

Are You Losing Potential New Hires at Hello?

Organizations need strong new hire onboarding processes.

By Laurie Friedman

Employee onboarding is a strategic opportunity for organizations to increase retention and employee engagement. As companies compete for talent and baby boomers leave the workplace en masse, building new hire onboarding processes will be a strategic opportunity that organizations cannot afford to miss.

According to the Corporate Leadership Council, successful onboarding is 60 percent talent and 40 percent support.

Recruitment, retention, and development of top talent requires more than good program design. Organizations need to shift their focus from recruitment and retention to adoption, development, and retention of workforce talent.

Key strategic opportunities exist to build integrated talent management processes that include leadership and supervision throughout the company. Leveraging new hire success and building integrated talent management requires a shift from a functional mindset to a process focus. Integrating new hires into the organization requires the formation of a mutually satisfying relationship.

First impression

In the movie *Jerry McGuire*, Tom Cruise's



character returns to the house to beg Renee Zellweger's character to take him back. During the exchange, she says, "You had me at hello."

Organizations need to adopt this attitude to attract and retain top talent. Recruitment efforts bring potential hires to your door, but how well your organization manages the interview process will influence whether the candidate takes the position. It also provides the candidate with a long-term impression of your organization. The first impression can create a lasting impression, so make the most of that first meeting.

Additionally, there are several crucial questions that need to be answered prior to the candidate's arrival, such as: What will the potential new hire learn about your company during the interview process? Are they kept waiting prior to meeting the hiring manager? Are employees friendly and welcoming? How is information shared about why your company is a great place to work?

Even if the candidate is not brought into the company, she may refer other potential candidates to your company. You want the referral to be a positive one.

Integration

The work is not over once you have hired your new employee. It is crucial to have a strategy to ensure your employee

remains happy with the job. Your organization needs to support the new hire's integration and adoption into the workforce. Find ways to leverage the enthusiasm and excitement that new hires bring to the workforce.

Most organizations spend more energy on celebrating retirees than they do celebrating the new hires. Mark a new hire's arrival with welcoming strategies. Organize meet and greets or hang a welcome banner on her office door. Let the new employee know you are happy she is part of the team. The Corporate Leadership Council's research suggests that new employees decide within the first 30 days whether they feel welcome in the organization.

Some organizations welcome their new hires with a great ceremony similar to a big wedding and complete with a formal orientation. This tactic can be hugely successful if it is designed to provide new hires with the information they need to be successful on the job. Too often the "wedding" approach does not support a continuous process and is the last stop in a functional approach to onboarding.

Research suggests that one of the keys to orientation is creating a clear line of sight that shows how the new employee's work contributes to the overall success of the company. How well is your organization creating this line of sight? What are the best delivery methods to integrate new hires into your company?

Onboarding doesn't have to end after the new employee's first day. As the employee gains tenure in the organization, the orientation program should be more than one stop in the new hire process.

Organizations that conduct group orientation sessions should evaluate what information is shared versus what is missing. Is enough information being provided to support integration into the organization? If so, how is the orientation follow-up process? The company's vision, mission, and values should be articulated clearly in words and actions.

Fundamentals //

When revamping your onboarding program, make sure your program includes answers to these questions:

- What are the political minefields that new hires need to maneuver?
- What role should the new hire's supervisor play?
- What are the new hire's training needs?
- What strategies does your organization have in place to ensure cultural information is shared effectively?
- Are mentors available to support new hire integration?

New hire development

Once the formal orientation process concludes, it is important for new hires to build personal relationships quickly. Organizations should identify candidates inside and outside the human resources department who can make sure the new hire has the information she needs to be successful. Some organizations assign a mentor to ease the transition.

Best practices—such as completing forms and reviewing policies and procedures that support behavioral integration and support—should be part of the new hire orientation processes.

All employment agreements require a period of adjustment as the employee and employer learn to live together. Making sure the new employee is part of the team is as important to building retention as developing effective recruitment strategies is to hiring. For new employees to be successful, they need to be welcomed into the team and the organization. A failure to integrate the employee into the office culture is a frequent contributor to low retention rates. Without careful planning, analysis, and design, cultural obstacles will impede the development of new talent.

Organizations suffer from their own kind of bystander indifference. Fear of speaking up, jealousy, competition, and

the inability to achieve consensus are some of the reasons organizations fail to manage cultural challenges effectively. New hires can offer you real-time feedback on what is working or not working. Develop open lines of communication.

Companies that do not manage organizational dynamics may find themselves dealing with employees who are in the office but not actively engaged, and that can lead to decreased productivity, morale, and business results. Consequently, that can result in good talent walking out the door.

Successful onboarding requires support, collaboration, and preparation. Do not underestimate the power of your organization's culture. Make sure that your new hire onboarding conforms to your corporate culture. Recruitment processes should include actions to determine the appropriate employee-employer match before hiring. Leaders need to be trained to provide support for their new hire.

No matter how hard you try, some employees will leave your organization. Benefit from their experience by using their input to strengthen your process.

The keys to recruiting and retaining new talent are not complex, yet far too many organizations are functioning with a revolving door policy when it comes to talent management. If your organization suffers from a one-size-fits-all orientation approach, and you believe that talent is walking out your door, you need to strengthen your new-employee processes.

Twenty-eight percent of the workforce is part of the baby boom generation, and like it or not, they will be leaving. The future of any business depends upon the recruitment, development, and retention of a workforce prepared to embrace your organization's future.

Laurie Friedman has more than 10 years experience in human resources and organizational development; LCF10@aol.com.

Send submissions to Michael Laff, T+D, 1640 King Street, Box 1443, Alexandria, VA 22313-2043; mlaff@astd.org.