

Modern Onboarding

TO ACCELERATE NEW HIRE SUCCESS



Section One

HOW DO YOU DEFINE A SUCCESSFUL HIRE?

When it comes to bringing new hires onboard at your organization, how you onboard is just as important as who you onboard. It can make the difference between failed hires and employees that continue to realize their full potential.

People are the most valuable asset your organization can have. So when your organization has a people need, the pressure is on to respond. Your managers want to find someone quickly, someone with the right skills whose salary requirements fit within their operational budget. Like many of their other projects, they plan out time, quality, and affordability, and then pick the two that are most important.

You've probably heard this trio of aspects before when it comes to managing projects. Sometimes illustrations of this principle feature these three characteristics as points on a triangle with limited resources at the center. Spend more resources on one aspect, and another has to accommodate it.

Some people see how advertising for a new hire fits into the project management triangle and think that's all there is to it. It's hard to blame them, because the basics of the classic job posting line up almost exactly:

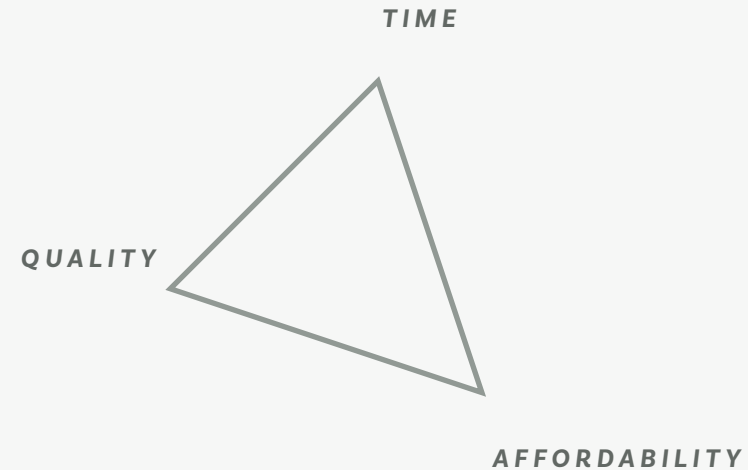
Time: you specify the time they need to work (full, part, hourly)

Quality: you lay out the quality of the work you expect them to produce

Affordability: you specify the salary you would pay them

Many organizations consider a hire a success when a candidate's needs match up with the organization's triangle. Here's the thing, though:

Managing people is different than measuring projects.



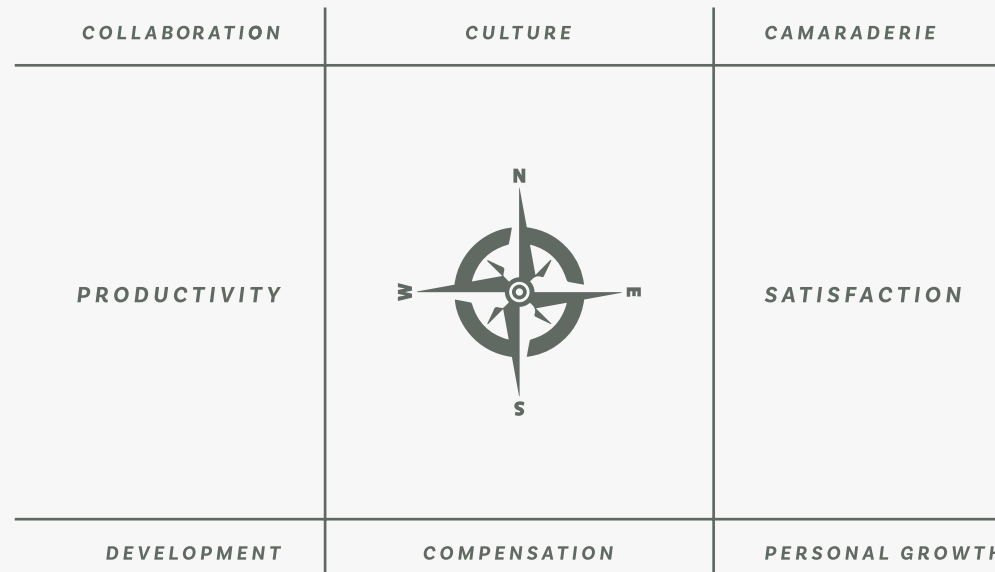
People don't come with deadlines you can measure in advance. Their capacity isn't a static measurement either—your worst employees can grow, and your best employees can hit a rough patch. Determining an employee's value to your organization is more like doing calculus than measuring the sides of a project management triangle. The answers come when you understand how things will change.

