Onboarding Introduction

What is onboarding?

Onboarding helps new employees acclimate to their job and your organization over their first year of employment. It involves teaching them about their role and performance expectations as well as introducing them to organizational values and the ways work gets done within your organization.

Often, onboarding is confused with orientation. Orientation is typically a one-time event held before a new employee's first day at work that focuses on paperwork and other compliance activities. While necessary, orientation is only a small part of onboarding. Onboarding is a more comprehensive process that involves people from all levels of the organization.

Why is onboarding important?

When onboarding is done well, it leads to several positive outcomes[1] including:
- Higher job satisfaction
- Organizational commitment
- Lower turnover
- Higher performance levels
- Career effectiveness
- Lowered stress

Onboarding helps improve employee retention, performance, and wellbeing.

How do you onboard new employees effectively?

According to Gallup, 88% of employees don't feel their organization does a great job of onboarding new employees.[2] In many cases, organizations overwhelm new employees with paperwork and policies. To be successful, onboarding programs need to move beyond a transactional approach to onboarding that focuses on compliance and filling

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[1] Bauer, T. N. (2010). Onboarding new employees: Maximizing success. SHRM Foundation's Effective Practice Guideline Series, 7.

[2] Gallup, L. L. C. (2013). State of the American workplace: Employee engagement insights for US business leaders. *Retrieved from Washington, DC: http://www.gallup.com.*

out forms. To adopt a more strategic approach to onboarding, purposely plan for four different aspects of onboarding throughout new employees' first year of employment.

- **Compliance** is the most basic level of onboarding. It involves ensuring new employees understand workplace policies and procedures and complete paperwork and training required by law.
- **Clarification** refers to ensuring new employees understand the requirements of their job and other performance expectations. Employees should be provided with the tools and resources needed for their work.
- **Culture** includes helping new employees understand workplace norms, unwritten rules, and how people work together. Employees need to gain deeper knowledge of the organization's culture including mission, values, customs, and politics.
- **Connection** refers to fostering a sense of belonging by cultivating relationships and connecting new employees to formal and informal networks.

Onboarding that only covers compliance and clarification is transactional rather than strategic. It's more like a checklist or task list of actions to be completed. Onboarding programs are more effective when they systematically address all four areas throughout an employee's first year of employment.