iCIMS Foundations Program Takes Empathy-based Approach to Onboarding

iCIMS

Best New Hire Onboarding Program

January 2023

Company Background

iCIMS®

Company-at-a-Glance	
Headquarters	101 Crawfords Corner Road Suite 3-100 Holmdel, NJ 07733
Year Founded	2000
Employees	1,300
Global Scale (Regions that you operate in or provide services to)	Global
Customers/Output, etc. (Key customers and services offered)	iCIMS is the talent cloud company that empowers organizations to attract, engage, hire, and advance the right talent that builds a diverse, winning workforce. The end-to-end-platform helps its customers at every stage of the talent journey including recruitment marketing (career sites, CRM), engagement (video storytelling, text, chatbots) hiring (ATS, video interviews, talent assessments), onboarding (and offer management), internal mobility (iCIMS Opportunity Marketplace) and more.
Industry	Software
Website	www.icims.com

Budget and Timeframe

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Number of (HR, Learning, Talent) employees involved with the implementation?	iCIMS counts on numerous groups across the company to implement the iCIMS Onboarding program, iCIMS Foundations Program. Interdepartmental teams are used to support software, hardware, building and parking access and space planning (when in the office), scheduling, and executing curriculum. In addition, iCIMS' internal distribution list when alerting the company of a new hire consists of approximately 50 recipients. This number only reflects the employees directly operating iCIMS' Onboard portal.
Number of Operations or Subject Matter Expert employees involved with the implementation?	Various employees across departments provide operational and technical support, curriculum design, and subject matter expert input. This includes: Infrastructure Shared Services, Talent Experience, Compensation and Benefits, Talent Management, Talent Acquisition, CEO and Executive team, Product Marketing, Product Management teams and Partner Development teams.
Timeframe to implement	Curriculum runs for 90 days per onboarding class, with new classes joining the organization every other week throughout the entire year. The 90-day onboarding program officially launched in May 2016 and continues to improve with curriculum additions. The entire redesign, including strategy, branding and enough class iterations to evaluate and implement the feedback on the program took one year to complete. With the pandemic and iCIMS' overall global expansion, the transformation of a largely in-person onboarding to a 100% virtual program was updated to the iCIMS Foundations Program in a matter of two months, with evolution starting in April 2021.
Start date of the program	June 2021

Business Conditions and Business Needs

Supporting iCIMS growth and global expansion, leadership invests in the development and expansion of the Talent Experience department, and particularly with the organization's new hire onboarding program. Creating a three-month assimilation program was based off feedback from new hires and hiring managers. Instead of utilizing a "firehose" strategy, the Talent Experience department has a mapped out a foundational onboarding program that spans over 90-days, allowing the new hires to acclimate to the company's vision, strategy and culture, while simultaneously getting exposure to the day-to-day of their role. Continued support also allows the Talent Experience team to accommodate the growing needs and preferences of employees, incorporating tools like a learning management system, polling engagement licenses and authoring software to provide a blended, engaging, and positive learning experience for new hires.

New hires, hiring managers and stakeholders alike consistently give the iCIMS Foundation Program highly satisfactory ratings (85%+). The program has also improved employee retention and satisfaction around professional development. Aligned to our own product's investment in hiring, our new hire onboarding program is known for mirroring a "customer-first" mentality.

Talent Experience works closely with the executive team to re-evaluate the goal of the program on an annual basis, ensuring consistent communication of the company vision and its aligned objectives and mapping content to it (i.e., iCIMS product portfolio knowledge, sales and service strategy, infrastructure support, etc.).

As the pandemic changed the way we all worked, we adapted and grew the iCIMS Foundation Program. We previously flew all new hires into our corporate headquarters in Holmdel, NJ, for their first week of onboarding for a warm welcome and introduction to our culture, but that was no longer possible. In one week, our team developed a remote curriculum to support the incoming class and the continued needs of the business. Every module of the onboarding program is now delivered virtually via Zoom through instructor-led trainings, e-learnings, recordings and hypercare "ask me anything" sessions. The shift in the way we work pushed iCIMS to think and operate in a more inclusive way. We shifted our programs to account for scalability, self-paced opportunities and a different way of connecting, communicating and learning, with the end goal still to give these new employees a warm welcome the "iCIMS way," near and far.

