

The first 30 days: onboarding a VA so they stick

Placements that fail almost always fail in the first quarter, and almost always for reasons somebody could have fixed in week one.

About 8 minutes to read

You have hired someone eight time zones away who cannot read the room, cannot overhear the context, and cannot tell from your face that they have got it wrong. Everything below exists to compensate for that.

Before day one

Set up in advance

- ☐ Email address, and accounts on every tool they need. Created before they start, not on the morning
- ☐ Password manager with shared vault, rather than credentials sent over chat
- ☐ A written first-week plan with something concrete to do on day one
- ☐ The screen recordings of you doing the tasks (five to ten Looms is plenty)
- ☐ A named person who answers their questions, and when they are available
- ☐ A standing check-in booked for the same time each day of week one
- ☐ NDA and data-handling agreement signed

Week one: watch, then do

Give them your recordings and ask them to turn each one into a written process document. This does three things at once: it is real work from day one, it proves they understood, and you end up with the documentation you were never going to write yourself. Their version will contain questions. Answer those, that is the actual onboarding.

Weeks two to four: narrow then widen

- Week two. They run one task fully, you check every output before it leaves

- Week three. They run three or four tasks, you spot-check
- Week four. They run the full first-20-hours list, you review weekly
- Do not add new responsibilities until the current ones are clean. Widening too early is the single most common way this goes wrong.

The 30/60/90 check-in

We check in with both sides at 30, 60 and 90 days. Not a satisfaction survey, a specific conversation about what is unclear and what is going unsaid. Most problems at this stage are small and only become resignations because nobody raised them.

Things that quietly kill a placement

Symptom	What is usually behind it
They ask a lot of questions	Good sign in week one, a documentation gap by week four.
They ask no questions at all	Almost never means everything is clear. Ask them to show you the work.
Work is technically right but wrong in spirit	They have the process and not the reason. Explain why the task exists.
Output drops after month two	Usually isolation, unclear priorities, or an unspoken problem with a colleague.
They go quiet near a public holiday	Check the Philippine holiday calendar. There are more than you expect, and they are usually in the contract.