

Onboarding programs & entry surveys

What happens when a new hire arrives at your organization for their first day? Is their workspace functional and ready for activity, or in a disheveled state of setup? Are they put in front of a computer, maybe handed a stack of files and left to get acquainted on their own? Not much further ado?

The first impression your organization makes matters. As much as you're checking out your newest employee, new hires are doing the same about their new employer. Good orientation and onboarding practices show new hires their new employer cares about them and their long-term success.

Onboarding Programs

Onboarding programs are about preparing for all the little things a new hire needs to feel welcome and succeed in their job. Well done, onboarding builds rapport between the newcomer, coworkers, management and organization. The immediate benefits are secure, settled new employees. Down the road, this translates into higher performance and organizational commitment, and manifests in reduced time to productivity, improved retention rates and strong employee engagement.

Entry Surveys

Onboarding (and new hire retention) can also be enhanced by using online survey tools. An effective entry survey process from TalentMap collects systematic feedback from new hires, internal transfers and acquired employees at 30, 90 and 180 days. It's a confidential channel for honest feedback, conveys an important message of caring and goodwill, and establishes credible data for decision-making. Information pinpoints emerging issues and gives organizations time to react before it's too late.

ADVANTAGES OF ONBOARDING PROGRAMS AND ENTRY SURVEYS

Almost a quarter of organizations say they don't bother with formal onboarding programs according to a Harvard Business Review article¹. Yet data from Equifax² shows 40% of employees who leave of their own choosing do so within six months of starting their job. Another 16% quit within 12 months. In other words, more than half of voluntary turnovers happen within a year of new hire start dates.

When "new hire" employees leave, chances are most are invited to a standard exit interview. Had they been asked for input at the start of their employment, things could have turned out differently.



Thoughtful onboarding programs and entry surveys:

- Reduce the percentage of voluntary exits that tend to happen within the first year of employment
- Minimize the time it takes for employees to become productive in their new roles. While new employees typically take eight months to reach full productivity, organizations with a standard onboarding process experience 50% greater new hire productivity within a shorter period of time
- Identify recruitment and retention issues before they worsen
- Boost retention and performance. According to a study by the Wynhurst Group, employees who go through structured onboarding are 58% more likely to remain with the organization after three years

ONBOARDING BEST PRACTICES

New hires have an expectation of their new job and employer. If the job isn't what they signed up for, if they're overwhelmed, under-challenged, out of sync, left flapping in a brown paper bag with little support, they'll leave. In fact, 33% of new hires know after the first week whether they'll stay long term.

Basic onboarding programs typically cover facility tours, department introductions, an overview of company policies, programs and best practices, and training specific to the job.

Best-in-class companies begin onboarding processes before day one and extend their onboarding efforts well beyond the first month using a variety of techniques outside of formal orientation programs.

Onboarding Interviews

Managers who meet early on with their new team members to chat about how the job is working out create an environment of collaboration and trust. These one-on-one discussions are an excellent opportunity to establish milestones, talk about and tackle discouraging experiences, praise even the smallest achievements, and look at training, resources and supports. Most especially, onboarding interviews are a great way to get to know the new hire as a person – what they hope to get out of their job, their career goals, what drives and inspires them.

The important thing is to show that the entry interview is a two-way street. Setting a standard of open communication from the start sends a powerful message about trust.

These types of interviews build strong, productive relationships. New employees believe they can be honest and feel valued from day one. And when employees feel valued, they become more invested, more willing to go above and beyond.

On the flip side, managers gain valuable insights; they can design more meaningful jobs for new employees and support them in modifying or “crafting” projects that are developmental and engaging. In turn, employees find greater fit, experience higher satisfaction and achieve better performance.



ONBOARDING INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

In a 2007 web article posted by The HR Specialist,³ a series of onboarding interview questions were suggested. They're as relevant today as they were then. "The goal is to discover what new hires like and dislike about the job and environment. Find out if the job meets their expectations. And nip potential problems in the bud."

1. Why do you think we selected you as an employee?
2. What do you like about the job and the organization?
3. What's been going well? What are the highlights of your experiences so far? Why?
4. Do you have enough, too much or too little time to do your work?
5. How do you see your job relating to the organization's mission?
6. What do you need to learn to improve? What can the organization do to help you become more successful in your job? (Don't ask these two questions unless you're prepared to follow up with action. Otherwise, you can build false expectations.)
7. Tell me what you don't understand about your job and about our organization.
8. Compare the organization to what we explained it would be like.
9. How would you describe your relationship with co-workers? Have you had any uncomfortable situations or conflicts?
10. Which co-workers have been helpful since you arrived? (Goal: Pinpoint which employees can be influential in retaining the new hire.)
11. Who do you talk to when you have questions about work? Do you feel comfortable asking?
12. Have I clearly explained what our team, the organization expects of you?
13. Does my input come often enough or too often?
14. Are you comfortable when offered constructive criticism to improve your work?
15. What can I be doing differently?
16. Do you believe your ideas are valued? Can you give examples?





Onboarding Tips

1. Make new hires feel welcome.
2. Communicate “we’re glad you’re here.”
 - Send a welcome package to the new hire’s home prior to their start including:
 - details about where to report, when and with whom
 - a personally addressed letter of welcome from the CEO
 - tips about dress code (relaxed – jeans are fine or professional attire preferred with dress-down Fridays)
 - any other “insider insights” that convey an affable message.
3. Break the onboarding orientation process into digestible bits of communication; engage with interactive fun rather than overwhelm with too much information.
4. Emphasize the big picture, share long and short-term goals. The more new hires understand the mission, vision, values and uniqueness of your organization, the sooner and more engaged they become.
5. Show how much new hires matter. Point out how vital their role is in the context of reaching organizational goals; if your organization has a strong corporate social responsibility culture, draw links between their work and the difference they’re making on a much grander scale.
6. Make it easy for new hires to get the information they need. A comprehensive intranet, some time to get to know the system, a helpful culture, and a work buddy at the ready increases success.
7. Use great stories, and the storytellers behind them to show new hires they’ve joined a great organization. What legendary customer service made headlines? How did a junior telemarketer become sales director? What is it really like to work at this organization? Build a storytelling component into onboarding sessions where other employees share their personal experiences.





