



SaaS Onboarding: Everything you need to know

Regardless of the quality of your software, its features will be of little use to the users if they aren't onboarded properly.

Since onboarding is the first step of a user's journey, mastering the art of SaaS onboarding is vital.

In this article, we'll be covering all you need to know about providing a great SaaS onboarding experience.

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What Is SaaS onboarding?

In SaaS onboarding, you set up your new customer for using your software properly.

During this process, you will explain to the customer how to use the software and navigate its interface.

This allows the customer to fully understand the functionality of the SaaS they've acquired.

Remember the time you signed up for a service and had a hard time getting to grips with its features? Guess what, your SaaS provider failed to onboard you properly.

SaaS onboarding is an introductory step where you help your customer familiarize themselves with the software so they can use it to its full potential.



Why Do You Need a Good User Onboarding Process?

Good user onboarding can make an enormous difference between a great and a bad user experience.

Taking the time to explain to your customers how to properly use your software ensures satisfaction with your SaaS.

If done correctly, your new customer will be fully acquainted with your software's features and won't have any user-experience difficulties.

This starts their customer experience on the right foot.

With exceptional onboarding, your users can get the maximum out of your product. After all, that's what they signed up for, isn't it?

When users fail to reap the full benefits of a SaaS, they begin to question the use of paying for it and eventually cancel their subscription.

Since they don't know how to use the software to its full extent, they're missing out on its potential. A good user onboarding can prevent that from happening from day 1.

But you don't have to take our word for it. Let the data do the talking.

A report by Wyzowl has found that 55% of users say they returned a product because they didn't understand how to properly use it, and over 90% of customers feel that companies could do a better job at onboarding new users.

Like it or not, user onboarding makes a huge impact on the user experience and satisfaction.

Delivering a great onboarding experience isn't optional.



Steps to Create a Smooth Customer Onboarding Process for SaaS

Creating a smooth customer onboarding process for a SaaS is anything but easy. The process is delicate and requires your utmost attention.

Lucky for you, this post is here to even the playing field.

Let's begin by explaining the steps for creating an airtight SaaS user onboarding.

Signup Process

The signup process is the very first step of a user's customer experience and its importance can't be overstated.

Having a smooth signup process will make sure your customer's first experience of your service is frustration-free.

It's all about delivering a fast, user-friendly way to upload basic data so they can start using your SaaS.

If your signup process takes up too much time, you can count on users giving up halfway through.

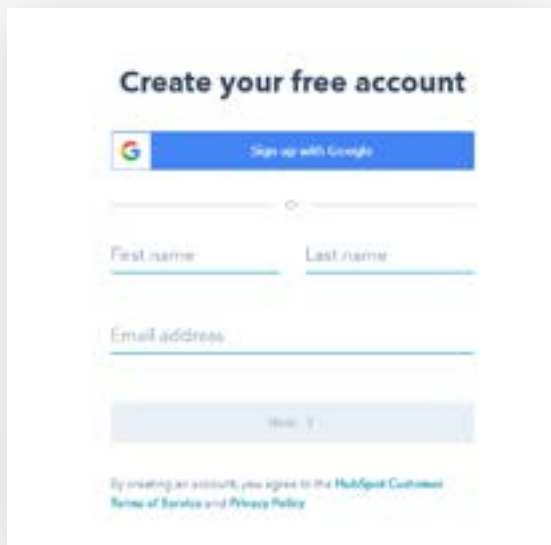
The signup process is vital to you as well because it gives you all the relevant user information you need to initiate communication with your new customer.

Ideally, it will grant you all the vital info without bogging down the user too much.

Think of the times you were an inch away from using a SaaS, but the signup process was so convoluted, you eventually gave up.

You don't want your SaaS to end up like that.

If you want an example of an outstanding signup process, look no further than HubSpot.

A screenshot of the HubSpot 'Create your free account' form. The form is titled 'Create your free account' and features a 'Sign up with Google' button at the top. Below this, there are input fields for 'First name' and 'Last name', followed by an 'Email address' field. A 'Next' button is positioned at the bottom of the form. At the very bottom, there is a small link for 'Terms of Service and Privacy Policy'.