Today's candidates understand this equation. Instead of just taking a job, they decide on a career path. Instead of accepting the first job with the right hours and the highest salary, they research the full employee experience at your organization, reading online reviews and forming impressions on how your organization is going to support them on their life journey.

If your organization is going to retain your new hires, you need to do more than just fit them through the hiring event triangle and get their signatures on their job offers. You need to align what they expect from working at your organization with what your organization expects in return. If your candidates are going to find their way through your onboarding process, then HR needs to provide the information they need to orient themselves and make sure your organization's journey aligns with theirs.

Project management is a triangle.

People management is a compass.



The way you plan and communicate the daily realities of your organization can help your employees navigate toward your shared goals while advancing on their personal journey as well.

While there are 360° worth of issues that your employees will need to resolve, it helps to start categorizing them with four cardinal directions:

At the north end of the compass, we have Culture. This includes any concern that affects your organization as a group, including how your candidates and employees see people interact.

To the south of Culture, there are Compensation concerns. If culture is everything group-related, then compensation covers the individual con-

cerns of your employees, including salary, benefits, and more intangible motivations.

At the western point is Productivity, and at the east is Satisfaction. Some call this axis work/life balance, but employees don't draw dividing lines on each hour of the day—they'll experience satisfaction at work and face productivity requirements at home. Their workplace experience will affect both.

Culture, Compensation, Productivity, and Satisfaction. Navigate along these directions, and you'll find collaboration, camaraderie, professional development, personal growth, and every other consideration that your employees use to evaluate their experience with your organization.

HR is most effective when it can point to true north – when it emphasizes and clarifies your organization's culture. When culture is consistent and communicated, candidates and employees trust it as a reference to navigate through the other issues on the compass and decide whether the experience your organization offers aligns with their personal goals. And as they succeed in their journeys, they share their experiences with others and strengthen your employer brand.

Modern onboarding is a critical part of your employee experience; not because it's a better way to fit employees through the hiring triangle, but because it's part of a continuing cycle that begins before candidates read your job ad.

Section Two

POSITIVE PERCEPTIONS AT FIRST CONTACT



Your values are the cornerstone of your company culture and brand. Does the reality of your culture align with the values you've chosen to collectively and individually follow? Prospective employees won't trust that your compass points true north if they don't see evidence that it all lines up, starting with the first time they hear about you or come across your job posting online.

Your vision, mission, and values should permeate all forms of communication throughout your company, both internally and externally. Whether

it's on a company intranet, your social media pages, website, or job posts, these interactions are an important aspect in influencing the public's – and prospective employees' – perception of your organization.

Of course, to get the right results from your values, *that perception needs to be accurate*. While first impressions are important, they get completed over time. If your real experience isn't as advertised, then your new hires will quickly become lost talent.

Perception and reality intersect when your recruitment includes happy and engaged employees, and that engagement begins with the candidate experience.



Section Three

THE CANDIDATE EXPERIENCE MATTERS

The relationship between candidates and prospective employers can hold a lot of tension. Both sides are hoping to show off what they have to offer and prove themselves worthy of continuing a successful relationship. If you're looking to bring on the best and the brightest, pay attention to how your recruiting process treats candidates. The impressions they form will give them a strong indication of how they'll be treated in the future.



Candidates will notice while they're in your office if it seems to be a positive environment or not, if employees they meet are friendly and helpful, or if they all keep their heads down and seem closed off. This goes back to culture – *promoting laughter and open communication as a regular part of your workspace will translate into candidates getting a palpable sense of how enjoyable and fulfilling it could be to work there.*

The way you handle interviews is another important indicator of how employees are treated at your organization. If you're dragging the process out with extensive or repetitive interviews, your talented candidates are going to think twice about accepting your offer. If your interview process is inefficient, what does that say about the rest of your operations? Interviewing is an area where you can give a great first impression simply by being flexible and respectful of your candidates' time.

