The Human Touch Drives
Onboarding Success

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Research reveals that many employers are missing the mark when it comes to making a strong – and lasting – first impression, and it's having a serious impact on business.

There are dozens upon dozens of clichés and quotes about first impressions, most of them a testament to the value of delivering a good one.

You could say that onboarding is the equivalent of an employer's first impression. And based on research done over the past few years by a range of organizations, the majority of onboarding efforts – when they even exist – continue to greatly miss the mark of creating an effective first impression.

New employees want to quickly get that feeling they have come to the right place. They want to know and sense early on if they fit in. To capture those new employee hearts and minds, the onboarding process must be elevated to be a positive, engaging experience.

It's also about loyalty, one of the ultimate upsides to effective onboarding from a business standpoint. But employers can't earn loyalty if new employees come in feeling lost, disconnected and uncomfortable.

Yet, when it comes to onboarding, many employers are still grasping for solutions.

Onboarding today is falling short

ADP® recently conducted a comprehensive research project focused on the onboarding process. To uncover the nitty gritty of onboarding, ADP surveyed almost 1,500 employees, managers and HR professionals. It found that just 25% of employees feel that their organization does onboarding/orientation "extremely well," and only 21% of employees were "extremely satisfied" with their organization's onboarding effort. Managers and HR administrators are even less proud of the current onboarding process, as only 9% and 19% respectively believe they deliver onboarding "extremely well."

Also, in most cases, less than half of HR administrators report consistently taking new employees through some of the basic "human" elements of onboarding (see chart on page 3).
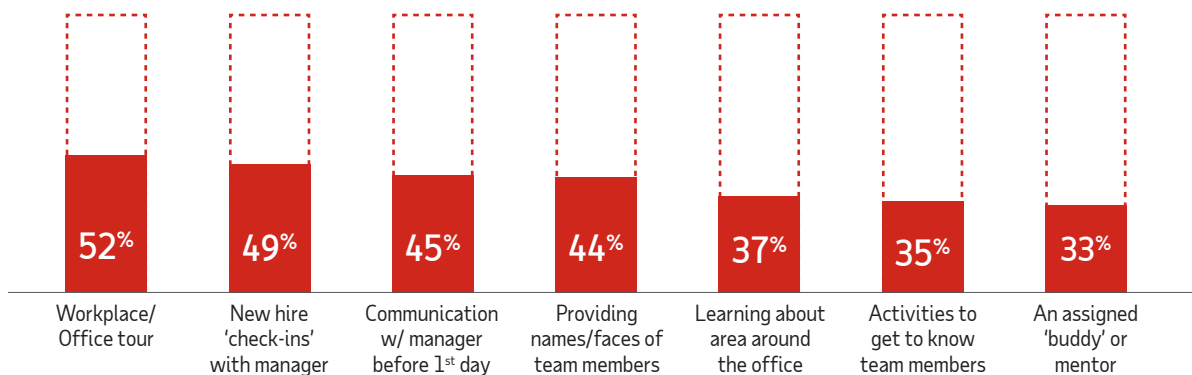
While successful onboarding comes down to capturing those new employee hearts and minds, the research shows that much of today's onboarding ignores the "human" needs which, in turn, jeopardizes the business outcomes (productivity, retention, engagement) that are central to successful human capital management (HCM).

Does Your Company Deliver Onboarding "Extremely Well"?

