CREATING AN ONBOARDING PROCESS

SilkRoad

Onboarding \onˈbordˈeeng\.

A systematic and comprehensive approach to integrating a new employee with a company or department, and its culture; as well as getting the new employee the tools and information they need to become productive, contributing members of your team.

During times of economic strife, organizations are being forced to focus less on recruiting and more on the retention and development of their current workforce. While the term "onboarding" isn't new, the significance of this critical period in the employee life cycle is more important than ever. A well-designed, fun and engaging onboarding process has a significantly greater effect on employee engagement and thus retention when compared to the old school mentality of one-day "orientation." In fact, The Human Resources Corporate Leadership Council found that increasing an employee's level of engagement could potentially improve performance by 20 percent and reduce the employee's probability of departure by a whopping 87 percent!

Build lasting relationships and get new hires up to speed quickly with personalized onboarding portals.

SilkRoad has been used by thousands of employees in a single day! We can help you manage change for onboarding, offboarding and every employee work event in between.

The first two steps that must be accomplished before diving into actual program creation are to take a look at your objectives for setting up a formal onboarding program and to answer some key questions - both of which are critical in order to attain team and upper management buy-in. Below you'll find a comprehensive list of items that need to be thoroughly considered before moving forward:

1. What are the objectives for the onboarding program?

2. When will formal onboarding start?

3. What will be the duration of our onboarding program?

4. What are the company values that we want to extend to the new hire?

5. What do new employees need to know about our culture and work environment that will make them feel comfortable?

6. What impression do we want them to walk away with at the end of day one?

7. What tools, supplies, etc. do employees need? Computer, phone, Blackberry, office or cubicle, etc.

8. What role will HR play in the onboarding process?

9. What role will the employees' supervisors play in the onboarding process?

10. What role will the employees' co-workers play in the onboarding process?

11. What key policies and procedures should the employee be made aware of on their first day?

12. Who is responsible for preparing tasks for day one? (i.e. getting their workstation ready, etc.)

13. What goals do we want to set for the employee?

14. How will we measure the success of the onboarding program and how frequently?(i.e. end of day one, first week, 30, 60, 90 days, 1 year)

15. How will we gather feedback on the program? (i.e. survey)

Once you've answered these questions, you can begin to formalize your onboarding program. Keep in mind that the list of things to consider can extend beyond what's presented here and it must be tailored to fit the needs and culture of your organization. What works for Company A, may not work for Company B. This list is intended to be used as a framework to get you started.

1. Start before day one

As soon as the employee accepts the offer, reach out to them and get as much accom-plished as possible. In addition to having them fill out new hire paperwork, consider answering questions in advance such as where to go on day one, who to ask for upon arrival and what to wear. Make them feel welcome before they show up!

TIP THIS IS WHERE ONBOARDING TECHNOLOGY CAN REALLY SAVE THE DAY. UTILIZING A NEW EMPLOYEE PORTAL CAN DELIVER CUSTOMIZED INFORMATION TO THE NEW HIRE AND ELECTRONIC FORMS MEAN LESS WORK ON YOUR PART.

GAMES AND GROUP ACTIVITIES CAN BE A FUN WAY TO LEARN AND NETWORK

WHILE BREAKING UP THE MONOTONY OF THOSE FIRST FEW DAYS AND WEEKS.

2. Socialization

Organizations that don't focus on acclimating new employees to their corporate culture are at a significant disadvantage. Employees who know what to expect from their company's culture and work environment, make better decisions that are more aligned with the accepted practices of the company. In addition to assisting with decision-making, the employee feels less anxiety and therefore is able to become quickly net-worked within the organization.

Again, this is where technology such as a new employee portal can come in handy. Simple things such as a welcome video or information on the dress code may seem silly to some but can make all the difference in the world to a new employee.

3. Extend it beyond day one

Studies have shown that extending onboarding beyond the first day, preferably from 3 months to one year, can significantly improve the overall experience and the resulting engagement and retention of your employee base. The first few days on the job can be crammed full of information, but if you've been able to take advantage of starting prior to day one, the amount of information you need to cover during this period will be relatively less. The remaining onboarding program can be extended over a longer period of time and activities can be scheduled at periodic intervals. This provides you the opportunity to go more in depth into certain topics than you would with programs of shorter duration. Many organizations find it useful to give new employees special assignments, rotations and have them engage in training and e-learning initiatives during this time.

THE MOST **SUCCESSFUL ONBOARDING** PROGRAMS ARE THOSE THAT LAST THE LONGEST AND **BEGIN BEFORE THE FIRST DAY** ON THE JOB.