HubSpot's signup requires you to enter the most fundamental info manually, or through Google.

The entire registration process lasts a handful of minutes and provides HubSpot with just enough information to engage with you.

You should make your signup process as quick and focused as possible.

Welcome Email

A welcome email is a chance for you to welcome your new user in a special, distinctive way. You should view your welcome email as a key part of your welcoming strategy for new users.

Writing a personalized email lets your clients know you're excited to have them and does wonders for the user experience.

It also sends them the message that they can contact you anytime in case they need a hand.

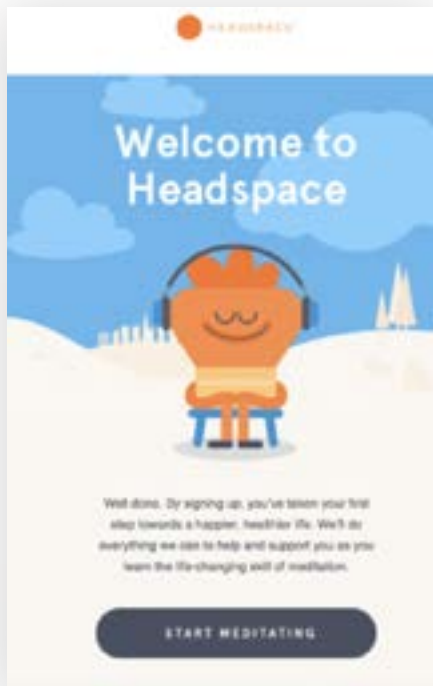
Writing a great welcome email requires much thought and effort.

However, there are a handful of practices that should do the trick:

- Focus on delivering a highly personalized welcome
- Encourage them to contact customer support if needed
- Stay clear of any generic welcome email formulas
- Be eloquent and punctual with your wording

Remember that your goal is to welcome your users, let them know you're excited to have them, and give them a piece of information that is useful on them.

To help illustrate our point, here's an example of a top-notch welcome email.



The meditation app Headspace sends you a quick welcome that demonstrates value, shows appreciation, and has a call-to-action button.

If you want your users to start their experience in the best way, hit them up with a stellar welcome email.

First Login

Remember when we said the first signup should be smooth and easy? Well, this applies to the first login as well.

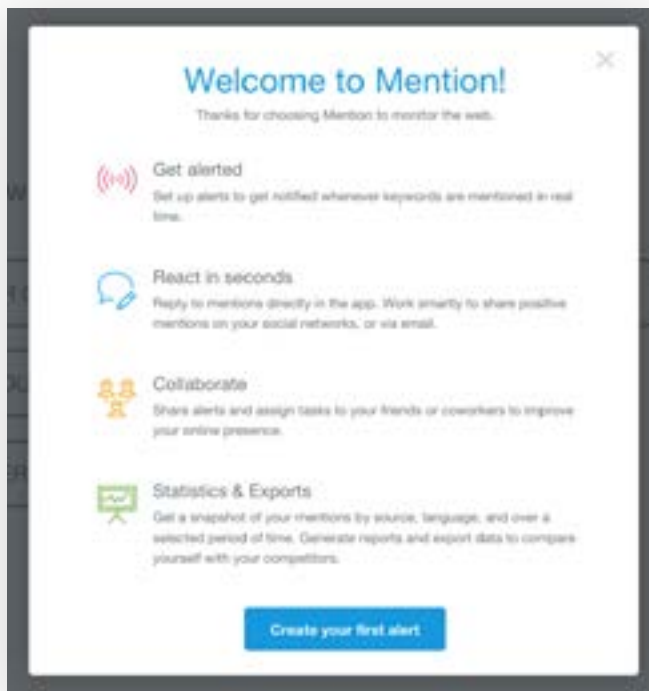
After your users have opted for your SaaS, signed up, and got the welcome email, they expect their first login to be excellent. Failing at this step will disappoint your users and harm all the hard work you put in to sign them up for your software.

If you're stuck on ideas, we've got you covered.

Here are some actionable tips on how you can create a fantastic first login experience:

- DO NOT leave an empty dashboard
- Motivate users to engage with the software right away
- Highlight which features are the most important, so they are focused from the word go

For example, Mention does a fantastic job at delivering a great first login.



