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Successful Onboarding Strategies

LEADING PRACTICES



Featured Case Studies



Introduction

The purpose of onboarding is to optimize new-hire engagement and increase time-to-proficiency, but it does much more than that. Brandon Hall Group’s research on the Strategic Onboarding Essentials to Improve Business Performance shows how transformational onboarding can be for new hires and HR professionals.

In this report we profile seven companies — Siemens, SAP, iCIMS, Mercer, GSK, NCSOFT and Walmart — that implemented engaging onboarding strategies. Each of these companies is an award-winning organization in the Brandon Hall Group Excellence Awards program, an international competition among hundreds of organizations in which entries are judged by independent subject matter experts and practitioners.

Onboarding: A Transformational Experience for HR and New Hires

Onboarding challenges to HR professionals include introducing all the elements of the organizational culture in a short period of time (five weeks on average) to assimilate, engage and train new hires. In addition, as part of this effort, it is incumbent upon HR professionals to build the business case to prove the value of onboarding to the C-Suite and executive leaders to successfully impact talent metrics — several organizations in this profile did just that. An important finding from our research is that organizations with leaders who extensively support onboarding are more likely to see improvement in new-hire talent metrics than those only providing some or no support.

From the new-hire perspective, onboarding is very transformational. There are expectations about the employment experience based on what they learned during the recruitment and hiring experience. If onboarding is managed correctly, new hires will quickly see that they are a valued member of the organization, can develop professionally and are given support to achieve career goals. With these transformational experiences, the new hire can become a champion of the organization, promoting it internally and externally, and referring their personal connections for employment with the organization.

Organizations Seeing Improvement in New-Hire Metrics Based on Level of Support from C-Suite

	Some, Little or No Support	Extensive Support
New-hire engagement	54%	80%
New hire time-to-proficiency	38%	67%
Quality hires	36%	61%
New-hire referrals	35%	59%
New-hire retention	34%	58%

*Excludes organizations that do not use a metric
 Source: Brandon Hall Group 2018 Onboarding Survey

Little to no support: With the exception of completing the necessary documentation, leaders feel almost all training and assimilation should be completed on the job.

Some support: May collaborate and participate in onboarding new hires but does not see full value of onboarding.

Extensive support: Collaborates, participates, promotes, and invests in the onboarding practices and technology

new@Siemens Inspires New Hires from Day One



Company At-a-Glance	
Headquarters	Berlin and Munich, Germany
Year Founded	1847
Revenue	€83 billion
Employees	377,000
Industry	Electronics and electrical engineering
Website	www.siemens.com

The Challenge: As with any other organization, Siemens needed to reduce its turnover rate. Although it has the new@Siemens program, the challenge was to convince new employees to spend four to six hours with its eLearning program.

The Solution: The company engages new hires through its innovative new@Siemens program that includes a “Siemens Portfolio Gallery,” which represents the different Siemens business areas in 3D exhibition spaces that invite visitors to explore. The vast Siemens world is presented as an entertaining tour with virtual rooms full of experiences. An avatar offers further answers to FAQs and motivates the learner to keep going after a pre-defined period without any interaction from the learner.

Implementation: Six missions are implemented within new@Siemens to activate the learner. They include: joining Siemens social network group called new@Siemens; use the Wikisphere page “My First Days at Siemens (by new@Siemens)” ; give feedback to the company; help Siemens improve its web-based training; inspire new colleagues; and tell Siemens what the new hire expects to find in the company’s social-networking group.

Measurable Benefit: Of all the new employees who passed the final quiz in new@Siemens, only around 9% have left within their first 12 months with the company. In comparison, of all the employees who did not complete the new@Siemens eLearning program, nearly a quarter of them left within their first 12 months with the company.

Access to full case study: [new@Siemens Inspires New Hires from Day 1](#)

SAP Academy for Early Talent Focuses on Innovation



Company At-a-Glance	
Headquarters	Walldorf, Germany
Year Founded	1972
Revenue	€22.06 billion
Employees	85,500-plus in 130-plus countries
Industry	Software
Website	www.sap.com

The Challenge: In 2013, the SAP Academy for Early Talent was launched with the goal of creating SAP’s next-generation digital sales force. However, SAP had never hired early talent for its sales force before and never had an early-talent sales training program, particularly one on a global scale.

