

# ONBOARDING AT THE SPEED OF GROWTH

How to slash your ramp time  
for a stronger team, faster





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# INTRODUCTION

For most companies, particularly in the high-tech sector, onboarding is critical to human success. Ramp up new hires too slowly, and you lose out on productivity. Overwhelm your new recruits with too much information too soon, however, and the risk of training missteps (and, as we'll mention later, the risk of turnover) is measurably higher.

That's why it's important to extend employee onboarding into learning and development to boost engagement and, in turn, increase knowledge retention for a longer, happier employment relationship for everyone.



## CHAPTER 1

# THE CHALLENGE

On one hand, there's the natural pressure to hire and onboard more people. But you also need to keep up with growth. The unique aspects of building teams across a global company add another layer to the challenge.

Left unchecked, exceptional growth can tend to leave some facets of the company's infrastructure slightly less developed than others, along with an ongoing evolution of your company's strategy and sales methodology can also cause weaknesses to pop up.

Before your onboarding strategy collapses under pressure, it's important to resist the urge to reinvent the onboarding wheel.



## CHAPTER 2

## WHAT'S YOUR ONBOARDING PROCESS LIKE?

The (sometimes scary) truth is that many companies don't actually have a structured onboarding process in place.

A typical example: The company hires new salespeople and begins by providing them with a few pieces of standard in-person training material. Next, they push the new hires a series of product-centric documents, like PDFs, spreadsheets, or instructional reading. Oftentimes this neglects to include actual sales process training, let alone a training plan with measurable (and attainable) objectives.

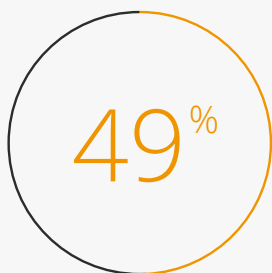
Moreover, when onboarding needs to accelerate as the flow of new hires grows, a mixed approach invariably fails, simply because it can't scale.

Research shows that one in three companies either don't have an onboarding process, or their onboarding process doesn't include training.

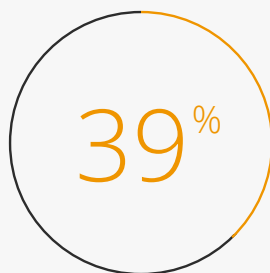
It's no wonder one-third of newly hired employees leave their company (voluntarily or involuntarily) before the end of their first year.

Employee onboarding rests between the new hire experience and talent management throughout the employee-employer relationship. Extending onboarding into learning and development only drives an increase in employee retention.

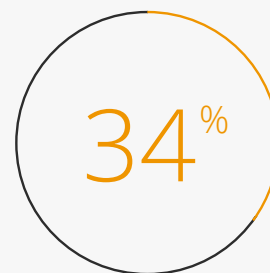
*According to Brandon Hall Group, engaging and retaining the workforce is by far a top concern for human resource managers:*