As you can see, it highlights every key feature, shows what the SaaS can do, and motivates users to start engaging with the software.

Take this opportunity to make your user's first login memorable and keep them engaged early on.

Product Tutorials

Product tutorials are critically important for teaching your new users how to use the features of your SaaS.

Getting to know features they've never seen before is difficult for new users.

Product tours and tutorials are here to step in and do the heavy lifting.

When new users get advice as they're engaging with your products for the first time, they are more likely to catch up fast and start using them right away.

Don't you wish every SaaS had a product/feature tutorial?

Here are the most important aspects of an effective product tutorial:

- Add a checklist on your dashboard that tracks the user's progress through the tutorial
- Buttons next to features that open up lessons specific to those features
- Make tutorials skippable

As you can tell by now, it's all about focusing your users' attention to the right features when they're engaging with your software for the first time.

For example, look at what Google does to deliver a seamless feature tutorial on Google Drive:



Their tutorial guides users through every facet of the service and explains how to use it so users can engage right away. It's important to note that these lessons are skippable.

Now, let's talk about knowledge bases.

Knowledge Base

Knowledge bases are outstanding tools for speeding up SaaS onboarding and boosting user experience.

Having a knowledge base available to users ensures they can access all the information they need in case they have any issues or questions.

By doing so, they can inform themselves and get the most out of the features of your software.

Without a knowledge base, they'll be forced to contact customer support whenever they have a question.

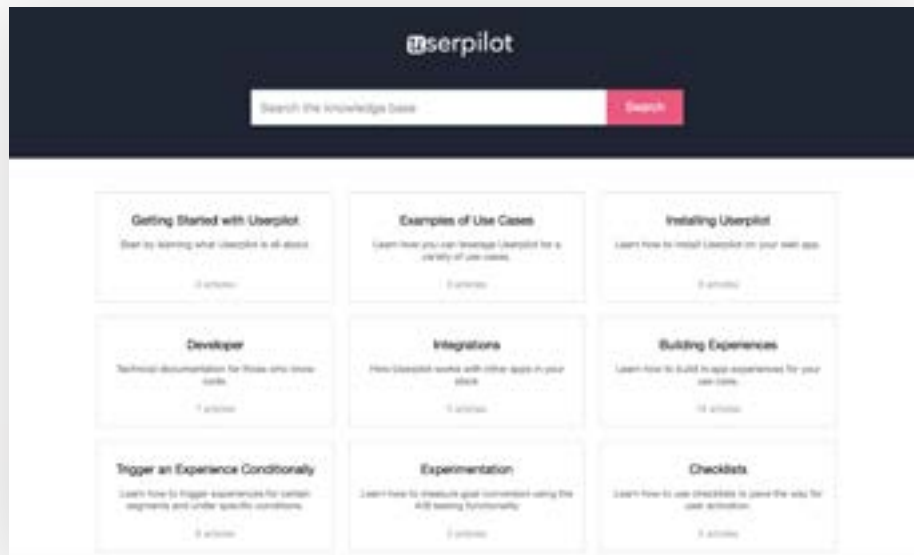
If you want the best user onboarding, start sketching out your knowledge base.

Your ideal knowledge base has to have the following characteristics:

- Quick and easy to access
- Actionable and insightful how-to guides
- A structure that's easy to navigate
- Additional data, such as case studies and statistics

When your users can access valuable resources with ease, they'll be able to use your software independently.

Check out what Userpilot is doing with the knowledge base of their SaaS:



Their knowledge base is easily accessible, offers an abundance of useful information, and is simple to navigate.

You should regard your knowledge base as one of your most important assets.

Onboarding Milestones

Nothing motivates people to strive for more than reaching their milestones. User onboarding is no exception to this.

You should show your users when they've reached specific steps in their onboarding journey.

By doing so, they'll feel encouraged to continue reaching new milestones and feel confident about their knowledge of your software. Best of all, it's super easy to implement.

