WHITE PAPER



Launching a Successful

ONBOARDING INITIATIVE

How to Incoroporate Technology

NEOGOV

IN "ONBOARDING FROM SCRATCH," NEOGOV's first in a series of onboarding white papers, we presented our latest thinking on the why and how organizations are using a formal onboarding initiative to gain impressive and important benefits related to improving the longevity of new hires as well as increasing the efficiency of the recruiting process. An effective onboarding program will have a bottom line impact and will result in newly hired employees becoming productive sooner.

This paper focuses on the more specific details of the activities that should be included in an organization's onboarding program and how onboarding can be directly tied to organizational performance. Additionally, the importance and impact of needed HR technology in support of the onboarding process will be discussed.

Launching a Successful Onboarding Initiative

The benefits of initiating an onboarding program, as discussed in our first paper on this topic, include increased retention, productivity, and job satisfaction. In order to achieve these benefits, a successful onboarding initiative will have key components, including explaining rules and regulations, defining expectations, presenting cultural norms, and developing relationships. In each of these areas, onboarding technology can enhance the process.

HR technology provides an increasingly important level of support that will help an onboarding program meet its goals. The components of an effective technology underpinning are:

Task Management: Those capabilities helping to perform the administrative tasks usually using a built in series of protocols, which are step-by-step instructions with feedback.

Workflow: Those capabilities providing communications, outreach, alerts, notifications, and process steps between the newly hired employee and the rest of the organization (at all levels across many departments). Oftentimes, the status of each of the workflow steps is presented in a "dashboard" view. The workflow capabilities typically include employee self-service and manager self-service notifications.

In either component, a workflow of step-by-step instructions and screen progressions pertinent to the task is important. This is especially recognized and intended to mirror the strong degree of comfort that Gen X, Gen Y and Millennials have with any online interaction.

Onboarding Must-Haves

Rules and Regulations Explained

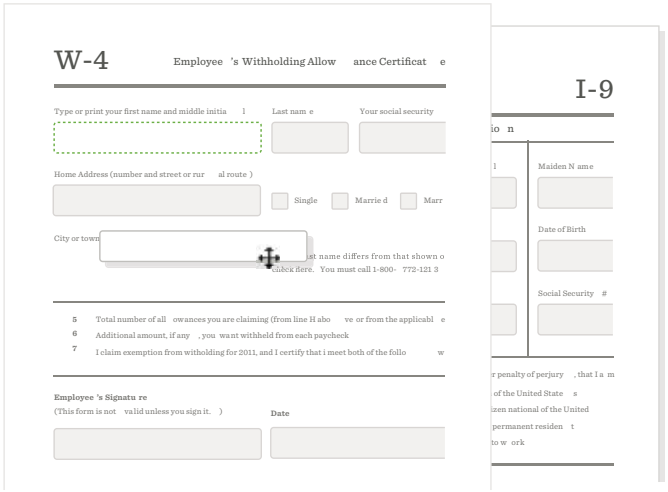
Successful onboarding will explain the basic set of requirements, policies, and procedures a new hire will need to follow. Doing so will ensure that the new employee is abiding by requirements needed to succeed in the role they are assuming.

HR technology streamlines the process of explaining the appropriate rules and regulations. For example, Onboard from NEOGOV, keeps track of I-9 and W4 forms online, complete with valid signatures. New hires can complete an onboarding checklist before their start date, allowing employees to participate in what is known as pre-boarding.

Ideally, this keeps them engaged, excited and eager to begin, and of course, gives them the feeling of being a productive member of the "team" even before they start their employment on day one. For college hires this might prove valuable as there is usually a lag time of a few months from graduation to start date.

With HR technology, it's also possible to create a portal where employees can go to complete all of their administrative tasks, learn about the corporate culture, take new hire training, and find out anything else that will help them be more productive.[1] In this manner the newly hired staff member takes an active role as opposed

to a passive one, and takes ownership for accomplishing the required administrative tasks.



Onboarding software keeps track of 1-9 and W4 forms online, complete with valid signatures.

Expectations Defined

Onboarding does more than explain rules and regulations, it also clarifies the new-hire's role within the organization. During onboarding, role clarity is a consistent predictor of job satisfaction and organizational commitment.[2] The better an employee understands his or her role, the more likely they will be to meet expectations. In fact, if a new-hire's role is unclear, the organization is likely to lose money due to employees that don't understand their roles, become disenchanted, and could likely leave in a short timeframe.

