



WORDS ON WISE MANAGEMENT

Onboarding: Are you enacting the lemon law strategy?

by Brad Federman

I recently worked with a company on its talent management strategy, and I heard a number of things from focus groups, including:

- Employees accepted the position because it was a job, not for a higher purpose.
- Employees were never told why they were hired and what would make them successful.
- Orientation was short and administratively driven, not learner- or employee-centered.

The way an employer brings people on board makes a big difference in how employees perform, how they feel about their decision to take the job, and whether they will stay. Some employees may feel buyer's remorse—like after buying a used car. They may even want to take advantage of the lemon law and find a new job. Other employees may feel a sense of pride from day one.

What's the difference? It could be the job, the cultural fit, the employee's manager, or your onboarding process. Typically, the employer's onboarding practice (or lack of one) affects the job and cultural fit. Too many employers have poor selection processes and leave managers in the dark about their onboarding practice.

Every onboarding process should include:

- **A clear reason the candidate was hired and why she will be successful.** A new employee who understands why she stood out and which competencies and characteristics will help her be successful in your organization will perform better, have a reduced learning curve, and have a stronger desire to stay. However, this step is usually skipped by most hiring managers.
- **A three- to six-month plan.** Onboarding is more than paperwork and a half-day session with HR. It takes time to develop a broad knowledge base, which helps new employees perform better and establishes a collaborative culture.
- **A development plan based on information collected during the selection process.** The biggest challenge in creating development plans is that HR does not know the employee well enough. Using strong tools and techniques, including

testing and appropriate behavioral interviews with trained interviewers, will help you collect a great deal of information about new employees. It should be fairly easy to create a productive development plan within a new employee's first two weeks of employment.

- **A buddy, mentoring, or coaching component.** People learn and gain cultural understanding through relationships. Tasking someone with helping a new employee become successful is a smart move for both the organization and the employee. The employee will be able to discuss concerns and vent safely.
- **A self-paced learning component.** New employees should be responsible and accountable for their success and learning. To create a self-sufficient employee, your onboarding process should have a component the employee must complete on his own.
- **Connections to people and departments in the organization.** Every onboarding plan should allot time to visit important departments and meet with key executives. Those activities help develop employees who think they are part of a team.
- **A quick win!** A quick win builds confidence, and confidence builds success. Early success means a new employee will have a good starting experience, will produce results sooner, and will want to stay. To ensure a quick win, managers must consider the first assignments delegated to new employees. For example, some companies give new sales reps a customer or two to get started.

A small investment in your onboarding process can reduce unwanted and unnecessary turnover. In addition, it will help eliminate the need to fire someone because he is not working out. Finally, successful onboarding will produce a sense of pride, stronger morale, and confidence in new employees.



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