



Summer 2010 Facility to Facility

## The Art of Onboarding

Onboarding is the process of successfully integrating a new employee into the organization. After the selection process, it is the single most critical step to ensuring the success of your new employee. Skip this step and you drastically increase your odds of losing a good employee.

There are three areas that the onboarding program focuses on:

- political/cultural
- people/relationships
- job training

The duration of an onboarding program can be from three (3) to six (6) months depending upon the goals of the program. Typically, the larger the organization, the longer the duration. The key players involved in the program are the executive, the boss, the buddy and the employee. All four have key action items to perform in a timely manner.

### **Step 1: Establish the goals of the onboarding program**

Consider the areas above and determine the mission of the onboarding program and specific measurable goals you want accomplished by the end of the onboarding period. A simple question to help you establish the mission and goals is: *At the end of [6] months, the employee will be...* Include anything related to critical success factors you may have previously developed for the job. Based on the goals, consider who is the best person to support the new employee and how they will do this.

### **Step 2: Establish an onboarding calendar**

This can be a generic calendar that is used for all new employees. Rather than a dated calendar, you use an onboarding calendar template with Day 1, Day 2, Week 1, Week 2, Month 1 and Month 2, etc. to lay out your action items. Assign tasks to all key players including the new employee.

### **Step 3: Assign a buddy to the new employee**

This is a critical step that can be destructive if not done properly and sensitively. First, get the commitment to act as a buddy from a current employee who is successful in their job. If the employee has reservations about serving as a buddy, don't assign them to be the buddy. To ensure the buddy-new employee relationship will be a positive experience, try to select a buddy that has similar traits to the new employee.

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#### Step 4: Implement action items per the calendar

A list of possible action items is provided below. Hopefully, you will think of many more items to add to this. Do not feel compelled to 'over do' the onboarding program. Whatever you perceive as creating significant added value is what should be implemented. You may try some things and decide to change or eliminate them as you gain experience and feedback with the program. Be sure to survey the new employee at the end of the 'formal' time to determine what worked best and what didn't. And don't be surprised if the buddy continues to serve in a supportive role.

#### *Sample Action Items*

- Political/cultural
  - Pre-Start Date: Executive assigns buddy to new employee, provide purpose and goals to the buddy
  - Day 1: Morning: Discussion on agency's culture, team orientation and values.
  - Day 1: Executive and/or boss take new employee to lunch or coffee (you might include the buddy also).
  - Day 2 and Week 2: Buddy takes new employee to lunch (on the company)
  - Weekly: Buddy meets with new employee (schedule time, specific break time, etc.) to give the buddy an opportunity to ask questions and discuss any issues that came up during the past week.
  - End of Week 2: Executive meets with new employee to see how things are going (15 minutes)
  - End of Week 4: Executive meets with new employee to see how things are going.
  - End of Month 2, 3, and 6: Executive meets with new employee to see how things are going.
- People/relationships
  - Day 1: Executive or boss introduces new employee to others.
  - Week 1: New Employee assigned to work with other employees (other than buddy).
  - Week 2: New Employee assigned to work with other employees (different employees from week 1).
  - Week 3: Special project assigned to buddy and one other person. Project should be challenging but a sure bet to be successful.
- Job training
  - Day 1: After lunch: Training of new employee
  - Day 2: Training all day or shadow the buddy
  - Week 1: New Employee works with boss
  - Week 2: New Employee sent to off site training program