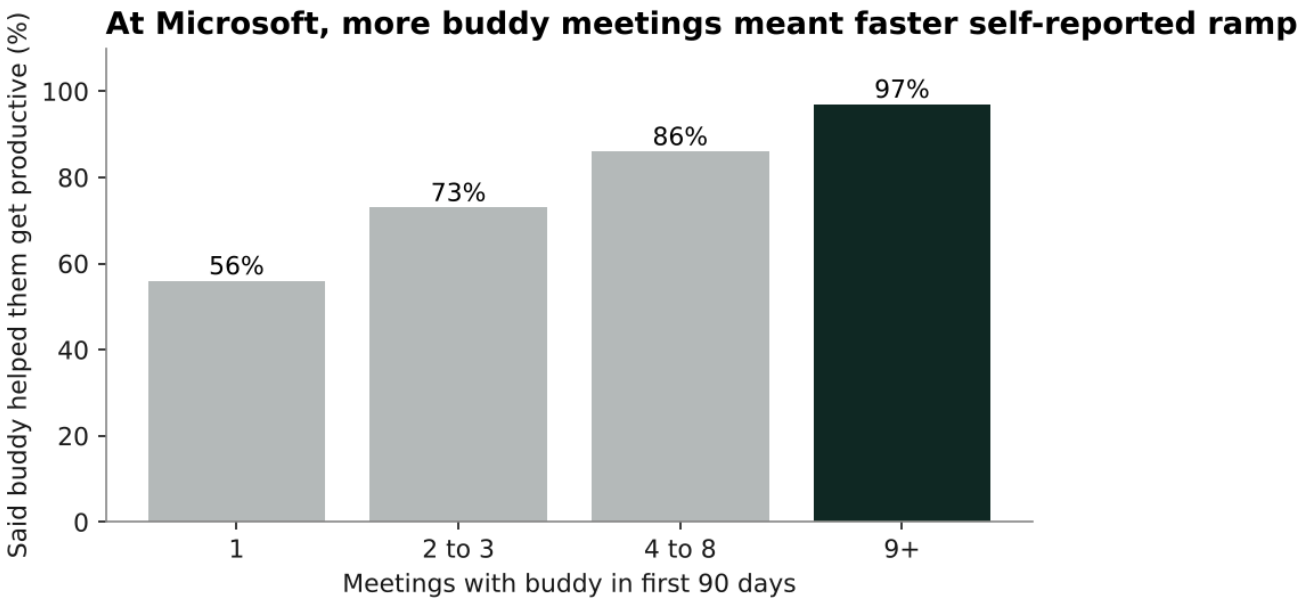
Pay gaps also reflect age and job level, since new hires skew younger and more junior. The gap is a rough stand-in for ramp, and it shows how far a new hire typically starts from full contribution.



What published research says

- Gallup found 12% of employees strongly agree their organization onboards new hires well. Only 29% of new hires feel fully prepared after onboarding.

- Gallup estimates new employees take around 12 months to reach full performance.
- Microsoft piloted buddies with 600 new hires. 56% of those who met a buddy once in 90 days said it helped them get productive quickly. That rose to 73% at 2 to 3 meetings, 86% at 4 to 8 and 97% at 9 or more.
- New hires with a buddy at Microsoft were 23% more satisfied with onboarding after week one and 36% more satisfied at 90 days.



Cost of slow ramp and buddy payback

The model assumes a $65,000 salary and output that starts at 25% and climbs evenly to full over 12 months. That leaves about $24,400 of lost output per hire.

A buddy costs about $1,230 per hire (2 hours a week for 12 weeks at $45 an hour, plus $150 of People Ops time). If the program shortens ramp by one month and cuts first-year exits by 3 points, it returns about $2,900 per hire, or about $167,000 per 100 hires after costs. It pays for itself if ramp shortens by about 18 days, before counting any drop in exits.

Every input is an assumption and can be edited in `data/raw/ramp_assumptions.csv`.

Limits of this study

The IBM HR Analytics dataset is synthetic. IBM data scientists built it for teaching, so its numbers show the method. The direction of the findings lines up with the Microsoft and Gallup research.

Years with current manager can also reflect reorganizations and manager turnover. A company running this for real should log buddy assignments and test the effect directly, for example by rolling the program out to some teams a quarter earlier than others.

The Microsoft figures are self-reported by new hires.

Data sources

- IBM HR Analytics Employee Attrition and Performance dataset (synthetic). https://github.com/IBM/employee-attrition-aif360
- U.S. Census Bureau, Quarterly Workforce Indicators, California, private sector by NAICS sector, 2025. https://lehd.ces.census.gov/data/
- Gallup, Creating an Exceptional Onboarding Journey for Your New Employees (2019). https://www.gallup.com/workplace/247076/Gallup_Perspective_on_Creating_an_Exceptional_Onboarding_Journey_for_Your_New_Employees.pdf
- Microsoft Workplace Insights, Every new employee needs an onboarding buddy (2019). https://workplaceinsights.microsoft.com/?p=853
- SHRM average cost per hire as summarized by Devlin Peck (2026). https://www.devlinpeck.com/content/employee-onboarding-statistics

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Tools used

Python (pandas, statsmodels, SciPy, matplotlib), DuckDB SQL, Jupyter, Census LEHD bulk files.

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