

Why onboarding is so important for new employees in all aspects of modern workstations

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Abstract

Onboarding has emerged to be an important aspect of modern workstations. Onboarding or organisational socialisation refers to the process in which an individual is thorough introduced or integrated into a workstation or department (Klein, Polin & Leigh Sutton, 2015). Onboarding is different from orientation because orientation can take one or two days but onboarding can take months (Langley, Dority, Fraser & Hatton, 2018). During onboarding, one is expected to learn the organisational culture and corporate objectives by engaging in starter objects and meetings with co-workers. Managers are expected to schedule constant or regular check-in meetings with new employees to ensure that they have the confidence to talk to one another (Cable, Gino & Staats, 2013). Gradually, new employees get to learn about their new responsibilities and roles as far as things like how to perform certain tasks properly, who should they report to or ask questions, how to make suggestions and to who and how to acquire approvals for their work. Onboarding plans are required to contribute to what matters the most to every department in order to help new staff members connect their day-to-day responsibilities and the organisation's corporate goals (Åkesson & Skålen, 2011). This report focuses on my personal experience with onboarding and a literature review about onboarding. Also, I would like to combine my personal experience and literature analysis with onboarding, who will explore the following research question: To what extent do formal socialisation practices influence the ease with which new employees are socialised ?

Keywords

Onboarding; new employees; workstation

1. Introduction

My Experience with Onboarding

Three years ago, I joined an international travel agency in China, whose main job duty is to handle customer information, approach customers properly following company's instruction, invite customers to our organization and give professional consultation to introduce travel products. The organization has an international presence and competitive organisational culture. Thus, candidates like me were ex-

pected to undergo rigorous onboarding experience in order to fit in. From a general perspective, my onboarding experience was an uninspired thing that was filled with videos, lectures, and many other transactional endeavors. The onboarding was largely personal but quite tedious.

Initial contact

That the first thing happened to me is the job interview in the travel agency. The staff members and managers treated me with kindness, engaging curiosity, and warmth. They were inquisitive about my talents and interests, strengths and weaknesses, and my work philosophy and styles. They wanted to know about my academic life and what my dream for the future was as far as my desired professional life was concerned. This experience left me with a positive sense that shaped my perspective and expectation of the organisation and its culture.

The Hallmark

I had accepted the offer after several days, who also got a card in my email box, signed by everyone I met during the brief interview. The card had personalised notes and signatures. The personalised notes revealed the excitement that the authors had with regard to me joining the team. Even other people I had never met congratulated my new role.

Received a Gift

To be honest, I did not expect to be given a gift when I am joining organizations. However, On my first workday, it is so surprised that I received a new white T-Shirt as a gift. And there are some words shown on the white T-Shirt that we are family. At that time, I just told myself that I will work harder to make a contribution to the organization.

Attending Regular Coffee Meetings

During the first two months (60 days), I had the opportunity to interact with many staff members from different departments. We talked about many things ranging from life and work among other things of common interest. The meetings not only enabled me to connect with the staff, but also introduced me to the organisation and the organisation's work. The meetings or interactions also enabled us to create a rapport that I later relied on during the execution of the organisation's projects and activities.

Personalisation

Being a slow learner, I learn better when I am exposed to a wider array of practices and realities and experiences from which I can figure out the organisational norms and rules. I also get tired or bored easily whenever I interact with the same people for a long time, such as for one hour or two hours. As such, I need some space and time to be effectively socialised from an onboarding perspective. My recruitment manager customised my onboarding experience while appreciating my temperament into consideration in order to give me time to take notes and make personal priorities for effective learning.

Developing Team Spirit

During the socialization period, I transformed from individualistic thinker or actor to group or team-based thinker or actor. One of the many questions I encountered was "How can I be of help to you?" Colleagues and supervisors/managers from Marketing, Finance and many other departments asked me this question. Consequently, I learned the importance of teamwork and collaboration for the well-being of the team.

2. Literature Review

Literature suggests that onboarding enhances graduate transition into the career path or the job of their choice. Many graduate nurse programs in Australia and internationally tend to focus on content and delivery of health care services (Phillips, Esterman & Kenny, 2015). Organisations can also improve graduate outcomes and minimise attrition rates if organisational socialisation or onboarding is individualised to suit the specific needs of graduate nurses (Phillips et al. 2015). In addition, onboarding enhance staff motivation and job satisfaction thereby enhancing staff satisfaction (Waterhouse, French & Puchala, 2014). Job satisfaction alone can inspire new staff member's transition into the new career path or employment. Many organisations tend to foster their new employees' trust in their respective organisations through onboarding (Eberl, Clement & Möller, 2012). For instance, employees who have a strong trust in their respective organisation are more likely to be loyal to their organisations than those who have limited or no trust in the organisation.

