On-boarding and cultural integration: The first 90 days

Research shows that 27% of people who leave an organization leave within the first ninety days of employment, and 50% of employees leave within the first year of employment.

This is the time when the candidate looks around at all of the new faces and thinks, "Did I really make the right decision? Maybe I can still get my old job back or maybe I should try to set up some new interviews." I cannot emphasize enough the importance of getting the first days and weeks of employment for your new hire off to a positive start. Don't allow the honeymoon between your new hire and your organization to end prematurely. Make a concerted effort to make the first 90 days feel as positive as the interviews did.

WELCOME ABOARD: REFINE THE EMPLOYEE ON-BOARDING PROCESS

Years ago, on a new hire's start date, it was customary to hand out a stack of HR forms, send him off to the standard "orientation" presentation and company tour, and hope for the best. But today, in our fast-paced, customer-focused, and increasingly technical world, it takes

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much more to get a recently hired manager or employee up to speed and ready to hit the ground running. As a matter of fact, you should just drop the word "orientation" from your vocabulary. Today the process is known as on-boarding and it lasts far longer than the new hire's first day. The concept of on-boarding implies that you have a customized strategy in place for bringing a new team member on board and showing them the ropes. Throughout the process those involved in on-boarding the new hire should exemplify the goals of the organization, department, and position; explain the roles of each department and how they work together; and explain how the new hire and their responsibilities will affect their department and the organization.

Five Best Practices for Effective On-boarding

1. Develop a clear game plan for each hire.
2. Include all relevant departments.
3. Clarify expectations from day one.
4. Take advantage of technology and networking.
5. Provide early and frequent feedback.

Essentially, you want to plan out the new hires' first 30 days so that they can be on-boarded successfully and in a way that benefits them and the organization. Create a plan for the first two weeks that will help you train the new employees, help them manage their work load, and

allow time for them to build deeper relationships with you and their coworkers. Then, plan out the following two weeks. Make sure your new hires are staying busy, but not so busy that they are overwhelmed. Effective on-boarding certainly requires more investment of time and resources than the day-long orientation process of the past. But if you are looking to drive innovation and instill a commitment to excellence, your chances of success will start on that first day. In the words of Ted Forbes, "When on-boarding becomes a strategic process, it creates an atmosphere in which employees are engaged, productive, and excited about their jobs, brightening everyone's prospects, especially the organization's." Definitely a win-win for everyone!

RETENTION STARTS FROM DAY ONE

Nothing welcomes new employees better than leaders, departments, and peers being ready for new employees when they arrive. On the day the new hires start, make sure everything is ready for them so that they can actually start woring that day. Unfortunately, too often new employees hear remarks like:

– "Well, I guess we'll have to find a place for you to sit."
– "Take these manuals and procedures and read them for the rest of the week."
– "We still need to order a phone for you."
– "Didn't your boss tell you? She'll be on vacation all this week." Consider the following to make a great impression on your new employee:
– Order phone, business cards, and email address in advance of the start date.
– Assign a partner or buddy for the first month to show the new employee around the department and organization.
– Arrange to have a lunch partner every day of the first week (nights or days).
– Post the new employee's photo on a poster board and leave space for the new hire to write information such as nick-

name, favorite hobby, where they were born, went to school, pet's name, significant others in their life, etc.

Since we all know that people like to feel appreciated, taking the time to make your new hire feel appreciated will help them forget about their old organization. When you schedule a start date for a new hire, remember to send the candidate a welcome aboard gift box or basket, with a book, a coffee mug, some special coffee, candies, etc., and a nice letter thanking the new hire for allowing you to assist them in their career advancement. Make this a planned step in your on-boarding process to further differentiate you from your competition. Let new employees know you will be meeting with them on their thirty and ninety day anniversaries to discuss how they are doing. Let them also know they should not wait if there is any way you can help in the interim, or if they have any ideas to share.

THE 30-DAY REVIEW

Research shows that a poor relationship with the boss is the number-one reason employees leave. The 30- and 90-Day meetings with the manager are excellent tools for establishing a successful employee-leader relationship. Meeting with a new hire on day 30 sets the stage for open communication and creates an opportunity for two-way feedback. If the employee feels empowered to give feedback, it will enhance retention and improve the workplace. You can also learn whether the new employee needs help or support in their new position.

Here are a few sample questions to discuss at Day 30:

– What is working well? Are there any individuals who have been helpful to you?
– Based on your prior work, what ideas for improvement do you have?
– Is there any reason you feel this is not the right place for you?

Make sure to dig deep to find answers and demonstrate that you value the contributions of the new hire. By uncover-

ing issues early on, you have a better chance of resolving them and increasing employee satisfaction.

THE 90-DAY REVIEW

You may recall what your first days were like – too much information! The 90-Day orientation is an excellent tool to enhance your retention rate and increase the effectiveness of the training your new employees need. The 90-Day orientation demonstrates commitment to development and takes place at a time when the new employee is ready to learn more. It also provides an opportunity for leaders to learn what is working well in the organization.

Here are a few sample topics to discuss at Day 90:

– Based on your prior work, what ideas for improvement do you have?
– Is there any reason you feel this is not the right place for you?
– Do you know of anyone who would be a good fit for our organization?
– As your supervisor, how can I help you?

You can also use this time to review answers and suggestions from the 30-Day meeting and discuss progress that has occurred since then. By making a new employee feel comfortable Day 1, and following through with a 30-Day and 90-Day review, you demonstrate commitment and support for new hires and reinforce the fact that they made a good decision by coming to work with your team.