Overview

The organization's ultimate goal is to assimilate the new hire to the company vision, corporate objectives and culture while prioritizing engagement and the retention of knowledge for the new hire, as well as trust and satisfaction from hiring managers whose new hires are attending the program.

The first 90 days of employment are the most integral to a new hire's success, so iCIMS breaks its onboarding down into digestible sessions, versus traditional orientation programs that may only engage the new hire during their first day or week with the company.

The biggest highlights of the program include:

People-first experience: iCIMS currently delivers onboarding from a virtual perspective. As the future of work unfolds, we will consider re-integrating in-person activities as part of onboarding. Whether in person or remote, our focus is on creating elevated connective experiences in a global company.

Drink our own champagne: iCIMS uses its own Talent Cloud solutions to truly showcase our employer brand and our products through the process. We leverage iCIMS Video Studio in several different ways, particularly in introducing new hires to the business and targeted departments to those new hires, like meeting their human resources business partners (HRBPs) and welcome messages from their recruiter. We've also created what we call "Navigate iCIMS," a page on our intranet that pairs with our org chart, showcasing the organizational design and video testimonials of employees discussing their roles, skills required and collaborating departments. This page also serves as a primer for career mobility once employees have hit their 12-month mark and want to explore other roles in the business.

Stakeholder support: There are nearly 50 people involved as part of the onboarding process. In a mostly virtual environment, no stone has gone unturned in thinking of ways to simplify the experience for not only the virtual new hires, but for our own stakeholders – whether that meant eliminating dead processes, automating steps, swapping out instructor-led content for opportunities to showcase iCIMS Video Studio, e-learnings, etc. This also includes a brand-new communication package and resources for the hiring manager, aligned with our leadership trainer, to ensure hiring managers have checklists, clear expectations and feel the same support that their own new hire is receiving.

Modified assimilation plans: We include modified assimilation plans for interns, contractors and other special audiences.

- Contractors: Self-paced options are available for contractor/temporary employees so they're able to get the iCIMS knowledge but jump right into projects
- Interns: This award-winning program is a modified version of the iCIMS Foundation program, paired with early-career development topics like business acumen, presentation skills and emotional intelligence.
- VP+: We leverage the core of the iCIMS Foundations program paired with everything a VP+ would need, encouraging the candor to share their feedback along the way and paired with what is offered from a Leadership Foundations Program perspective. We also leverage this program as we acquire organizations and tweak where necessary to focus on change management and culture.

Metrics for leadership support:
- 100% of managers agree that the program helped their new hire assimilate to the company.
- 100% of managers agree that their new hire received the proper amount of companywide knowledge to be successful in their role.
- 100% of managers agree that they'd recommend iCIMS' new hire program format to someone looking to build an orientation program.
- 70% of managers feel that the amount of time allocated to the iCIMS Foundations Program is appropriate.
- 90% of managers feel that their new hire received the proper amount of companywide knowledge to be successful by their 90th day of employment.

Design and Delivery

iCIMS cares about the candidate journey and has found that it's incredibly important to continue that experience from a signed offer letter to day one on the job and beyond. The Talent Experience department uses iCIMS' in-house onboarding solution to onboard all new hires into the organization. The onboarding solution is the first step in an employee's touchpoint experience at iCIMS, utilizing task management and form management. iCIMS can engage with the new hire through a branded "Welcome" email, which lets new hires know that their Onboarding Specialist will be in touch with relevant information and details shortly. This portal also allows them to complete demos of iCIMS' products, learn more about the area surrounding the company's offices and watch interviews with the CEO of iCIMS.

The team also uses iCIMS' Text Engagement to communicate to new hires through text messages throughout the process as a quick, easy and convenient means to keep them updated and engaged. Texting has increased engagement with new hires before they even walk through the door, generating response rates over 80% with replies in under nine minutes. This engagement, coupled with the opportunity to complete all necessary employment paperwork prior to their start digitally, allows for the Talent Experience team to dive right into professional development and cultural integration without the typical administrative concerns that come with onboarding a new employee (i.e., a provisioned laptop, access to the benefits site, etc.).

The first week: Prior to the pandemic, all new hires, regardless of their level, department or office location, went through an onsite three-day program at iCIMS headquarters in New Jersey. During this time, new hires are introduced to the company's mission, vision and values, benefits, corporate systems and more. New hire onboarding groups are hosted onsite every other week, meaning each employee starts with a hiring class, allowing for cross-functional relationship building, reinforced through group events like scavenger hunts, icebreakers, socials and more.