HR Technology can aid in the onboarding process by setting expectations for employees. HR technology creates specific onboarding workflows that are triggered upon input and receipt of the initializing event, such as acceptance of the "offer letter" and agreement of the first day of employment. These can include:

- An e-mail message to be sent to a new employee with a "welcome letter" and instructions for using the onboarding components of the HR system.
- An e-mail message to be sent to other internal departments, especially internal IT, informing them of the new hire's start date and other pertinent information needed to establish security IDs, passwords and access to specific systems, and to initiate the preparation of any devices such as laptop and phones, as needed.[3]
- An e-mail to the employee with a link to a "new employee portal" which walks the new hire thru a step-by-step process of downloading and uploading a wide variety of employment information, prepares them for their first day, and streamlines their socialization to the new organization.
- At the same time that the above activities are taking place, the hiring manager can go online to select the tools and office space the new staff member will need. Those requests, in the form of a triggered email, with content preloaded, are sent to the information technology and facilities departments, among others, so they are ready for the employee on their first day.

An effective onboarding program must seamlessly incorporate the supportive protocols mentioned above into what the newly hired staff member "experiences" in each and every contact with the organization.

Cultural Norms Presented

Besides explaining rules and regulations and defining expectations, onboarding, if implemented correctly, will convey the "culture" of an organization. When cultural norms are conveyed correctly, new employees gain an understanding of the organization's goals and values and hopefully begin to embrace and understand the ethical and political landscape.

Supporting your onboarding initiative with Onboard from NEOGOV allows you to communicate your organization's mission and values while the new hire goes through the onboarding process.

The most effective onboarding initiatives are within those organizations that are using the Internet to facilitate the experience and provide the new employee

with the organization's history, values, and an overview of their strategy and goals.

Another important component is the use of videos that can, for example, provide a "welcome" message from the most appropriate senior executive or can provide an overview of the company's performance.

All of these tools and activities are intended to build an initial and strong foundation for engaging the new employee and hopefully instilling positive momentum, excitement, eagerness and a feeling of being an important part of the organization. These "emotions" must be reinforced by an effective program that extends over a period of time. Research shows that the most effective and considered "best practice" onboarding programs should extend over several months and not end right after any formal orientation.[4]

Relationships Are Developed

The last component of successful onboarding implementation is developing relationships in order to help employees become better integrated into the organization. In order to achieve integration, some onboarding programs include rotational assignments; others may include special projects that are designed to expose the new employee to parts of the organization they would not normally have any contact with. There is good reason to incorporate these types of activities during a period of months after the start date as this would expose the newly hired staff member to other organizational practices, locations, culture, and colleagues.

Another critical component in the relationship development process is the need to include the direct hiring manager. Research shows that the relationship with the manager is one of the most significant in an employee's work life and directly influences the engagement and eventual longevity of the employee.[2] Most employee turnover is ultimately caused by that relationship (or lack of), which makes the ability to assimilate new employees a core competence of managers. An employee's direct manager typically controls all career progression, educational opportunities, and the assignment of projects.[5] So a manager who takes time to discuss goals and expectations and in effect serves as a "mentor" who shows concern over that person's "socialization" and who knows what the employee can do and wants to do, will make wiser decisions and build loyalty over time.

Using onboarding technology from NEOGOV can enhance relationship development by building a new hire social network and engaging the new hire in the company's social network. If you are hiring a significant number of young employees, an online new-hire community can help them feel more at home.[6] These networks can be used for work tasks, allowing employees to help each other get acclimated, and provide for socialization.

None of this will be effective without appropriate technology, front and center. Although onboarding isn't all about the technology, it is a critical factor in creating a best-in-class initiative that will provide the end result of improved performance. That alone makes onboarding programs a needed and strategic capability in itself and also a justifiable target for strong technology support.

This white paper covered how to launch a successful onboarding initiative, including incorporating technology. For additional information about how technology improves HR processes, download NEOGOV's white paper, "10 Ways the Cloud Improves HR Processes." The paper includes information about how cloud-based technology benefits HR in the areas of value, finance, and risk-mitigation.

Marc S. Miller has over 40 years experience with all aspects of technology solutions for the function of human resources. His consulting firm, Marc S. Miller Associates, supports his clients in HR Technology solutions including strategy and business case development for executive leadership, cost justification, needs analysis, and request for proposal development. He is an adjunct professor for HR and HR technology in the Master's Degree programs at NYU and Long Island University.

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