Sites like Glassdoor have a review section designated for the interview experience, so it's easy for potential employees to see whether or not they're going to be treated with dignity before they apply. Of course, anonymous reviews have to be taken with a grain of salt, but obvious trends in reviews will affect candidates' first perceptions of your organization.

Section Four

AUTOMATE COMPLIANCE TO MAKE ROOM FOR CONNECTION

Many organizations see a new hire's first day as a compliance issue and nothing more, a formality for HR to cover before getting back to other administrative tasks.

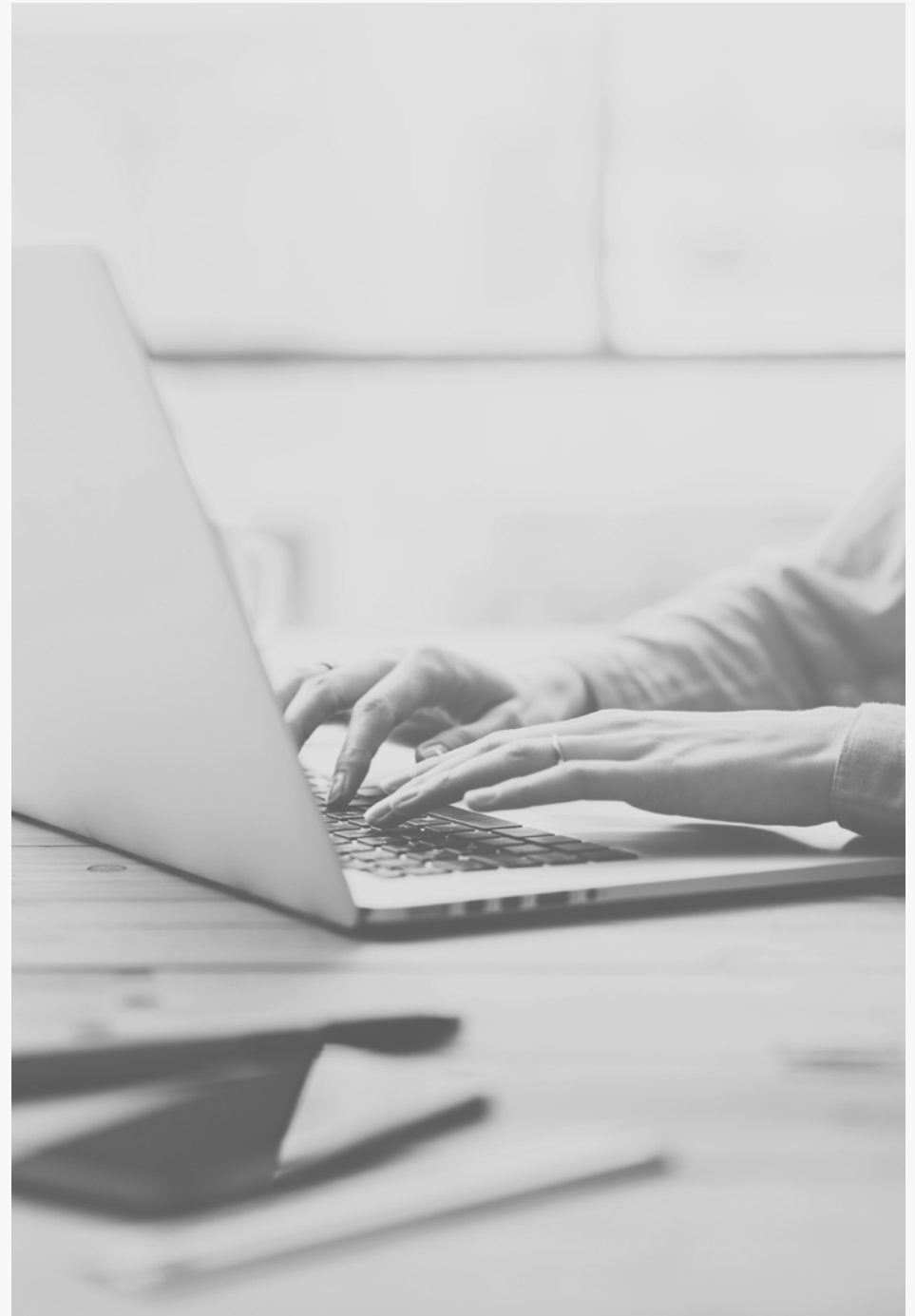
There are quite a few compliance tasks to cover before a new employee is ready to start working for you:

Policies to explain

Signatures to gather

Ensuring everything is ready at their desk

Digital access to determine and set up



It takes time and thought to make sure that all of these boxes get checked. But your candidates are still forming impressions on their first day, and this time can be good for so much more than hanging over their shoulder and telling them where to sign.