ENGAGING  
AND RETAINING  
EMPLOYEES



DEVELOPING LEADERS  
AND MANAGING  
SKILL GAPS



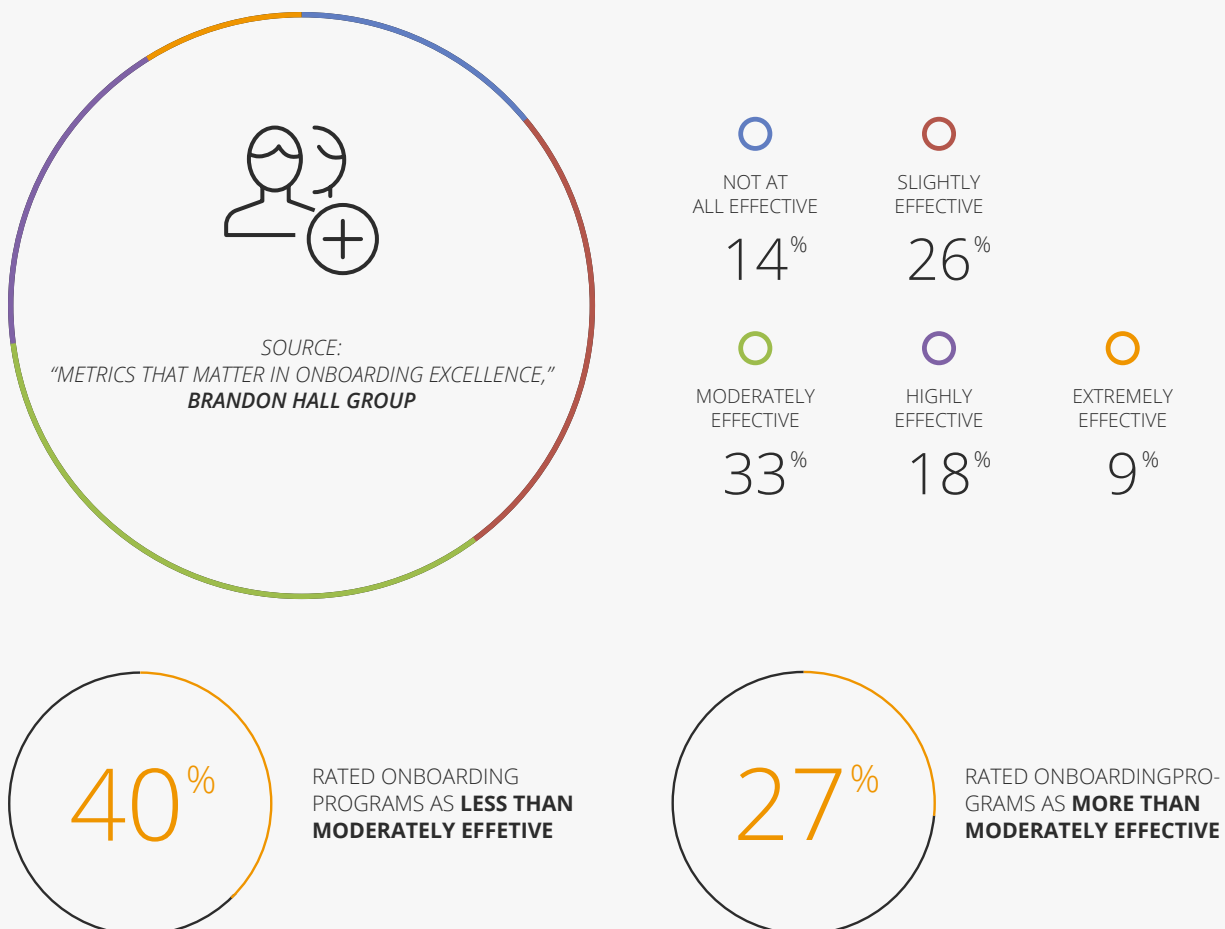
RECRUITING  
THE BEST  
EMPLOYEES

According to the Allied Workforce Mobility Survey, companies lose almost one-quarter of new employees within a year, and many other new hires never reach their target productivity levels.

Why?

- ➔ Many companies don't measure employee retention and/or productivity
- ➔ Many companies do not have onboarding programs and most do not have a specified budget for this program
- ➔ Many firms do not provide coaching or mentoring
- ➔ Training is not a component of many onboarding programs
- ➔ Many companies do not establish clear expectations
- ➔ Most companies do not conduct "stay interviews"

<sup>1</sup> *Best practices for retaining new employees: New approaches to effective onboarding*





## CHAPTER 3

## BEST PRACTICES IN EMPLOYEE ONBOARDING

Research suggests that onboarding may be the most critical time in an employee's experience at a company - one that has a long-lasting impact on engagement, performance, and retention.

In a recent article, the Harvard Business Review reports that too many new hires slip away because of a poor initial experience with their new company:

→ The old saying applies here: "The best time to find a job is when you already have a job." People have caught on: Nearly 33% of new hires in the U.S. look for a new job within their first six months on the job. (Among millennials, that percentage is even higher - and it happens earlier.)

→ 23% percent of new hires turnover before their first anniversary.

→ The organizational costs of employee turnover are estimated to range between one and three times the employee's salary.

→ It typically takes eight months for a newly hired trainee to reach full productivity.

