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Employee Onboarding

There's a fairly new concept in the talent management world and it's called onboarding employees. This idea has been around for quite some time and it used to be known as new employee orientation. But as we'll soon explain, onboarding is more about retaining talent than getting people settled in their new office.

In this article, we're first going to explain why onboarding has become so popular in today's workplace. Then we'll talk about the many facets of this theory and how you can leverage this information whether you're a job seeker or a corporate recruiter. Finally, we'll provide you with an example of an onboarding checklist that you can download.

New Employee Onboarding

The concept behind employee onboarding is best defined as a systematic and comprehensive approach to orienting a new employee to help them get "on board." There are two high-level goals of the onboarding process:

- To make new employees feel welcome and comfortable in their new surroundings.
- To minimize the time before new employees are productive members of their new workgroup.

Making Employees Feel Welcome

Studies conducted by the Corporate Leadership Council indicate that it's important for new employees to quickly acclimate to their new work environment. It's also important for these employees to start building rapport with colleagues so they can begin to assimilate into existing workgroups.

By doing so, new employees experience a sense of purpose within their new organization and the transition into this organization is less disruptive.

Minimizing the Learning Curve

From the employer's perspective, onboarding can help minimize the downtime typically experienced when bringing a new employee into the department. And by sharing information such as performance expectations right away their can be a significant reduction in the amount of misunderstandings which can often lead to frustration and even the premature departure of a new hire.

Objectives of Employee Onboarding

Finally, from either the employee's or employer's perspective, the high-level objectives of a good onboarding program include:

- Helping the employee to identify with their new employer.
- Allowing the employee to understand some of the company's values and priorities.
- Building an optimistic attitude towards the company.
- Avoiding misunderstandings.
- Helping the employee feel valued.
- Encouraging socialization and creating a sense of belonging.
- Reducing new employee anxiety.
- Setting of performance expectations.
- Decreasing the learning curve.

Of particular importance among the post baby boom generations such as Generation X is to feel they've made friends at work. By quickly introducing these workers to their new coworkers this generation can start to build the relationships they need and employers can reduce new employee turnover.

Building an Onboarding Program

Before we introduce our onboarding checklist, it's important to take the goals and objectives of such a program and create modules of information around each. This means a good onboarding program must address:

- Company / Departmental Overviews
- Job Expectations
- Policies and Procedures
- Administrative Housekeeping Items

Each of these elements is discussed briefly in the sections below and these same elements will be used to organize the information on our onboarding checklist.

Company / Departmental Overview

Corporate and departmental overviews generally includes going over items such as the vision / mission statement of the company or department along with organization charts and value statements. The purpose of these onboarding activities is to give the new hire a feel for the overall mission of the company and to introduce them to the objectives and goals of their particular department.

This information also helps the employee to better understand how their department and their role fit in the company's "big picture." By understanding this corporate or departmental level information, the employee should be able to recognize how their job contributes to the company's success.

Job Expectations

These are the very specific job expectations of the new employee. This can include any training they might have to go through, job descriptions / expectations and the company's performance management / appraisal process.

By clearly explaining to the new employee exactly what is expected up-front, there will be less confusion later on. And by introducing the employee to your system of performance management, the employee will have a clearer picture of what it takes to be successful in their new job.

Policies and Procedures

The policies and procedures section can range from items like hostile work environment and affirmative action policies all the way through employee compensation guidelines. If you've got a fit-for-duty program or a system to resolve complaints, these policies and procedures should be shared with the employee early on.

No doubt this is a lot of information to go through with the new employee, but that's what onboarding is all about - it's providing the employee with a foundation of information on which they can build.

Administrative Housekeeping Items

Although these administrative "housekeeping" items might also sound like policies and procedures, these are generally less formal matters that still need to be reviewed such as normal work hours, overtime pay, and inclement weather practices. This section should also include contact numbers (both at the company) as well as contacts outside the workplace for the employee. For example, telephone numbers of relatives in case the employee becomes ill at work.

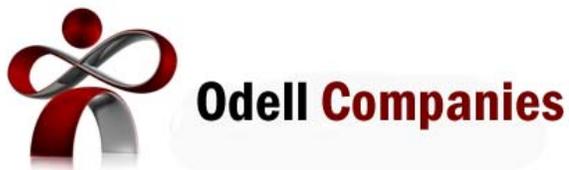
Onboarding Checklist

As promised up front in this article we're going to provide an example of an employee onboarding checklist you can download for free. And while each company will have a slightly different arrangement of items, the concept of how to build such a list and the organization on the checklist are helpful to see for those that like visual aids.

Finally, don't be upset if your company has fewer items than those appearing on our checklist. And certainly don't be afraid to add to the list if your company has a policy, procedure or program that doesn't appear on our list. Consider this example a template that you can build on and customize to your company's programs.

About the Author - *Employee Onboarding*

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