In fact, the right technology can help you coordinate some of these tasks in advance. An HRIS (human resources information system) helps track applicants throughout the application process, including reaching out to new hires to collect their signatures. The right system will also let other departments know to prepare for new hires, including physical and digital setup.

When compliance is automated, it makes room for them to jump right into *making connections on the first day*.

Hopefully you've already introduced your new hires to your organization's mission and values during the recruiting process. On their first day, spend some time elaborating on your vision, mission, and values and help each new hire see *how they connect to the bigger picture*. It also helps if you can put a face on these values by introducing new hires to the founders of your organization, whether in person or with a biographical presentation.

By the time your new hires get halfway through their first day, they should have a solid connection to your organization. At that point, we recommend treating your new hires to lunch with their team members. Why is this important, especially on the first day?

Think about it – do you want your new hires' first day to include driving around a possibly unfamiliar location trying to find a restaurant, then sitting alone and wolfing down lunch so they can find their way back on time, so their new coworkers don't think they're slackers?

Or do you want their first lunch to be a fun, relaxing time where they enjoy good food from a recommended restaurant and really start getting to know the people they'll be working with?

That first day really sets the tone for the onboarding experience – or lack thereof. According to SHRM's "Onboarding New Employees: Maximizing Success" guide, *new employees who can take part in a well-structured onboarding program are 69% more likely to stay with a company for up to three years*.

Contrast that amount of time with BambooHR's findings that one third of 1,000 people surveyed left their company within six months of being hired.

So what else can you do to show people right away that they can grow with your organization?

Section Five

TURNING CONNECTIONS INTO CULTURE

The first days and weeks will give new employees a clear picture of your organization's learning culture, and whether or not it's the kind of place that encourages personal and professional development. Modern learning opportunities greatly improve employees' ability to connect with their roles and how their work impacts the organization.

According to the [*Harvard Business Review*](#), "Job seekers from entry-level to executive are more concerned with opportunities for learning and development than any other aspect of a prospective job."

Your new hires are hungry to learn, so the way you train through onboarding should fit with what they see as effective on-the-job learning – which is definitely not making them click through hour-long PowerPoints for a week straight. The most effective onboarding experiences should be a blend of both in-person and online training.

Those aspects that talk about your company branding, products and services, values and mission, processes, etc. are a great example of things to go over in person within the first few days so new employees can ask questions then

and there and start building a sense of connection with what your organization is all about.

Other aspects, like compliance training on various topics, whether it's cybersecurity, safety, OSHA and HIPAA required training, those types of things – this training can be really effective when you provide up-to-date videos that break the content down into shorter topic areas, so you don't end up with all that important information going in one ear and out the other.



Building a culture that's invested in learning and growing together is a major advantage, no matter what industry you're in.

It's really important to understand that culture affects everything about your company, so the values that tie everyone together have to be meaningful on a human level.

Especially when you're trying to engage new hires in building an emotional connection to your company, if your values are totally geared toward business success and don't address the fact that *your business depends on the relational, emotional, and physical health of your people*, then you're really going to struggle with getting people to engage with their work there.

Culture is built on how your employees interact with each other. It's different from the environment they work in, because it runs much deeper than simply having a nice space and free coffee and snacks. Creating a stronger culture is about encouraging positive interactions that bring teams and departments closer.