	Yes	No
Managers	9%	91%
HR Administrators	19%	81%
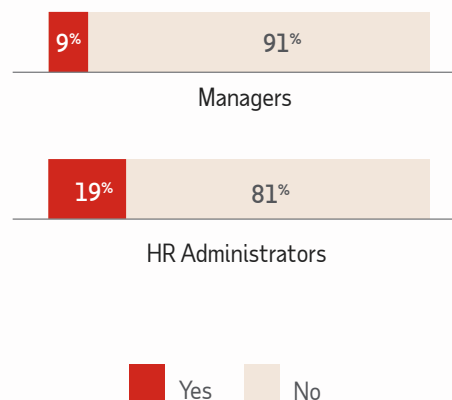
Basic "human" elements of onboarding

Percentage of onboarding steps HR administrators report doing consistently:

Workplace/ Office tour	New hire 'check-ins' with manager	Communication w/ manager before 1st day	Providing names/faces of team members	Learning about area around the office	Activities to get to know team members	An assigned 'buddy' or mentor
52%	49%	45%	44%	37%	35%	33%

Times are changing

Until recently, onboarding has been defined most often as an ad-hoc, paper-driven, unstructured and non-systematic program … all reasons why onboarding has failed to live up to its promise.

Research shows that onboarding must meet specific needs and criteria to achieve the desired outcomes. Employers with a winning onboarding approach offer a structured, digital onboarding process – one focused on those human needs that drive loyalty, retention and productivity. Taking a deeper dive into ADP's research findings, there are "3 Cs of Onboarding" required for success:

Connection

Employee satisfaction and assimilation that lead to retention.

When ADP asked how onboarding impacts that connection, the combination of a structured and high-quality program won out. Employees who experienced a structured process were more likely (55%) to feel "extremely/very connected" after their first day than those who did not (32%).

From a quality standpoint, employees who reported onboarding "went very well" were three times as likely to feel "extremely/very connected" compared with those who did not.

Comfort

Bonds between an employee, their manager, team and organization that lead to effective working relationships and productivity.

The relationship between onboarding and employee comfort is key, and ADP's research drives that point home in dramatic fashion. In fact, employees from the survey said "feeling more comfortable" is the number one desired attribute when it comes to onboarding.

Culture

Workplace norms, expectations and values that shape career success and purpose-driven work.

Employees need to feel that sense of belonging to something larger than themselves. By getting the cultural factor right within onboarding, employees are primed to be productive.

Technology: playing a key role

Along with its human side, onboarding also needs a capable technology solution to succeed.

For example, onboarding software could include text and video to allow introductions from a manager and team before the new employee's first day at work. Not only can this build loyalty and answer the "Is this the right place for me?" question, it can also mitigate some of the nervousness that typically affects new employees.

The research also suggests an interest in completing standard protocols prior to the employee's start date. For HR and Managers, this could include critical administrative functions, such as direct deposit, benefits documents, corporate policies or a federally required form that records a person's eligibility to work in the U.S. For employees, this means knowing more about the company and location. It might even coordinate with a mobile maps application, so the new employee gets specific directions to work on day one, and can learn about the surrounding area to pick a place to go to lunch.

The concept at work here is the clear value of data integration, where onboarding data flows to the rest of the HR system, saving time and hassle for managers, employees and HR.

With effective onboarding software, the moment the new employee gets to work, they will know their team and their environment. They have met their manager, learned about the organization in depth and have their paperwork completed. They're ready to hit the ground running.

Effective onboarding software must be designed to build connections between a new employee, their manager, team, potential "buddy," and the organization's culture well before the employee's start date.
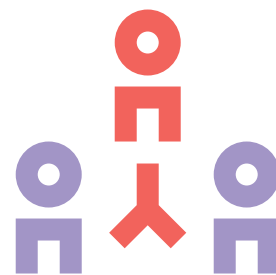
A trio of takeaways: things to get right

In the end, the research brought to light three key takeaways in creating and deploying an effective onboarding process. While there are many smaller details to manage (see checklist on page 6), it comes down to three critical steps:

1

Design Onboarding for Both Managers and Employees

According to the research, managers spend more time onboarding a new hire (equivalent of 7 days) than HR does (equivalent of 4 days). Reducing time spent on onboarding and getting new hires productive right away are two of the top three "manager desired" attributes of an onboarding program. And again, employees feeling "highly comfortable" at their new organization is the most desired attribute of an onboarding program.