Since March 2020 all these events have transitioned to a virtual environment. This includes a scavenger hunt, which is a gamified approach in allowing teams to scour the knowledge they gained that week, while introducing themselves to the company through a Microsoft Teams channel, complete with picture challenges in their work-from-home environment. A cohort-specific Teams channel is also created to last for their full 90 days in iCIMS Foundations Program, with strategically placed engagement points (e.g., welcome video feeds) and pinned resources like LinkedIn Learning playlists, product demonstrations, acronym packets and more.

First 30 days: After the first week, new hires attend a virtual instructor-led session or complete an eLearning at least once every two weeks to continue to learn and retain

information. For instructor-led sessions, new hires learn about different departments in the organization, the customer commitment strategy, hiring process and more. The CEO also hosts a monthly session for new hires, sharing the state of iCIMS in the industry and its corporate objectives. eLearnings are not only assigned for standard compliance training, but they are also used in several other ways. For example, iCIMS hosts trivia questions via an eLearning to gauge what new employees have learned in onboarding thus far, as well as core messaging overviews of the product suite.

After their first month, new hires must complete a "Tell the iCIMS Story Louder" eLearning that gives them the talk track and tools to do so. In customer-facing departments, this includes submitting a video to their manager with the "golden pitch."

Days 30-90: Additional modules are strategically placed throughout different marks in new hires' onboarding journey between days 30 & 60 that dive deeper into iCIMS' platform and solution offerings. While each employee doesn't necessarily build or sell the software, the organization firmly believes that each new hire should be equipped with a talk track on the Talent Cloud. To build this proficiency, their onboarding is inclusive of opportunities to learn about the Talent Cloud, introducing new hires to the concepts of the iCIMS solutions, with discussion groups that allow them to play the role of recruiter and candidate. Other engagement points from days 30-90 include a "Meet the Executives" event, allowing for new hires to submit questions to the C-suite and network with the group, as well as respective overviews of the organization's compensation strategy, product roadmap and industry insights. More trivia e-learnings are provided at days 60 and 90 to continue reinforcement and retention.

In addition to the iCIMS Foundations Program, employees are fully immersed in functional training programs that align to their particular role. The Onboarding Specialist works with the respective trainers to ensure a smooth transition and balance between each curriculum offered, managed effectively in our shared Learning Management System.

At the 90-day mark for new hires, Talent Experience celebrates each new hire class on their completion of the program, while exploring areas of triumph and opportunity from a development perspective. New hires receive their final survey at this point and the Talent Experience team surveys hiring managers to continue to build an effective partnership between the onboarding program and leadership expectations. We also leverage an employee recognition software to award new hires "points" on their 90th day, giving them a monetary reward that can be spent on charitable giving, gift cards or even company swag.

Outside of the classroom: To support the overall curriculum, Talent Experience deploys additional strategies to ensure new hires are set up for success. Career Conversation panels and internal career fairs are also available to build upon new hires' skill sets for their current role and one they may want to obtain in the future.

Corporate Communications support: Talent Experience works closely with the Corporate Communications team to streamline messaging to the organization around professional development. Upon joining, new hires utilize the Talent section of the intranet, Watercooler, which supports them in their assimilation through items like additional suggested learning playlists, system and practice user guides, book recommendations and more. The Talent Experience team also leverages social tools like Microsoft Teams, creating environments for new hires to share ideas, updates and pictures of their onboarding experience. We also leverage a "social media checklist" for employees, encouraging them to connect with and review iCIMS on multiple channels around our employee value proposition.

CBID involvement: iCIMS' CBID (culture, belonging, inclusion and diversity) leader has given Talent Experience the opportunity to partner on an "Inclusion @ Work" series for new hires, as well as an introduction to the overall strategy and invitation to our iBelong committee, which fuels all employee resource groups, like Pride+, Mental Health and Womxn @ iCIMS.

External opportunities: The organization invests in each employee by providing them with a LinkedIn Learning license, which Talent Experience will utilize for pre-work and post-work for additional programming, or even around certain competencies like Adaptability in a Remote World. For more specific functional support, iCIMS works with departments, such as the software developers, to introduce vendors like PluralSight and Safari. New hires are exposed to these opportunities during their first week with the organization.

