

# Onboarding-

## The importance of Organizational Socialization



We have entered into an era of socialization at all levels of our lives. We are inundated with social media in the form of Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, and Google+ to name a few. We have created a web of heightened social connection that spans the globe at the touch of a button. In the case of our work environment, organizations that have caught on to the positive results of establishing a strong organizational culture through building positive relations at work are obtaining greater staff retention by utilizing organizational socialization.

A strong and formal onboarding process is the key to successful new employee orientation and ultimately the establishment of a strong work culture. Formal onboarding processes work with the understanding that socialization is a key element to the associates' successful acclimation to their new work environment. This article will cover best practices that have been established by successful organizations in creating their onboarding processes. But first let us start by reviewing some staggering statistics:



**50%** of all hourly workers leave new jobs within the first 4 months. *Krauss, A.D. 2010, Onboarding the hourly workforce*

**22%** of staff turnover occurs in the first 45 days of employment. *The Wynhurst Corporation*

**\$37** Billion dollars lost due to employee misunderstandings in the United States and the United Kingdom, according to research provided by the *International Data Corporation*.

**50%** of all senior outside hires fail within the first 18 months in a new position. *Smart, B. 1999, Top Grading: How leading companies win by hiring, coaching and keeping the best people.*

**22%** Only 22% of the companies surveyed in 2012 by the *Allied Workforce Mobility Survey* had a formal onboarding process.

**11** Is the average number of jobs held in one person's career, according to *The Bureau of Labor Statistics*.

**25%** The cost of replacing an employee: 25% of the employee's annual salary. (*Bureau of Labor Statistics*)

Statistics provide power. Knowing what your numbers are will help you sell to your organization the need for a formal onboarding process. What is your turnover? Is it lower or higher than it was 5 years ago or compared to the national averages? Do you survey your staff for job satisfaction on a regular basis? Do you know what it costs to hire, train and place into a position a new employee? This information is vital before you begin establishing an onboarding process at your organization. If you do not have this information you should begin the process of monitoring these numbers as soon as possible.

Talya N. Bauer, Cameron Professor of Management at Portland State University and founder of Management Analytics, LLC, provides a great best practice review for establishing an onboarding process. Professor Bauer provides us with “The Four C’s”: Compliance, Clarification, Culture, and Connection. Utilizing these “Four C’s” I have created an onboarding process that moves through what Bauer describes as passive onboarding to high potential onboarding and finally to proactive onboarding.

## KEY COMPONENTS TO A SUCCESSFUL ONBOARDING PROCESS:

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**1 POSITION PREPARATION-** This involves job descriptions that are specific to the position. It should also include information such as start times, break and lunch times, and end times. It is important to also provide information on time clock locations, locker rooms, appropriate areas for breaks, proper dress and safety information. It also should include information on work rules, and policies and procedures. It would be best if it could be reviewed during the hiring process and made available prior to the associate’s first day. Another issue that should be addressed during this time is language barriers. If English is not the applicant’s first language what additional training will need to take place? An evaluation of the job skills must be completed to determine whether or not it is important that English be the applicant’s first language. If it is not necessary, then you must be prepared to provide a mentor/coach who is bilingual and can provide support through the process.

This first process of position preparation is often referred to as form of passive onboarding, covering compliance and clarification. It is the first level of onboarding.

**2 PRE-HIRING PROCESS-** The focus here is on the potential associate’s ability to perform the job requirements through prior work experience, education and training. This involves doing a personality assessment of your existing top performing staff through the utilization of customer satisfaction and associate surveys. These help identify what your organization is doing correctly and which staff members are recognized as high performers by your customers and other staff members.

Having this process in place covers Compliance, Clarification and begins to establish Culture. You are approaching the second level of onboarding: high potential.

**3 HIRING PROCESS-** Once the pre-hiring process is in place and you have established the criteria that you will use to find your new hires, you can feel confident in your hiring process. Utilizing the application process to determine prior work experience, you have isolated candidates who are capable of doing the job. The next step is to utilize the personality assessment tool to determine whether the potential candidate will augment the desired culture as well as have the ability to provide outstanding customer service. If the candidate meets both established benchmarks, then the interview process and reference checks are used to make the final decision. During the interview process the interviewer will discuss all the items reviewed in Step 1: Position Preparation. Enough time should be taken to be certain that potential new hires understand what will be expected of them if they choose to accept the job.

Proper execution of the hiring process covers Compliance, Clarification, strengthens Culture and supports the establishment of Connection. You are now moving closer to the second level of onboarding, high potential.



**5 TRAINING/SKILL DEVELOPMENT** - Formal training programs should take place directly after the orientation process and should be conducted by a coach/mentor from the existing staff that has received formal training to become a true coach/mentor. On the job training should continue through a specific period of time based on the technical difficulty of the job. In most laundry organizations, on the job training can take up to five days to accomplish. Excellent training during the onboarding process should focus on the new associate's progress, and if possible do not leave them alone for long periods during this time. Utilize a checklist that identifies the new associate's comfort with each skill necessary to be successful on the job. It should be a two way process, which allows the new associate to ask questions and review all processes associated with the tasks.