The Solution: SAP established a rigorous learning framework and performance management strategy focusing on building critical professional and sales competencies; accelerating the learning curve through real-world situation; providing 360-degree evaluations with a robust feedback loop; frequent, direct and proactive feedback and coaching; and creating a continuous improvement mindset.

Implementation: Participants in the sales program take part in a nine-month program consisting of an initial six-week “Academy Discovery” period in their home market unit, followed by two six-week classroom trainings at SAP’s facility in San Ramon, California, and two rotations practicing in the field in their home market unit alongside a seasoned sales mentor. Those in the Presales program participate in a 12-month program with six months in the classroom and six months in the field practicing in their regional market unit.

Measurable Benefit: The SAP Academy for Early Talent has proven to be a success. To date, SAP’s sales associates achieved three consecutive years of sustained performance that is on par or exceeds that of experienced sales professionals across more than 13 lines of business and seven regions.

Access to full case study: [SAP Academy for Early Talent Focuses on Innovation](#)

iCIMS' 90-Day Program Helps New Hires Feel Less Overwhelmed



Company At-a-Glance	
Headquarters	Holmdel, New Jersey
Year Founded	2000
Revenue	\$150,000-plus
Employees	700
Industry	Software
Website	www.icims.com

The Challenge: iCIMS' employees said in survey results and informal feedback that although they were impressed with the onboarding program itself, they felt the company was sharing too much information too fast.

The Solution: iCIMS' talent development department created an in-house product, iCIMS Onboard, as a first step in an employee's touchpoint experience at iCIMS. The iCIMS Onboard program seamlessly moves a candidate from the recruiting progress into onboarding by utilizing task management and form management.

Implementation: With iCIMS Onboard, the company can engage new hires and create enthusiasm through a branded "welcome" email that lets them know their talent development/onboarding specialist will be in touch with them shortly with relevant information and details. This portal also allows them to view demos of iCIMS' products, learning more about the area surrounding the company's office and watch interviews with iCIMS' CEO.

Measurable Benefit: Based off survey scores in the past year, iCIMS has found that 92.73% percent of participants *strongly* agree that they feel engaged with the iCIMS culture while participating in the program. In June 2017, the entire manager base was surveyed and 81.38% rated 8s through 10s on new-hire onboarding program satisfaction.

Access to full case study: [iCIMS' 90-Day Onboarding Passport Program Helps New Hires Feel Less Overwhelmed](#)

Mercer's Sensei Program Turns Colleagues Into Training Experts



Company At-a-Glance	
Headquarters	New York, New York
Year Founded	1945
Revenue	\$4.3 billion
Employees	21,200
Industry	Insurance administration
Website	www.mercer.com

The Challenge: At the end of 2016, Mercer formed Mercer Services. The first obstacle was getting all the LOBs on board. Many leaders had concerns that using non-L&D staff would not result in consistent learner performance outcomes. There was additional apprehension whether Mercer's current staff could learn the necessary skills to facilitate, instruct and manage a classroom.

The Solution: The Mercer Services North America L&D team met with the company's North American delivery leader to stress the Sensei program as a vital need. L&D also stressed that learning needed to be available as soon as possible — LOBs don't have the time to wait for training events. In addition, learners must perform job tasks on day one after training — and they should be able to try and fail in a safe training environment.

Implementation: Getting colleagues on board was as simple as creating a Sensei interest form for those interested in participating in the program. With training, Sensei participants are certified on four different levels (from knowing the fundamentals to being able to perform basic tasks of a full-fledged L&D professional).

Measurable Benefit: The Sensei program resulted in 48 training events onboarding approximately 750 new hires in three locations between July 1 and Sept. 30. Kudos and recognition soared throughout the business. There were no decrease in Key Performance Indicators and quality scores increased once the Sensei program was initiated.

Access to full case study: [Mercer's Sensei Program Increases High-Quality Training for New Hires](#)

GSK's Engaging Onboarding Program Cuts Waste



do more
feel better
live longer



Company At-a-Glance	
Headquarters	Brentford, Middlesex, UK
Year Founded	2000
Revenue	£30.2 billion
Employees	100,000
Industry	Pharmaceutical and healthcare
Website	www.gsk.com

The Challenge: Fewer than 50% of GSK's international Global Manufacturing and Supply staff have direct PC or internet access, 17 different languages are spoken and employees in some countries have varying literacy skills and knowledge. GSK found that as well as having no standardized onboarding approach across several of its sites and central functions, its learning content varied considerably — exposing gaps in critical quality, safety and compliance training.