Section Six

CONTINUING TO CLARIFY YOUR MESSAGE

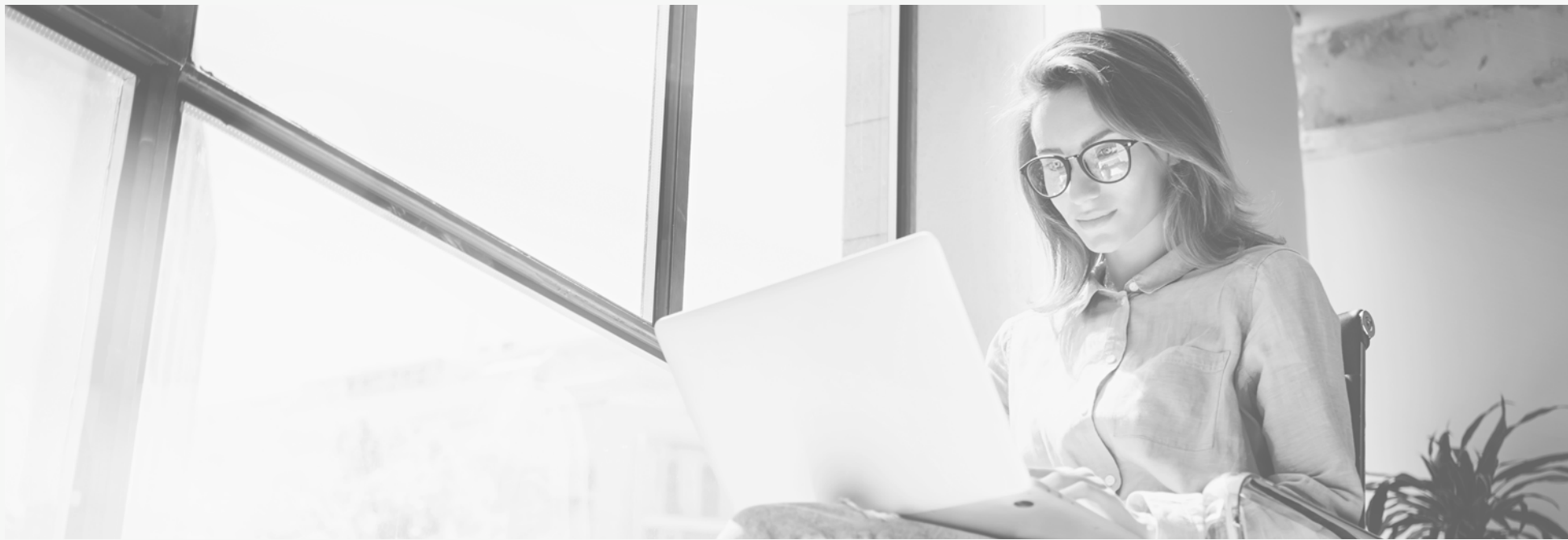
As time goes on, new hires see culture put into practice, which helps *clarify the message of your values*. How can you make sure that your employees have a clear understanding of your organization and your culture after the onboarding process?

A couple ways to do that are by having regular opportunities for people to learn about the benefits available to them, and holding challenges based on your values.

It takes time for people to fully understand their benefits. If they have to wait until the next open enrollment period for more details or encouragement to use their benefits, they may miss out. Having mini open-enrollment experiences throughout the year can help improve new hires' understanding of what's offered. Monthly 401k presentations and regular wellness events like screenings and shots can help promote use of benefits.

You can also hold regular challenges based on your values. These help employees take the values and see how they can apply in their work lives, and sometimes their personal lives as well. These can be group activities or more introspective challenges, but for all these challenges, you'll want to define goals and follow up on them.

Making these *clarification points a regular part of your organization's monthly and yearly rhythm* helps keep your culture and values at the forefront. Setting up this consistency helps your employees recognize and respond to your values.



Section Seven

BRING ONBOARDING FULL CIRCLE THROUGH CONSISTENCY

It's this kind of consistency that takes your onboarding full circle and will help your employees get through their "epiphany moments." Your employees are constantly making comparisons between roles and companies, and that includes comparing their current situation to their previous experience.

Research from CEB, a best-practice insight and technology company, shows that job hunting activity jumps 6% on the anniversary of the hire date and 9% on the anniversary of a promotion, marking natural comparison points (what we refer to as epiphany moments). There's also a 12% spike after birthdays, especially milestone birthdays like 30, 40, or 50. And after the biggest of all comparison events, the high school reunion? A 16% increase in job-hunting.

When onboarding is tied to your culture, it isn't just a program that ends after 90 days. It continues and becomes re-boarding, where the workplace experience you set up reminds your employees why they chose to work there, even during those common epiphany moments.

By optimizing your onboarding cycle to provide a consistent experience from first contact to the latest epiphany moment, you can create a culture that shapes your future hires and fulfills your employees' expectations of success.



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