

Onboarding, done well

Why Onboarding is Your Biggest Opportunity
to Foster Employee Resilience & Engagement
(& How to Capitalize on It)



Summary

Changing jobs is like changing lives. The experience of critical junctures such starting with a new project, on a new job, in another company, industry in another location or all of those together are often the worst times of people's lives. The steep toll that this takes on mental fitness lowers the new employees productivity and creates further tensions at the new place of work. The overall effect of letting employees muddle through critical junctures is lower company performance. Companies should not leave their newly hired members struggle, companies should take responsibility for the results and improve them.

Onboarding, done well, can help with fast and full integration of new employees. Woosh5 has developed a unique hybrid solution that supports each individual throughout the critical juncture. A carefully orchestrated process of online and offline activities helps with significantly improving the experience of new employees on the job. Raising their readiness to perform at the personal peak sooner, helps companies to achieve the objectives faster and with more accuracy.

Onboarding, done well

How hybrid support wins the day

There are many challenges that HR in companies needs to address to ensure success¹. While clearly technological change, increasing competitiveness and regulatory constraints are important, mostly the human experience is overlooked. Although we know of the importance of physical exercise and a focus on food, only now mental health is gaining more attention².

Mental resilience has emerged as a key factor in employee ability to perform at their personal best for their companies. Mental resilience is at risk due to many factors including hardship, crises, and extreme stress in their personal or professional lives. Few things disrupt careers as much as changing jobs. Surely, this is distressing when the change people lose their jobs involuntarily. However, even when a change of jobs is initiated by professionals as a career choice, joining a new company is a critical juncture. A new job, a new project or a new place of work compounds challenges for the individuals making the change but also for the sitting colleagues who need to adjust as well. Both sides need to pay attention, both sides need to adapt, and they need to do it quickly, and naturally, of course, with a positive attitude. Therefore, much weight lies on the first impressions in first weeks are very important in influencing whether the investments made will pay off for all new colleagues and the company.

The pressure caused by a change of jobs is considerable and undermines mental fitness, often temporarily, occasionally for the long term. Employees feeling the pressure, often suffer from it, which reduces their productivity. The costs associated with such a decline in mental fitness and productivity reduces the benefits that a company can expect and a new place of work can offer the newcomer. This deters companies from hiring and employees from changing jobs. This tendency to stay longer in the same job is detrimental to job mobility, knowledge sharing and rewiring knowledge and skills, which is often seen as important driver of innovation. To sum, the first weeks are key and those who change jobs are often left alone to cope. What could be done?

Preparation and guidance

Preparation for what is coming helps professionals to prepare for the move and organizations for their arrival. What does such preparation entail? Work needs to be done on skills, identity and culture. Personal skills, including empathy, openness and optimism, are essential to be arrive and adopt well on a new job. Identity work should help newcomers to join and sitting staff to welcome support they do not yet know well. Clearly culture plays an important role on both sides; which culture did the new colleague experience before, which culture do they find. Following preparation, guidance for the first weeks are needed as well. Having someone to consult with during the heat of the change can provide the information and personal support needed. Woosh5 Onboarding provides both.

Onboarding ... towards something new

Making a change, commencing with a new project, role, job are critical junctures that challenge those who make these changes. Brave enough to go for it, they bear the brunt of the challenge. We know of the importance of onboarding practices including clear goals, socialization, mentoring, and follow-up³.

Expanding on such insights, Woosh5 seeks to help people fit in and find themselves in the new situation. Rather than fitting them in, like fitting squares into holes, an onboarding program focuses on firms' abilities to support new employees to join quickly and effectively so that they can reach the levels of productivity they have been hired for. Successful onboarding helps people find fit.

Onboarding ... common and excellent practice

Onboarding comes in different flavors. Most companies provide support over a period of time, short or long term, from days to months. Frequently they include discussions of job expectations and evaluation criteria, many cover a company's mission, vision, and values. When it comes to explaining organizational culture and politics much less is covered. Many use check lists to manage the onboarding process⁴. Occasionally companies help new employees with dealing with change, or understanding the team-based environment, how diversity is managed. Exceptional organizations, like Google empower newcomers to "feel at home" adopting company practices, they leverage peer-learning and collaborative practices. Reducing isolation, such practices enhance collegiality and raises employee morale⁵.

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Successful onboarding leads then to measurable increases in job satisfaction of the newcomers, but there are also positive effect for the rest of the organization who do not suffer the likely disruptions without onboarding.

Higher Productivity with Woosh5 Onboarding

Helping people rediscover themselves in their new place of work, Woosh5 Onboarding focuses on the individual, they have multiple complementary elements that address the needs and emotions of individuals to facilitate fast and full integration.

A focus on the individual is essential because every professional who changes employment is unique and each company is unique. Therefore each job change or each new project presents the individuals with challenges that go beyond the task and companies with the opportunities to leverage the new employees or project team members' resources. Developing a process for each individual allows each to discover their core strengths and how to build on them, Woosh5 helps new employees to reconnect and rediscover their strengths⁶. Such a process no only surfaces the authentic strengths but also takes into account the highly specific situation. Rediscovering their strengths is an important step to lay the foundation for success starting in the first weeks.

Changing jobs or project teams is a complex change. In order to support people during this critical juncture, we need different, complementary components that address the informational, emotional and social needs to people going through the critical 90 days. Research shows how unconscious processes that involve affective reactions can strongly influence the ways we make decisions and the ways we behave⁷. Especially, strong emotions that during critical junctures are often negative require attention during onboarding. Consider how fear, anxiety or even insecurity can derail even seasoned professionals when they feel thrown into a new context. Woosh5 Onboarding helps individuals to address their personal challenges through complementary approaches and achieve fast and full integration in a new work environment.

Resources

1. <http://www.humanresourcesonline.net/top-5-trends-and-challenges-for-hr-in-2018/>
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<https://www.forbes.com/sites/cheetung/2017/12/19/four-key-hr-trends-to-watch-in-2018/#3edb2a6e19de>
2. <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/health/>
<https://www.mentalhealth.gov/basics/what-is-mental-health>
3. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbescoachescouncil/2017/01/30/seven-new-onboarding-strategies-youll-see-this-year/#1e88e12e7b4d>; Klein et al. (2015) Specific Onboarding Practices for the Socialization of New Employees, International Journal of Selection and Assessment, 23, 3, 263-283.
- 4 Graybill, et al. (2011) Employee onboarding: identification of best practices in ACRL libraries, Library Management
- 5 Johnson and Senge (2009) Learning to be a programmer in a complex organization: A case study on practice-based learning during the onboarding process at Google, Journal of Workplace Learning, 22, 3, 180-194.
- 6 Cable et al. (2013) Reinventing Employee Onboarding, MIT Sloan Management Review, Spring, 23-28.
- 7 Kahneman, Thinking Fast, Thinking Slow