2

Design Onboarding for a Digital and Mobile World

ADP's research found that 80% of HR administrations report that paperwork is still completed in person at a desk or in conference room, or both. And finally, fewer than 12% of employees can access any single type of onboarding paperwork from a mobile device. So, many employers have a long way to go in moving onboarding to the digital mode.

3

Listen to Employee Feedback on Your Onboarding Process

Returning to some of the survey's most actionable results, employees who were highly satisfied with their onboarding program were three times as likely to feel comfortable after their first day than those who were not satisfied, and almost twice as likely to feel comfortable later on in their first year.

Also, when compared to those who were unsatisfied with onboarding, employees who were "extremely" or "very satisfied" with their onboarding also reported being extremely/very loyal to their organization by an almost three-to-one margin.

It takes the 3 C s to onboard successfully

From the start, onboarding is as much about human touch as it is about the technical tools. Of course, new employees and their managers want to have the right technology and processes to make their first day a smooth one from the "paperwork" side of the equation.

But as the research clearly shows, many employers still have a long way to go in what is arguably the most decisive factor in whether or not onboarding succeeds – winning those hearts and minds of new employees, even before they cross the workplace threshold for the first time.

The good news is it can be done. But it won't happen without the appropriate customer-centric technology and process embedded within those three Cs: connection, comfort and culture.

Onboarding checklist
Putting the human touch in action

BEFORE THE FIRST DAY	DURING THE FIRST TWO DAYS	AFTER THE FIRST TWO DAYS

Goals:

- **Build employee comfort and connection**
- **Let team know a new hire is coming**
- **Complete employee paperwork**

☑ HR set-up of employee record

☑ Send welcome note from manager

☑ Manger introduces team members and "buddy" (optional)

☑ Provide overview of the company neighborhood and driving directions

☑ Company policy acknowledgements

☑ I-9 Section 1 completed from home

☑ Direct deposit and W4 completed from home

☑ Order/set up of custom items (uniforms, equipment, etc.)

Goals:

- **Finish paperwork and policy acknowledgements**
- **Introduce new hire to team and company**
- **Build understanding of company culture, expectations and success factors**

☑ I-9 Section 2

☑ Manager and employee discuss expectations

☑ Office/workplace tour (bathrooms and coffee!)

☑ Benefits enrollment (if applicable)

☑ Team lunch

Goals:

- **Get going!**

☑ Goal setting and measurement

☑ Review onboarding steps and ensure completion

☑ Identify and assign required learning and training

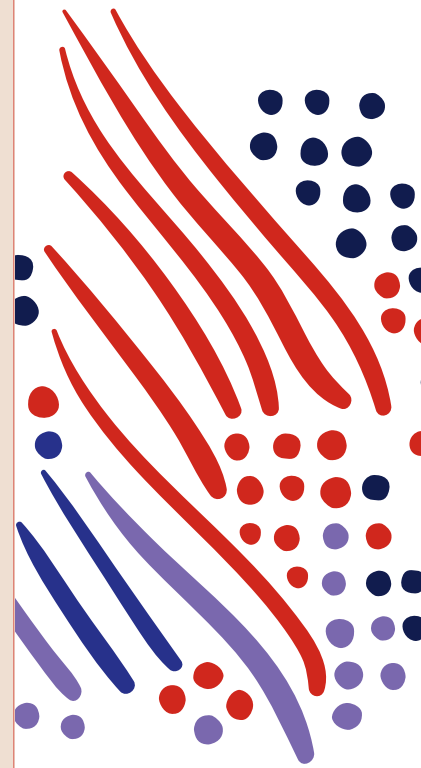☑ Capture employee feedback/ satisfaction with onboarding

About the research

ADP surveyed almost 1,500 employees, managers and HR professionals. All employees had been with their current organization for one year or less; approximately two-thirds for six months or less. The majority of employee respondents were in full-time positions (82%), split evenly between hourly and salaried. All HR professionals and managers were from organizations with 1000+ employees, across a wide range of industries.

About ADP

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