

VettedSolutions

Authentic Onboarding®

A practical guide to effective new-hire integration

Every organization wants new hires to step in quickly and make immediate, meaningful contributions to its success. Yet often senior executives are frustrated with the significant number of new hires that simply don't measure up to expectations.

In plain language, efforts to integrate new hires — especially at the executive level — are doomed to compromised effectiveness when organizations think in terms of formulaic onboarding rather than *Authentic Onboarding*®.

Formulaic onboarding is based on a checklist mentality — an approach that equates effective integration with rote completion of a lengthy roster of mechanical steps.

- Provide copies of the employee manual and the policy and procedures manual
- Make sure to deliver the mission and vision statement, and our last annual report
- Secure business cards, stationery and badges
- Explain the office layout, kitchen location, parking facility
- Introduce the new hire to office neighbors
- Appoint the appropriate contact person for subsequent questions
- And on and on and on ...

Little wonder so many new hires are left puzzled about what to do, what to focus on, how to really get things done.

That's where *Authentic Onboarding*® makes the real difference between immediate and lasting success for new hires. *Authentic Onboarding*®

goes beyond the mechanical checklist of "welcome aboard" steps to focus on the true keys to success — providing the organizational understanding that helps every new hire go beyond the obvious to a deeper understanding of how to achieve significant results.

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The real foundation for success in effective organizational integration is a clear, comprehensive grasp of an organization's culture — how all the policies, procedures, processes, rules and other operational guidelines are carried out in human terms, and how things get done when no clear guidelines or answers seem to be present.

The Cultural Foundation

The objectives behind the traditional mechanical onboarding process are important. Every new hire needs to have certain basic tools and understanding to function. New executives need to know the

fundamental rules of the road of organizational conduct, and the physical environment in which everyone operates. Every employee, likewise, is sure to have a job description or some kind of defined expectations for job performance.

But these methodical aspects of onboarding don't begin to deliver the understanding needed to be truly effective, especially in a leadership role.

The key to *Authentic Onboarding*® rests in its recognition of the importance of culture — to fast, smooth and effective integration into a new organization.

Understanding Culture

Culture is the fabric that unites an organization and how it embraces its diversity.

It begins with values — the things the organization holds dear and are universal. Doing things the right way. Being honest and open with each other. Following the rules, and treating people with respect and courtesy. Standing by your word, and achieving objectives.

But a culture is far more than adherence to a set of abstract principles. Culture also embraces the way those principles are applied — the framework in which values are transformed into something real and immediate. Culture is not only *that*

things get done but also *how* things get done.

An organization's culture provides a mechanism through which individuals can make judgments and decisions in their day-to-day jobs. A culture guides people to actions, when the policy manual doesn't cover a particular situation, or there's no precedent to dictate the next right step to take, or no boss on hand to take the responsibility for making the call.

Understanding the culture unique to each organization is critical to finding not just *possible* new hires but the ideal new hire right for each position within an organization. By finding those candidates already closely aligned with their distinctive culture, organizations can speed the process of effective integration — and enhance their likelihood of building teams of high-performing, loyal executives and other employees.

Personal Learning

No amount of written guidelines will provide the understanding of culture needed by successful executives and other new hires.

For most people, understanding an organization's culture is a continuous learning process — an understanding that is constantly being expanded, deepened and refined, both to master the subject and to try to keep up with the inexorable evolution of every organization as it adapts and evolves to its own changing goals and objectives, or the world/environment, in which it operates.

Authentic Onboarding® places a priority on the human element in organizational integration. It emphasizes the importance of

providing not just a single point of on-going support and information, but a network of the resources needed to help new hires find answers laying outside the policy and procedure manuals, identify emerging performance issues, deal with personalities and the human factors that affect teamwork and often determine success, and all the other seemingly countless things that influence the new hire's ability to adhere to their goals.

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Authentic Onboarding® provides a supportive, learning environment that maximizes chances of individual success. Results — not process — are paramount.

Similarly, Authentic Onboarding® makes continuous assessment and adjustments a key part of the integration process. Authentic Onboarding® makes this critical education and improvement process a natural part of the dialogue and interaction with a range of support resources — not an overly formal, stressful mechanical milestone evaluation.

Organizational Culture

Individuals within an organization must come together as smoothly functioning teams. The temptation is to place more emphasis on a prescribed routine or process to address key operational challenges. However, regular and close interaction among leaders and staff breeds the understanding and insight that trump process.

Superior organizational cultures often display a select set of core values and attitudes.

- A genuine spirit of co-operation and mutual success — not a competition for individual recognition or praise. The 'star mentality' and 'cult of self/the individual' are checked at the door. Achieving necessary or desired goals is more important than anything else.
- A learning mindset. A willingness to do the hard work to learn, to study and prepare, to do the necessary homework to understand the organization, its challenges and opportunities, and the options for the future.
- A truly open mind. It begins with a willingness to acknowledge that no one person has all the answers or a corner on understanding. The best staff aren't afraid to say "I don't know," or to turn to others who may have the required knowledge and expertise.
- A balance of leadership and followship. Being open to new ideas and new thinking — to ask "why not" and "what if" when appropriate. Recognizing the importance of understanding the role of leadership, and how best to support the organization in advancing its strategic ambitions.
- A willingness to communicate and share. Great ideas come from great thinking, and the best teams value their ability to communicate concepts and ideas clearly, effectively and regularly with others as a critical component of strategic thinking and innovation.

Recognizing the Trend

More and more organizations are frustrated with the effectiveness of new-hire integration under the mechanical onboarding approach. They see the importance of looking beyond the traditional way of thinking and recognize that finding the most talented candidates is just a first step in developing a truly high-performing individual or team of exceptional leaders.

Successful new-hire integration – like organizational success – demands more. It demands the kind of thinking at the core of Authentic Onboarding®. Absent that approach, the risks to

organizations from failed integration – in terms of costs, performance, strategic growth and evolution – are simply too great to contemplate.

What best describes your onboarding process: mechanical or authentic?



About the author



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