### INDUSTRY BENCHMARK FOR EMPLOYEE TURNOVER

29%

INDUSTRY BENCHMARK FOR 90-DAY  
TURNOVER IS 19.7-(29%)

25%

INDUSTRY BENCHMARK FOR 1ST-YEAR  
IS 20-25%

### THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN HIGH-PERFORMING ORGANIZATIONS AND THE REST:

64%

OF HIGHLY EFFECTIVE ONBOARDING PROGRAMS  
GO WELL BEYOND A NEW HIRE'S FIRST WEEK.

25%

EXTEND THREE MONTHS AND EVEN  
THROUGH THE FIRST YEAR.

Source: Brandon Hall Group Research Team

# Follow these best practices to maintain the momentum built up in the interview process:

## **EXTEND YOUR ONBOARDING TO LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT**

The best onboarding doesn't stop when someone's "on board." It's important to provide support and opportunities for personal and professional development beyond the first year of employment. By cultivating an onboarding strategy with versatile technology at its core, your people are more engaged and more likely to return for more information, beyond their mandatory training and assessments.

## **SET UP A COMPREHENSIVE, MULTIMODAL ONBOARDING PROCESS**

Offer new hires a healthy combination of training, performance management, mentoring, coaching and goal-setting. Instead of allowing a push-only modality for learning content (online or instructor-led training), enable a pull modality, where new hires can access learning assets and reach out to subject matter experts when they need them, whether they're looking for information on process or product.

## **ADDRESS LEARNING AT THE POINT OF NEED**

Make it easy for new hires to find what they need, when they need it. Instead of dumping content into a series of exhausting full-day workshops, avoid information overload by devising a roadmap that supports and directs the learning process, and make available mentors and coaches for trainees to learn from during onramping. It can be helpful for the manager and the trainee to discuss their respective vision for the role, define successful performance, goals and identify necessary resources.

You should be able to walk away with a dynamic plan that can adapt to meet the needs of your new employee, while helping him or her have the best chance at meeting expectations.

## **TAKE IT GLOBAL**

If you have international teams, build an onboarding process that accounts for regional differences. Start with your highest priority region first, then expand from there. On the national level, start small with one department or organization, implement more training components, measure the impact, optimize, rinse and repeat.



## KEY ONBOARDING METRICS

According to Brandon Hall Group's 2014 "State of Talent Acquisition" report, a mere 27% rated their onboarding process as more than moderately effective. This elite group is outperforming their competition in a number of ways – including increases in revenue and gains in employee engagement metrics.

What sets these organizations apart is not just a more robust onboarding program, but also their dedication to measuring impact. By identifying KPIs and tracking the metrics that matter, these organizations are keeping ahead of the curve.

There are several metrics that can be used, from candidate experience score to new hire performance. But in this diverse pool of data, four very strategic metrics should always be tracked. Each influences the other, so all four are connected:

### **TIME TO PRODUCTIVITY OR TIME TO PROFICIENCY**

Decrease in average employee tenure – from entry level to C-level – have made proficiency metrics a top priority. Time to productivity defines how employee performance looks when the worker is at full productivity.

### **ENGAGEMENT**

This is the primary driver for employee retention. As Gallup Research reports in its "State of the American Workplace" report for 2014, Engaged employees work with passion and feel a profound connection to their company. They drive innovation and move the organization forward. Others are not engaged, or worse, are actively disengaged. They simply drive retention down.

### **COST METRICS**

(e.g. cost for employees at 50% or 100% productivity)

### **EMPLOYEE RETENTION OR REDUCTION**

in voluntary turnover (e.g. at 6 or 12 months)

#### **TIP**

*Be sure to also measure the attribution to the onboarding plan for success. When the formal onboarding plan is complete, ask your employee to attribute the success of their first win. Is it a sale, or a customer satisfaction goal? Do they attribute their success to the onboarding plan they just finished? If so, you can rest easy knowing your onboarding process is likely doing its job.*





# THE ROLE OF LEARNING TECHNOLOGY IN ONBOARDING

Top performing organizations use a variety of technologies to enable and support a comprehensive onboarding program, from before the day of the interview all the way through long-term retention.

Learning technology plays a primary role as it extends the reach of, and the soundness of, a well-thought onboarding plan.