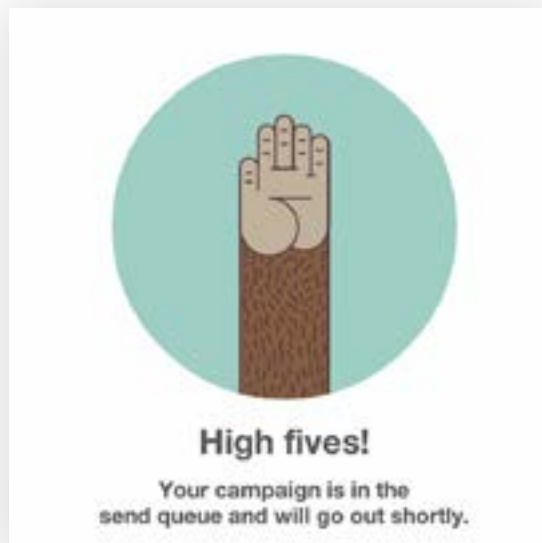
Just adding a bit of flavor to your onboarding can make a terrific impact on user engagement.

Your user onboarding milestones will make a difference when you follow these tips:

- Use visuals to illustrate reached milestones
- Show how their overall onboarding progress is coming along
- Explain the benefits of reaching their current milestone

Using these tips will help you keep your new users focused and itching to reach that next step.

But if you need a practical example, see what Mailchimp is doing to motivate their users with milestones:



A simple high five gives a sense of accomplishment and is followed by a useful piece of information that prompts more engagement.

Whatever the specifics of your SaaS, don't neglect to highlight user milestones.

In-App Notifications

For improving SaaS onboarding, in-app notifications are a game-changer.

Delivering an in-app notification at the right time keeps users engaged without taking them away from the page they're on.

It's a fantastic way of improving user onboarding and re-engaging users who have been inactive for a while.

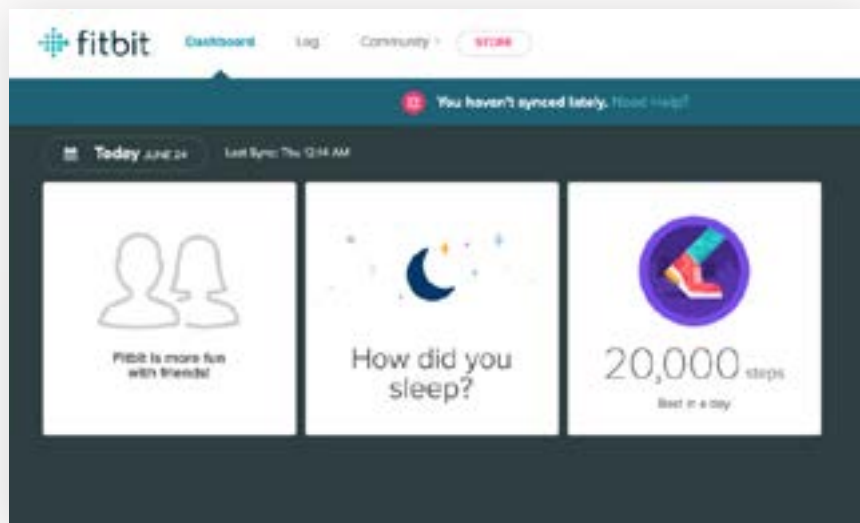
The trick with in-app onboarding notifications is that you have to know when to time them. Here is where automated notifications step in.

There are several great in-app notification practices for SaaS onboarding:

- Have a "getting started" checklist pop up when users log in
- Automate notifications when users are inactive
- Send notifications to remind them of the knowledge library
- Allow users to turn off notifications if they want to

Just think of a time when you got distracted, and an app notification pulled you back in.

For example, the app Fitbit makes great use of in-app notifications to re-engage users.



If you stay out of sync for a while and neglect to track your activity, their app sends you a notification to re-engage you.

It's easy for users to get distracted and bail on the onboarding process, which is why you should put automated notifications to work.



How to Measure the Success of Your SaaS Onboarding Process

Measuring the success of your SaaS onboarding process is incredibly important.

A study by Userpilot has found that 95% of tested SaaS companies use analytics to measure their user engagement.

As a matter of fact, using metrics to track your engagement is a must for improving your SaaS offering.

Let's talk about those vital metrics you should look out for.

Free Trial to Paid Conversion

The time it takes for users to upscale from a free trial to a paid subscriber is one of the most important metrics you can track.