Buddy program: Talent Experience asks hiring managers to pair their new hire with a "buddy," an experienced iCIMS peer who will informally help introduce the employee to the iCIMS culture, answer questions, build relationships and ultimately help increase the new employee's proficiency and sense of inclusion and belonging.

Engagement

While designing the iCIMS Foundations program, it was important for us to build new content that aligned with the evolving company purpose and objectives, especially keeping virtual engagement in doing so. iCIMS has dedicated support from iCIMS leaders, who participate in the programming, either as guest speakers or facilitators for several in-house programs. Leaders also actively participate in the Talent Experience by benchmarking learning expenditures, success and activities.

The Talent Experience team appears in front of the C-suite to present how the department is performing against its objectives and how it is impacting the organization's strategic goals, and reviews successes and changes. iCIMS also keeps open lines of communication with hiring managers during new hire onboarding sessions and hosts a training curriculum for hiring managers that aligns with the expectations of new hires, particularly in surveying the managers when respective new hires hit their 90th day. 100% of new hires, no matter their role with the company or where in the world, attend the program, which is a testament to the managers' buy-in.

iCIMS Talent Experience team has had the autonomy to break this program down and build it back up time and time again, improving it with every single 90-day session by collecting feedback. iCIMS' dedication to improving the program is necessary to ultimately impact iCIMS' employee base and retention rates. In everything iCIMS does, the company strives for scalability. Anything that iCIMS' facilitators may create for a live or virtual classroom could also be paired with a job aid or eLearning that will be able to support knowledge retention.

Measurable Benefits

The Talent Experience team aims to impact retention, engagement and performance through the iCIMS Foundations Program. These are tied to performance objectives for onboarding stakeholders, particularly the Onboarding Specialist and Director, Talent Experience.

To measure the program, iCIMS surveys employees after their first week, mid-way through the program and at their 90-day session. Based off survey scores in the past year, iCIMS has found the following:

New hires (engaged at first week, mid-program and day 90):

- 90.2% strongly agree their first impression of the onboarding is positive (after first week)
- 89.9% strongly agree that they feel engaged in the iCIMS culture while participating in the program
- 70% strongly agree, 30% agree that the program positively impacted their ability to assimilate to their role

Industry-standard notes that 69% of employees stay with organizations for three years after completing a structured onboarding program. From 2017-2020, nearly 80% of onboarding participants are still with the organization in a high-performing capacity.

Annually, iCIMS invests in using a third-party vendor to host an internal engagement survey. Talent Experience partners with Human Resources business partners to ensure onboarding continues to fit the needs of themes the business is seeing. The third-party vendor also conducts pulse surveys to track success against prior metrics. In our last survey, the company scored above the benchmark for employee satisfaction with professional development.

Overall

Lessons learned: iCIMS has created a curriculum that aims to and succeeds in continually surpassing expectations of new hires and leadership, and we will always be evaluating and improving upon it. Innovation is one of the company's values, and iCIMS is dedicated to continuously refining the program to align with the best interests of employees and the business.

The Talent Experience team is committed to maintaining iCIMS' materials and will continue to iteratively make updates to content, strategy and process. The program overall is evaluated twice a year, and results and opportunities are presented to the executives quarterly.

As the company continues to expand globally, the iCIMS Foundations Program continues to flex in terms of appropriate offerings and modalities, due to the state of the acquired employees, their time zone and more. The emphasis on a successful assimilation has helped the business to reevaluate internal tools that would best support a global audience. Our tech stack has evolved to use tools like Kazoo, Articulate 360, Kahoot, Poll Everywhere and more to increase knowledge retention and engagement, especially as part of constant Zoom delivery.

Next/future outlook: iCIMS plans to constantly update content based off feedback and industry trends. In addition to evaluating employee feedback, iCIMS is planning the following:

1. Continuing to evaluate global expansion training opportunities, through virtual instructor-led trainings, recorded webinars, etc.
2. Continuing to leverage internal social tools to drive more engagement to the Talent Experience brand.
3. Continuing to build relationships throughout the business so that the Talent Development team can incorporate their participation into the onboarding strategy, no matter the modality.
4. Further scoping out a more consistent and refined flash mentoring program, allowing for employees of all levels from all over the world to build a profile that would match them with someone from the organization in a totally different role, encouraging networking and collaboration where it may not be natural in a global, remote environment.

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