The Solution: GSK made more than just a few half-hearted changes — in what would be one of the largest and most ambitious onboarding projects ever implemented at GSK, an entire program was designed from the ground up.

Implementation: GSK's global learning and development (GL&D) learning managers gathered insights through first-line leaders, performing learning needs at 20 sites and engaging subject matter experts on a variety of topics such as health and safety. To help bring learning to life, modules with multiple channels and a high level of interactivity were created. Content was deliberately varied between PowerPoints, videos, guest speakers, quizzes and site tours. Gamification was also incorporated and new starters were familiarized with GSK's vision and purpose by becoming connected with those at the end of the supply chain.

Measurable Benefit: As a result of the program, 86% of managers said they saw an improvement in awareness among new hires. In addition, accidents, defects and waste were dramatically reduced.

Access to full case study: [GSK Engaging Onboarding Program Cuts Waste](#)

NCSOFT Uses Gaming to Power Up Onboarding



Company At-a-Glance	
Headquarters	South Korea
Year Founded	1997
Revenue	\$150 million
Employees	750 (NCSOFT West)
Industry	Entertainment and technology
Website	http://us.ncsoft.com/en/

The Challenge: NCSOFT’s new-hire survey results showed that 43% of new hires disagreed or strongly disagreed that their computer and systems were properly prepared and ready on their first day. In addition, the company’s employee engagement survey in 2016 indicated the need for a more engaging employee experience and a more efficient onboarding process.

The Solution: By using the characters from the company’s games, videos and images, NCSOFT created a branded onboarding site implemented with SilkRoad Onboarding that introduced new hires to the company’s culture and got them excited about joining NCSOFT.

Implementation: Throughout a 90-day period, new hires are given specific tasks that bring them back to the portal for quests such as benefits enrollment, 30-/60-/90-day check-ins with managers and a new-hire onboarding survey to provide feedback on their experience. The first “Quest” or task that goes out is mailing a welcome card and the “NC Launch” logo pin to the new hire’s home. The new hire then is given a link to a video message from the CEO before entering the onboarding portal. Once in the portal, “Wuju,” the onboarding mascot, welcomes the employee. The new hire then navigates the NC Launch portal to pages such as “Loot” to discover payroll information or “Our Guild” to find out more about NCSOFT’s headquarters in Korea. All pages are named using lingo that fits the gaming culture.

Measurable Benefit: Today, 0% of new hires disagree or strongly disagree that their computer and systems were properly prepared and ready on day one.

Access to full case study: [NCSOFT Uses Games to Power Up Onboarding](#)

Walmart ‘Dress Code Fashion Show’ Makes Onboarding Fun



Company At-a-Glance	
Headquarters	Bentonville, Arkansas
Year Founded	1962
Revenue	\$500.3 billion in FY 2018
Employees	2.3 million
Industry	Retail
Website	www.walmart.com

The Challenge: In 2016, Walmart turned over approximately 750,000 associates in stores. Exit interviews revealed several factors that contributed to this turnover, including associate confusion, a lack of communication and a lack of meaningful human connection with peers and supervisors. Confusion over dress code policy was one of the major complaints.

The Solution: A focal point for Walmart is improving its “Clean, Fast, Friendly” (CFF) scores in stores. The “Dress Code Fashion Show,” which was delivered as part of the company’s revamped hourly onboarding program called Welcome to Walmart, was designed to target both of these issues.

Implementation: Walmart focused on maintaining a light-hearted atmosphere and injecting as much humor as possible while still presenting key information. Associates are grouped in a training area with a personnel coordinator and together they watch the video through Walmart’s internal VOD service. Afterward, the personnel coordinator conducts a debriefing to make sure associates took in the relevant information about dress code while they were being entertained.

Measurable Benefit: Walmart’s “Dress Code Fashion Show” video contributed to incremental improvements in CFF scores in stores. As a side benefit, the in-house DCFS video cost Walmart \$17,722.29 to produce. A recent vendor-produced video of similar quality cost the company almost \$22,000. Walmart now is committed to using more in-house video production.

Access to full case study: [Walmart ‘Dress Code Fashion Show’ Makes Onboarding Fun, Memorable](#)

Contributors

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