Tracking upscale time tells you how long you should expect for your users to move from free to a paid service.

This metric gives you viable data to assess how effective your methods are at converting new customers, so you can change or improve the features you're offering.

Shortened upscale time means your SaaS onboarding efforts are paying off, and users are adopting your software faster.

On the other hand, if it takes longer to upscale free users, you have to provide them with more reasons to opt for a paid subscription.

So how do you reduce the time from a free trial to a paid subscription?

Here's what you can do to change the time it takes for your free users to upscale:

- Use onboarding tactics, so new users catch up on your app fast
- Give users incentives to upscale
- Use marketing tactics to decrease the time it takes to upscale
- Put a time limit on the free trial

Using these tips along with an effective billing solution, you can onboard new users faster and nudge them towards subscribing to a paid service pack.

But before you can do that, you can't reduce upscale time if you don't start tracking it.

Reasons for Cancellation

Users can cancel their subscriptions for any given reason, which is why you should track this data and make necessary changes to your SaaS.

Cancellation reasons is a collection of data that explains why users canceled their subscription and stopped using your software.

Thanks to this metric, your team can make educated, data-informed decisions on what changes they should make on your SaaS, so you don't lose software users.

Without this metric, your team can end up guessing what's wrong and do more harm than good while trying to correct what's wrong.

To increase subscriber retention, you have to understand their reasons for canceling.

Here's an example of how Youtube collects cancellation data when someone cancels their Premium membership.

← Cancel membership

Marina, sorry to see you go. What is the main reason for canceling your membership?

- Don't mind ads
- Don't use the Music app
- Don't watch YouTube enough
- Don't want to pay the current price
- Don't use Premium benefits
- Other
- Don't want to answer

Have you ever been confused as to why users stopped using your software even though you've made key changes to it?

Well, it means you didn't have a full understanding of why users lapsed in the first place.

As we said, there are many reasons why users cancel their subscriptions, but the most common ones include.

- The lack of desired features
- Poor user experience
- Users failing to achieve a good ROI with your software
- The price of your SaaS

Getting a grip on these is vital if you are to make substantial changes that will help you keep users.

It goes without saying that you can't reduce the number of lapsed users without tracking this metric.

Onboarding Completion Rate

Measuring the rate of users that actually end up completing their onboarding is incredibly insightful and should not be skipped.

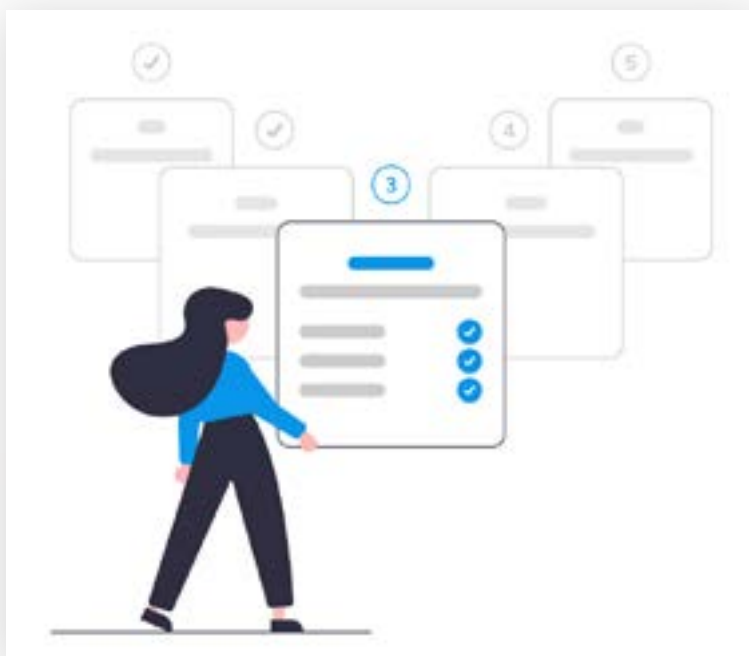
As we've stated earlier in this article, SaaS onboarding is vitally important for new users.

If most users fail to complete the onboarding, they won't understand how to properly use your software and get the most out of it.

