

Onboarding

How One Company (Finally) Got On Board with Onboarding

There are a lot of things employers can do to find and keep good employees. I'll argue that one essential piece to happy hires is effective onboarding. A recent case study found new hires who attended a structured orientation program were [69 percent more likely](#) to stay with the company for at least three years. But proper onboarding is more than just an orientation day.

Onboarding broadly includes everything that an employee needs to become socialized into the organization. It's all the things, such as meeting co-workers, a functional workstation, logging into company email, etc., that quickly get people working productively while integrating them into the company culture.

I know what a headache onboarding can be for new hires, and for their managers who are usually burdened with the task. Often, the pieces of onboarding are spread out across an organization. The IT department assigns an email and provides a laptop. HR has administrative details related to payroll and benefits to complete. Someone needs to find a desk...or a Zoom account. The hiring manager has to get all those pieces moving, make introductions and get the employee's workload going. It's a pain point for just about everyone. And now, the entire process must be executed virtually. So, if onboarding wasn't working well before, it's likely even worse now.

But there is a better way. I led a cross functional team that built an effective and virtual onboarding program for one large, global company. While there was blood, sweat, and tears, the work wasn't nearly as painful as we expected, and the payoff was huge.

New hire satisfaction rates soared to 90 percent. Not only did we smooth out the process of bringing on new hires, but the new operational processes also had a ripple effect across the organization. We moved to 100 percent auto-provisioning of Active Directory, LAN, email and home drive access. Cross-departmental support dropped from 48-hour turnaround to just 4 hours. New Hire help desk calls went down by 47 percent, with "password issues" – the most frequent ticket and a huge productivity drain – down 86 percent. Overall, support teams were able to shift from firefighting to more productive work

Here's how we did it:

Rapid assessment of the current state

We started by putting together a shopping list, so to speak, of all the things that need to happen during onboarding. We didn't look at how (or if) these things were happening, just what needed to be done. We also looked at the various types of new hires to see what role gets which stuff. We talked to all of the stakeholders – everyone who owned pieces of the process and solutions. That included recent new hires, their managers, HR folks, IT, etc.

We then looked at current capabilities for getting all the things on the onboarding shopping list checked off. What was in place? In the works? Under consideration? From there, we could make clear assignments for who was responsible for which item on our list.

Design a roadmap with direction and wins along the way

We used what we learned to design a realistic roadmap that included the intersection of urgency and capability. We developed performance metrics early in the process to track whether or not we were solving pain points. We knew we couldn't fix everything at once. But we could find out which was the most urgent, which was the easiest, and build in quick, short-, medium-, long- term wins – celebrating each along the way to build momentum. That kept everyone actively engaged in the process instead of defaulting to the previous "this is a nightmare" mindset.

Keys to success

We gave the onboarding revamp project full visibility across the organization. It kept those of us working on it on the hook, but it also made it easy to gather suggestions for improvement—this required consistent, frequent, and multi-audience communication. The visibility, feedback channels, and regular wins kept everyone looking for solutions.

We relied on the experts in each division, functional, and support area. We gave them room to shine and boost their visibility within their groups, but we also managed to foster a culture that worked more naturally across teams. We also took a "rising tides raise all ships approach" so that solutions found in one area were applied company wide. As a result, if we fixed a problem in one place, we fixed the same problem everywhere. We discovered the core tenants of a good onboarding process: transparency, process improvement, standardization, and automation.

Successful execution of a such an integrated process does require organizational patience and sponsorship from the leadership team. But, remember, more than onboarding gets fixed with an overhaul like this. Things get fixed everywhere.

I'd be interested to hear your thoughts on our approach or answer your questions if you want to learn more. And the combined expertise of the Stanton Blackwell team adds up to decades of experience helping organizations sort out operational quirks and hiccups, so feel free to get in touch to talk through your onboarding or other process pain points.

Give us a call at (703) 254-7071 or send us an email at info@stantonblackwell.com. We are interested in learning more about your vision.



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Alex offers Stanton Blackwell almost 25 years of experience in strategic planning, program management, and project execution, with a specialization in technology governance and operational efficiency. She helps clients simplify a broad scope of issues and opportunities, into a prioritized, impactful and achievable solution roadmap, and then supports its execution.

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