Literature also supports the idea that newcomer socialisation or onboarding improves employees' performance and reduces staff turnover (Field & Coetzer, 2011). When staff selection methods are personalised in order to predict the new staff member's learning and potential adjustments, the new employees are more likely to be satisfied with their work or workstations thereby reducing employee attrition and enhancing staff productivity (Field & Coetzer, 2011). However, informal recruitment and socialisation are not as effective as formal recruitment and organisational socialisation with regard to staff satisfaction and productivity. During crisis moments, organisational socialisation helps employees exploit their skills and knowledge to manage the outcomes and mitigate the risks associated with the crisis (Lalonde, 2010). For example, testimonies from individuals who helped manage the "Quebec ice-storm" crisis indicate that their onboarding experience helped them mobilise their talents and knowledge, exploit their skills and practice their professional grounding in managing the crisis (Lalonde, 2010). Therefore, onboarding helps improve staff performance.

Meanwhile, literature affirms that onboarding helps organisations improve their employees' skills because it offers them the opportunity to learn how to perform their responsibilities. Google, for example, uses onboarding to encourage or achieve practice-based learning (Johnson & Senge, 2010). Onboarding is also used as an

opportunity to introduce new employees to the organisation's work requirements and rules (Dai, De Meuse & Gaeddert, 2011). Some organisations may use executive onboarding to enhance the skills and job performances of their senior executives like the chair of the board of directors (Ross, Huang & Jones, 2014). The fact is that, the recruitment of a department chair is resource-intensive and is expected to yield an individual who is both creative and energetic (Ross et al. 2014). Other organisations use onboarding to institute a form of staff mentorship where the incumbent department chair or board members teach the incoming department chair about the work and organisational expectations.

Furthermore, the literature suggests that the nature of onboarding can determine or influence the degree of success of the onboarding program. Onboarding in open source projects has been shown to attract and retain many newcomers or new individuals compared to self-organised ones (Fagerholm, Guinea, Borenstein & Münch, 2014). Collaboration is identified as a necessity in promoting competitive onboarding endeavors (Pereira, Kim, Seywerd, Nesbitt & Pitt, 2018). Open source projects have less restriction to who can enter and who may not enter and this provides the much-needed incentives for collaboration in onboarding programs.

3. Integrating the Literature Review and Personal Experience with Onboarding

Formal socialisation practices make it easy to socialise new employees to attain the skills and training they need. Formal onboarding practices enhance psychological contract where new employees or staff members are made to feel welcome and appreciated (Phillips et al. 2015). Psychological contracts help employees understand the expectations that their employers have and what the employee should expect from the employers (Landy & Conte, 2014). My experience with onboarding is that it makes one understand the norms and expectations of the new workplace thereby enabling the new employee or recruit to improve his or her organisational socialisation outcomes. The formal organisation socialisation makes it easy for employees and employers to develop psychological contracts during the early days of their interaction thereby making it possible for new employees and employers to create psychological contracts much earlier. In my case, for instance, my organisation and I developed a psychological contract during the first day of interaction, namely during the interviews. Informal onboarding scenarios cannot create psychological contracts early enough because the organisational socialisation is not properly planned and executed (Fagerholm et al. 2014).

On the other hand, formal organisational socialisation formalises the socialisation process thereby making it possible to achieve superior onboarding outcomes. When personalised onboarding strategies are used, the new employees obtain the best organisational experience compared to when a generalised onboarding is employed (Field & Coetzer, 2011). Formal organisational socialisation makes it possible for

organisations to implement personalised onboarding activities. For instance, my onboarding experience with my former place of work was formalised which made it possible to personalise the onboarding experience. Formal onboarding also makes it possible for the mentorship team to impart the skills or knowledge they want their new employers to have in order to be productive or successful (Dai et al. 2011; Johnson & Senges, 2010; Ross et al. 2014). Formal onboarding activities make it possible for organisations to nurture new employees to learn their new roles from their colleagues who understand their organisation and work environment better. My onboarding experience affirmed the fact that organisational socialisation makes it possible for the new employee to experience and internalise the skills that he or she needs to be productive.

In addition, formal onboarding offers staff members to connect with other employees thereby creating professional bonds that improve the outcomes of the organisational socialisation endeavors. Relationships between new employees and old employees are good for onboarding and staff mentorships because new staff members need to learn from his or her existing colleagues (Morrison & Cooper-Thomas, 2013). Intra-staff friendships add more value to organisational socialisation than ordinary relationships between new employees and older ones (Morrison & Wright, 2009). My experience has shown that when you connect with the old staff members through formal and informal interactions, it is easy for the new employee to enter into a psychological contract with the employer and this can boost onboarding outcomes. Knowledge about the new organisation's organisational behaviour is crucial to any new employee (Wood et al. 2019). One can only appreciate the new employer's organisational behaviour if he or she has friends among his or her new colleagues.

4. Conclusion

Onboarding remains an integral part of modern organisational recruitment because it enables new recruits to enter into psychological contracts with their new employers. My onboarding experience three years ago showed me how tedious and demanding the process can be if one is not psychologically prepared to face it. Nevertheless, my employer understood my case and customised the onboarding experience to suit my personality and demeanor. Organisational socialisation remains an avenue where organisations can get workers who have the right skills and energy to be productive in their work. Formal onboarding makes it possible for employers to give the new recruits the right form of introduction into their new work environment, enhance their trust in the organisation and make them like their new roles or responsibilities.

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