## Extend onboarding into L&D with learning technology

The best possible solution links the two practices, so that even in the early recruiting stages, the company has identified training needs to ensure new hires are successful on the job. Learning happens in a variety of ways, and technology is increasingly supporting it well beyond traditional web-based training courses.

A sound learning program always includes a combination of learning modalities. Let's take a look:

### **CLASSROOM (INSTRUCTOR-LED) TRAINING**

Live ILT is expensive and time-consuming. Knowledge retention after an intensive classroom training, during an exhausting sales kickoff meeting, is abysmal. Salespeople don't typically like to be removed from the field for an extended period of time, but classroom training can significantly reinforce learning material by providing an opportunity to practice the skills required. This is also known as "homework."

On the other hand, virtual ILT is incredibly convenient, as participants can access and take courses from anywhere, reducing or avoiding altogether time away from the field, which can damage productivity for some teams. The best virtual ILT offers learners frequent opportunities for collaboration using chat, polling, discussions and interactive exercises.

### ONLINE LEARNING

Training fits in when it works best for the learner, meaning peak activity hours can remain uninterrupted. Your sales team can access training anytime, even on the go. And self-paced learning can serve as a primer to prepare participants for instructor-led classes.

Online learning is proving a great way to reinforce training, as it can be delivered in short, two to three minute modules on-demand, from any device. Elearning allows trainers to reuse existing content across a variety of courses and learning plans that can be built online and made available in minutes, to every team across the globe. Not only can you manage and distribute learning content on an online training platform, but the tracking and reporting capabilities of these solutions are unmatched.

### ON-THE-JOB TRAINING

Good old-fashioned, hands-on application will never go out of style. The key here is to ensure your training program provides individual attention and immediate feedback for trainees. Moreover, complementing on-the-job training with classroom events and augmenting them with a solid coaching and mentoring program are essential steps toward making the most out of this training modality.

### 5 WAYS TO CONNECT ONBOARDING TO LEARNING AND PERFORMANCE

- ➔ Connect your development and training strategy to short- and long-term talent needs and plans
- ➔ Design practical learning efforts that fit organizational characteristics
- ➔ Know the job requirements, and ensure training is relevant and timely
- ➔ Understand what motivates and drives employees, and ensure training is connected to those items
- ➔ Provide training in transferable skills to improve mobility, engagement, and long-term performance



# NEVER ADOPT THE WRONG LEARNING MANAGEMENT SYSTEM AGAIN

## 8 TIPS AND TRICKS FOR MAKING THE RIGHT BUY

- ➔ With a learning management system (LMS) that allows you to centralize all your learning content, you gain a single repository across various business units and organizational branches, rather than having to manage content across multiple systems.
- ➔ One size doesn't always fit all when it comes to onboarding and training sales personnel. An integrated LMS loaded with relatable onboarding content can make it easier for new hires to meet expectations.
- ➔ Link your end users (learners) to the subject matter experts in your organization to bring light to the knowledge that your people may never have known was available to them. Beyond simple courses and learning plans, an end-to-end LMS should support both social learning - that is, learning that happens via peer interaction and coaching - and experiential learning, or learning that happens in the workflow.
- ➔ Provide learning content in both push and pull modalities to accommodate a variety of learning styles, business conditions and, of course, schedules. Enable a pull modality where new hires can access learning assets and reach out to subject matter experts on their time to learn more about, say, the sales process or product.
- ➔ Build and keep engagement up! Be sure to build gamification mechanics into your learning courses. By instilling a sense of accomplishment, gamification increases interaction and motivation in learning, which can provide a far more effective learning process than a traditional course can. Implement leaderboards, contests and awards - and never underestimate the power of a \$10 gift card.

- Don't compromise your user experience. If a learning system delivers a poor experience, learners are unlikely to return or use it again once they have done and passed any mandatory assessments. It's not just about usability - It's a matter of creating an experience that supports and engages users right from the start and nurturing them along in their journey to keep them coming back for more.
- Look for scalability. Adopt an LMS that supports the evolving needs of your business. As you develop the need for a more sophisticated learning program, find a platform that can support multi-organizational environments, and adopt a platform with a flexible pricing model, so you only pay for the users who access the platform.





## CHAPTER 7

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