The onboarding completion rate lets you know how many users finish the process.

When that rate is high, it means the majority of your users are properly onboarded.

On the other hand, low onboarding completion rates indicate that your onboarding process is lacking, and you have to make adjustments so users can complete it.



You need to identify the reasons why they skip onboarding and make the necessary changes.

This will enable you to improve your SaaS onboarding and set up your users for your software.

Supercharging your SaaS onboarding begins with measuring the onboarding completion rate.

Daily Active Users

The number of daily active users is a benchmark metric that reveals how healthy is your software's user base.

To track your number of daily active users, you must first define what active means, in terms of the frequency of use.

Tracking daily active users goes beyond measuring how many people log in to your software every day. A better way to look at it is to measure how many users logged in and spent time using your software to derive something of value.

Imagine having a mobile photo editing app that users are paying for.

To measure how many daily active users you have, tracking the number of daily logins and how frequently logged-in users use your SaaS to edit their photos is the way to go.

The latter can be measured by the number of edited photos or in-app time spent on a single photo edit.

After measuring these, you'll get a clear picture of your number of daily active users.

Tracking daily active users is not optional for SaaS companies that want to achieve top performance.

Time-to-Value (TTV)

Time-to-Value (TTV) is easily one of the most critical user-related metrics to track when it comes to your SaaS onboarding process.

TTV is a metric that shows how much time it takes for your users to derive value from using your SaaS, i.e., to effectively use its features.

If it takes too long for your users to achieve value from your SaaS, they are likely to cancel their subscription and find a quicker solution.

In addition, long TTV is indicative of a flawed SaaS onboarding process.

When you see an improvement in TTV, it means your users take less time to properly use your software and get a return on their subscription.

Want to reduce your user's TTV?

Keep your onboarding process condensed, to the point, and insightful. This will allow your users to quickly understand how to use your software and start deriving value from it ASAP.

Make a habit of tracking TTV so you can improve it for the benefit of your customers and your SaaS.

Net Promoter Score

The Net Promoter Score (NPS) is an outstanding tool for measuring the user satisfaction of your SaaS and the likelihood of them recommending it to their friends.

NPS is measured on a scale from 1 to 10, which tells how likely users are to recommend your product to somebody else.

It goes without saying that achieving a high NPS means your users are highly satisfied with your SaaS offering and would be happy to show it to their friends.



Measuring and increasing it should be one of your utmost priorities.

Being effective at measuring your NPS is all about getting a score from your users.

Users that rate your SaaS from 1-6 are called detractors, and those who rate it 9-10 are promoters.

Additionally, users that rate it on a scale of 7-8 are neutrals.

You can calculate your NPS with this formula:

$$\text{NPS} = \% \text{ promoters} - \% \text{ detractors}$$

This will tell you how satisfied your users are with your software and give you a numerical value.

Make sure you ask your users for feedback and measure your NPS so you can tell how likely your users are to recommend it.



What to Do After a Customer Is Successfully Onboarded?

A successful SaaS onboarding is only the beginning of your user's journey, and it has plenty of room for a follow-up.

After successfully onboarding customers, you should provide them with the necessary info that will help them stay engaged with your SaaS.

The way you go about your post-onboard follow-up will impact their user experience and engagement, so skipping on this step is a bad move.

If you leave your users to fend for themselves after onboarding, you're setting them up for cancellation.

For a great follow-up, there are three things you should do:

- **Keep your knowledge base updated.** Since your new users will rely on them long after the onboarding process is completed, they need to have relevant and serve up-to-date info.
- **Offer flawless customer support.** In case users run into problems, your customer support team has to be able to step in and resolve any issue quickly.
- **Contact users when you notice they are disengaging.** When you notice customers are using your software less frequently, reach out to them to re-establish contact.

A successful SaaS company has to have a plan for every step of the user's journey, and yours should be no exception.

Conclusion

In this extensive guide, we've discussed the ABCs of a great SaaS onboarding experience.

By now, you have realized the role it plays in keeping your users engaged with your software and allowing them to derive value from its features.

So, if you want to keep your users from canceling their subscriptions, you'll deliver a seamless SaaS onboarding and keep them engaged well after you've shown them the ropes of your software.