Proper training covers Compliance, and Clarification. Utilizing a mentor or coach helps to establish an understanding of the organization's Culture and reinforces Connection. You are continuing to move into high potential, level three: proactive onboarding.

**6 BUILDING POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS** - High performing organizations focus on developing positive relationships 100% of the time. Positive relationships refer to those that are "a generative source of enrichment, vitality and learning" for both individuals and organizations (Dutton and Ragins, 2007:5). Positive relationships have been found to produce greater degrees of creativity, trust and openness to new ideas (Pratt and Dirks, 2007), foster healthier team functioning (Ancona and Isaacs, 2007), and raise levels of commitment to the organization (Kahn, 2007). Allowing established associates to reach out to new staff members creates a connection that is vital to their success on their new job. New associates should be introduced to the existing staff members through out their day, including managers and executives.

Previous to my current position, I was CEO for an organization for over 20 years. Our new associate orientation included a lunch with the top executives, including myself, with the goal to an open dialogue with each of them on their work history, families and passions. Our new associate surveys consistently provided the highest scores on the CEO lunches. They felt connected with the company very rapidly. Organizations whose upper executives visit with new hires to say hello, and participate in a break or lunchtime conversations increase the success of new associate acclimation.

Strong Connectivity moves your onboarding process through level three: proactive onboarding.

**4 ORIENTATION PROCESS** - Timing of new staff orientation is critical. New associate orientation needs to occur within the first days of being on the job. Orientation can take anywhere from one to five days depending on the job complexity and the size of the organization. New associate orientation can be accomplished both formally as well as informally. Having an experienced staff member or coach spending time to welcome new associates on day one is vital. Walking them through the sign-in or punch-in process, providing them with lockers, showing them where breaks take place, introducing them to other staff members and allowing them to ask questions lowers their anxiety and creates a safe and comfortable environment.

This process continues throughout the day with the new associates receiving direction on the tasks they will be responsible for as well as the continual opportunity to ask questions. Some organizations have all new associates start on the same day and go through a formal orientation as a group, having key managers speak to them about the company and the culture of the organization. Checklists and surveys are very important in this process. Associates have the opportunity to communicate concerns and all issues are addressed rapidly.

Proper execution of the orientation process covers Compliance, Clarification, and Culture and reinforces Connection. You are now well into high potential and beginning to move towards level three: proactive onboarding.

## 7 FOLLOW-UP AND MENTORING: CONTINUATION OF CONNECTIVITY

- It is important for organizations to provide strong formal follow-up programs. The follow-up program should include a checklist with a timeline that provides reviews by a mentor who is trained to provide ongoing support to new hires. Follow up checklists should include a review of skill development, policy and procedure review, safety reviews and socialization review. This process should last throughout the first three months of their employment.

Company functions throughout the year helps both new and established associates to achieve stronger relationships and in turn strengthens culture and reduces turnover. Company activities can be lunches attended by the executives and upper management, or staff meetings on a regular basis. Another idea is fun nights that include team building games and celebrations for goals achieved throughout the year.

## 8 SURVEYS AND ASSESSMENTS

- Finally, it is important to constantly measure the success of any program and process. Surveys should be conducted during the hiring process, orientation, and training sessions. Associate satisfaction surveys should be an ongoing formal process as a review of not only the success of the onboarding process but of the overall culture of the organization.

Other key components to successful onboarding programs are the establishment of a company website that provides access for staff members to review training and development programs, assessments, and evaluations. It should also include a calendar of all events, fun nights, up coming surveys and other company activities.

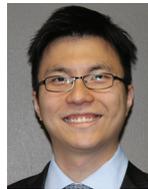
Another great way to increase the socialization of new staff members and strengthen the corporate culture is through the establishment of a company digital newsletter, Facebook page, LinkedIn and Twitter accounts.

Finally, there is the concept of onboarding through an online process. Although any onboarding process is better than none at all, utilizing an online onboarding process is not as successful as in-person processes. After all, organizational socialization is critical and must be completed through a process that includes associate-to-associate interaction, as well as associate to management interaction.

The on-boarding process, in whatever form it takes, is an invaluable tool in the hiring process and in establishing a successful work culture for your organization. While the process of crafting it and putting it into a practice may be intensive, the payout is well worth the effort.



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Chak Fu Lam received his Ph.D. in Management and Organizations from the University of Michigan, Stephen M. Ross School of Business, Ann Arbor, Michigan. He is a professor at Suffolk University - Sawyer Business School in Boston, MA. Chak Fu is currently an owner and managing partner of Positive Leader, LLC a management consultant company. Chak Fu is also an owner and managing partner for ELearning Minds, LLC an on line training and development company. Chak Fu has been a speaker and presenter at numerous healthcare facilities throughout the country.

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### Resources for Further Learning

1. Onboarding: How to get your new employees up to speed in half the time. Bradt, G., & Vonnegut, M. (2009).
2. The First 90 Days. Watkins, M. Harvard Business School Press (2003).
3. Successful Onboarding: Strategies to Unlock Hidden Value Within Your Organization, Stein, M., Christiansen, L., (2010).

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### Onboarding

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