8. Help people leaders do their part properly; provide training, support and checklists that outline what needs to be done in the days leading up to a new hire's arrival, the first day, the first week, the first month and so on.
 - Ask the immediate manager to:
 - Assign a work buddy from the new hire's peer group to serve as the go-to person over the next week or month; provide this individual with a lunch voucher the two can use at the cafeteria or a nearby restaurant at some point during week one.
 - Prepare a functional workspace with functional tools (laptop, mobile devices).
 - Write and send a welcoming email of introduction to relevant teams/ departments/ divisions.
 - Plan to dedicate at least 30 minutes every week for onboarding interviews (which will eventually become standard one-on-one sessions).
 - Serve as the department's first point of contact when the new hire arrives.
 - Introduce new hire to colleagues and associates.
 - Clarify roles and responsibilities.
 - Take the new hire out for coffee or lunch within the first week or two to help create a sense of approachability and rapport.
 - Make ongoing coaching a priority to help the new hire become fully invested in the organization, culture, position and workplace.
9. If you haven't got a mentoring program, make it a priority. Mentoring is a win-win proposition. While advantages to the new hire are obvious, the person doing the mentoring gets recognition (a major driver of employee engagement), and an opportunity to acquire or finesse coaching and leadership skills. If your organization offers a mentoring program, arrange for a mentor from a higher reporting level in another division or department to coach the new hire as they progress over the months and years in their career.
10. Design the new hire experience from the new hire's perspective; get that perspective by asking through formal onboarding orientation sessions, interviews, entry surveys and one-on-one meetings. Measure, monitor, and involve your HR department, supervisors, managers, senior leaders and employees to make sure you're getting it right.

ONBOARDING SHOULD BE CONSIDERED EVERYONE'S JOB. WHEN SUPPORT LEVELS ARE HIGH FROM TEAMS AND LEADERS, NEW HIRES TEND TO HAVE MORE POSITIVE ATTITUDES ABOUT THEIR WORK AND PUT IN GREATER EFFORT.



Entry Survey Features

Entry survey questions and data collection tools like those available from TalentMap smooth out the transition period and better the “stay-put” odds for new hires.

- Systematic 30, 90 and 180-day feedback surveys explore different areas of the onboarding experience:
 - At 30 days new hires are asked about their experiences and insights in terms of the interview process, job description and actual work, orientation and training, manager and colleagues, and overall fit with the organization.
 - At 90 days, the typical end of probation mark, survey questions delve into training. Was the timing right? The information helpful? Anything overlooked or too excessive? Recommendations for improvement?
 - At 180 days – six months in – employees are asked for their views about the organization’s information and communication practices, personal and professional growth opportunities, work resource, immediate manager and a general sense of engagement.
- Information helps spot potential problems before they happen or escalate. • Reinforces the employee’s value.
- Expresses organizational gratitude.
- Improves recruiting and onboarding practices.

Entry Survey Sample Questions

1. During the interview process, I was asked questions that were relevant to the role offered.
2. The orientation program was interesting and interactive.
3. I received job-specific/departmental training.
4. My manager is supportive of my development and work.
5. The workload required of me is achievable.
6. I believe my ideas are valued.
7. I understand how my role contributes to the organization’s goals.
8. I receive coaching and encouragement to develop professionally.
9. I perform rewarding work.
10. Senior leaders have communicated a compelling vision for this organization.



Conclusion

We hope this Onboarding and Entry Survey Guide helps your efforts in improving onboarding practices and the benefits that come from entry surveys.

For more information on onboarding, entry surveys, and other ways to better engage your employees, visit <https://talentmap.com/entry-exit-surveys/>



Endnotes

- 1 “Technology Can Save Onboarding from Itself.” Harvard Business Review, <https://hbr.org/2015/03/technology-can-save-onboarding-from-itself>
- 2 “Why Employees Quit Jobs Right After They’ve Started.” Inc., <https://www.inc.com/adam-vaccaro/voluntary-turnover-six-months.html>
- 3 “Onboarding: 15 questions to ask employees in their first 60 days.” HR Specialist, <https://www.thehrspecialist.com/3445/onboarding-15-questions-to-ask-employees-in-their-first-60-days>



About TalentMap

A THOUGHT LEADER FOCUSED EXCLUSIVELY ON WORKPLACE ENGAGEMENT MEASUREMENTS AND RESEARCH, TALENTMAP IS PASSIONATE ABOUT UNDERSTANDING THE PEOPLE BEHIND ORGANIZATIONAL SUCCESS: EMPLOYEES.

Since its start in 1998, TalentMap has conducted thousands of employee engagement survey projects and surveyed more than one million employees. Working in partnership with public and private sector organizations of all sizes across North America, TalentMap's deep understanding of methodologies and assumptions unique to different sectors alongside volumes of benchmark data accrued over the years have become valued resources for organizations that value their people.

TalentMap employee engagement survey tools – readily customized from hire to retire – are based on years of research, field experience, and scientific measurement. The company also offers:

- expert consulting services
- deployment
- data collection
- analysis reporting
- post-survey action planning

It's a proprietary workplace intelligence process – developed and delivered by people-oriented people consumed with helping leadership teams and HR professionals create positive organizational change.



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