4. Assign a mentor

The recently published Aberdeen Group onboarding benchmark report, "Fully Onboard: Getting the Most from Your Talent in the First Year" states that "Best-in-Class organizations are nearly two and one – half times more likely than Laggard organizations to assign a mentor or coach during the onboarding process." Mentoring programs come in all shapes and sizes. They can be as simple as assigning a new employee a "go-to" person or having an elaborate team of mentors for any questions that might arise. Whatever your preference, there are numerous benefits to offering mentors or coaches during the onboarding process, such as:

• improved retention

• providing culture and network assimilation

• building morale

• improved time to productivity

• providing ongoing career development

• building teams

• facilitated learning

5. Get the manager involved

The Aberdeen Group Benchmark report, "Fully Onboard: Getting the Most from Your Talent in the First Year", also states that in order to achieve Best-in-Class status, organiza-tions must have managers meet with new employees soon after the start date to set performance expectations and related development plans. This initial meeting and the involvement of the manager in the onboarding process should set clear job expectations

for the employee. Managers should also be prepared to set goals, whether it be 30, 60, 90 days or a one year plan. Setting these clear expectations up front will create a sense of ownership for the employee, reduce confusion and give them an idea of what it takes to be successful. The manager-employee relationship is the most significant in an employee's career.

HAVE A LUNCHEON FOR NEW HIRES AND MANAGERS SO THEY CAN GET TO KNOW EACH OTHER IN A MORE INFORMAL MANNER.

DID YOU KNOW: Exit-interview research shows the No. 1 reason people leave their jobs is their managers.

6. Measure the impact.

In order to determine if your program is successful you need feedback and the ability to measure the results. Surveys regarding your employees' onboarding experience given at intervals, such as the end of week one or the 30, 60, and 90-day marks, can be effective. One-on-one interviews and focus groups are useful tools at the conclusion of the onboarding process. Take these results and determine how day one readiness, time to productivity and retention rates have been affected, then use the results for continual process improvement. A few questions that can be asked in your surveys include:

- I felt welcomed at Company XYZ. True/False

- The onboarding program helped me successfully transition into the organization. True/False

- I had a telephone and telephone number on my first day. True/False

- I had a computer on my first day. True/False

- I was able to log onto my computer on my first day. True/False

- I accessed and took advantage of the new employee portal prior to my first day. True/False

- My manager was involved in my onboarding experience. True/False

- Company XYZ provided me with the tools and resources to begin building my social network at the company. True/False

- I felt the job expectations and goals were clearly set for me during the onboarding process. True/False

- Having a buddy assigned to me was useful during my first few months at work. True/False

- Overall, how satisfied were you with the onboarding program at Company XYZ?

- What suggestions do you have that can help us improve the process for future new hires?

More than likely, these questions will be slightly different depending on the frequency that you choose to perform surveys and at what intervals the employee surveys fall. For example, on a six-month survey you may want to ask questions that address such topics

as whether the employee is being given appropriate assignments and whether he or she is able to make good use of their skills and capabilities.

[With onboarding software] I could say

'here are the numbers.'

McAfee case study

7. Automate the process.

An ever-increasing number of organizations are moving to an automated onboarding process, specifically in the areas of electronic forms, task management and portals to integrate employees into the culture quickly.
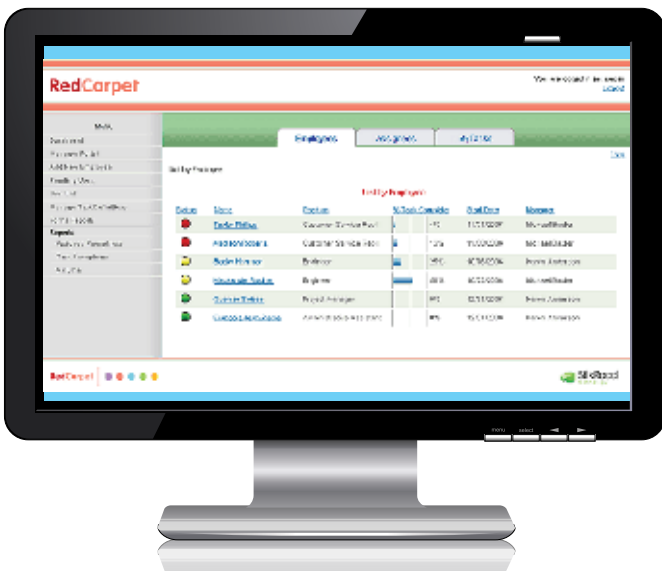
43% of organizations cited "automation of onboarding processes" as a top way their onboarding processes will change.

An automated process can be much easier to manage and can save vast amounts of time and money.

Aberdeen Group's 2009 Onboarding Benchmark Report provides some interesting facts around utilizing technology to onboard employees:

Several organizations that achieved Best-in-Class results and have automated onboarding forms and/or tasks management uncovered cost savings and productivity gains that ranged from a couple hundred to more than one thousand dollars per new employee onboarded

FUN FACT: After Seagate Technology implemented an automated onboarding process with SilkRoad, new hire performance ratings for onboarding went from 3.09 to 4.24 on a scale of 1 to 5 -- a 37% improvement! As for the completion rate of pre-day-one onboarding tasks and form completion, more than 80% of new hires completed all of their tasks before the due dates.

Final Thoughts

While there's a lot to think about when it comes to developing an onboarding program at your organization, the results will make it well worth the effort! Increased employee engagement, retention and productivity are just a few of the benefits that can be realized by putting some of the tips and tricks in this eBook into action. Even if you're not hiring and onboarding a tremendous number of employees today, now is the time to think through what you need to do in order to implement a program. In addition to the benefits to your employee base, you can save thousands of dollars in paper as well as administrative and training costs by automating your onboarding process with a technology solution.