



# EMPLOYEE ONBOARDING: A PROCESS FOR THE FUTURE OF WORK

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## EMPLOYEE ONBOARDING: A PROCESS FOR THE FUTURE OF WORK

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We hire new employees because they have a much-needed expertise in their field, but we still need new hires to become experts in our company culture, policies, and processes. As systems and processes continue to change, it's becoming more difficult to expect new hires to have the skills and knowledge needed to navigate those processes. The Brandon Hall Group found that strong onboarding not only **improves retention by 82%**<sup>1</sup> but improves productivity by 70%. In addition to these challenges, workforce demographics are changing – and learning styles change accordingly. The benefits of well-designed onboarding are obvious, but what happens to our design strategy when workplace technologies and processes quickly change? Arguably, our onboarding practices must proactively change to keep pace.

**Employee onboarding**<sup>2</sup> is an ever-evolving process that doesn't have a specific cut-and-dry formula. Despite these challenges, one thing is clear: a careful design strategy is integral to getting new hires up to speed and fostering knowledge and confidence in the modern workplace.

This eBook explores the role of employee onboarding for the modern workforce, and best practices for designing, developing, and deploying onboarding initiatives. You'll learn about strategies, technologies, and approaches you can use to develop effective employee onboarding programs that make a long-term impact on employee performance.

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**“Strong onboarding improves retention by 82% and improves productivity by 70%.”**

BRANDON HALL GROUP

# SIX REASONS TO INVEST IN EMPLOYEE ONBOARDING IN YOUR ORGANIZATION

The right kind of training can lead to success, so it's important to embrace new onboarding and training techniques from the very beginning to ensure employee engagement. Social learning, even accomplished remotely, and other techniques for employee engagement can increase accessibility to information within a team. For example, a salesperson might send helpful demo videos or a presentation to their team through their training content platform.



Here are six key benefits of effective onboarding for employee engagement:

## 1. Employee Satisfaction

Good training doesn't result in employees shaking their heads and wondering what the point was. Before you produce a new course, discover your learners' needs. Designing your course around this kind of analysis lets you focus on developing relevant skills without unnecessary information. In turn, employees will see improvements to their ability to work. They won't see training as a timewaster, and they will walk away feeling much more satisfied.

## 2. Reduced Turnover

LinkedIn's [2021 Workforce Learning Report](#)<sup>3</sup> found that 70% of managers say direct reports that spend more time learning are more satisfied on the job. An

international study of food service employees also found a significant relationship between providing effective training and [reducing turnover](#)<sup>4</sup>. Employees become happier and more productive rather than looking for a new job as soon as they get the professional development they need. Knowing how to do your job is a great feeling. So, as job satisfaction improves and motivation increases, employees will feel like staying.

## 3. Increased Performance

Your employees want [training tailored to the tasks they do](#)<sup>5</sup> every day, not a generic, one-size-fits-all course. If you want to see performance improve, then your training design will have to target the knowledge base, motivations, skills, and competencies that are critical to individual positions. You can accomplish this by building personalized learning paths, but effective

personalization has a few requirements:

- Training goals and objectives are role-specific
- Content targets well-defined knowledge and performance gaps
- LMS/Learning portal technology enables complex learner paths

#### 4. Increased Knowledge Retention

People lose around 90% of what they learn<sup>4</sup> by the time they get back to work, and unfortunately many training courses don't take this into account. Developing your employees' skills isn't a one-and-done activity. Employees should **repeat key parts of the training**<sup>6</sup> at regular intervals to keep their knowledge sharp. By engaging learners during training, you can prevent their new expertise from decaying. To help them retain what they've learned, you need to make the training relevant, review content regularly, and provide opportunities to apply their knowledge and critical thinking skills.

#### 5. Acquiring Fresh Talent

This may come as a surprise, but when you focus on developing your employees' skills and knowledge base, word gets around. You'll find people clamoring for a position at your company. The **potential for professional growth**<sup>7</sup> is key to finding and keeping talented new personnel. Millennials care quite a bit about opportunities to learn and grow. A report

**“70% of managers agreed that their direct reports who spend more time learning have higher employee satisfaction scores.”**

LINKEDIN

by Gallup found that **59% of Millennials assign the most importance**<sup>8</sup> to training when applying for jobs, compared to 44% for Gen X and 41% for baby boomers. According to LinkedIn, in 2021, 69% of Gen Z reported making more time to learn skills. So, whether or not it's intentional, training will become a key part of your company's recruitment strategy.

#### 6. Keeping Pace with Changing Technology

Growth of new technology-enabled business processes was unprecedented, but is quickly becoming the norm. Companies are adopting these new processes just as quickly as they are being created. Countless studies show the half-life of skills is decreasing, and reskilling is a top priority. Right now data analysis, security, and digital marketing are all ranking high on the skills wish list of organizations across industries. Chances are your employees are going to need to be trained on some new tech-driven processes soon. Maintaining a dynamic onboarding program will go a long way to prevent future performance gaps in your workforce.





# DOS AND DON'TS WHEN PLANNING EFFECTIVE EMPLOYEE ONBOARDING

## What To Do

### Keep it simple

New employees are already overwhelmed with their new responsibilities, company culture, and expectations. The last thing they want to do is navigate complicated operational systems and processes. According to statistics provided by relocation management software developer, [UrbanBound](#)<sup>10</sup>, companies lose an average of 25% of all

**“By 2022, 42% of core skills required to perform existing jobs are expected to change.”**

WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM

new hires in the first year. Of those employees, 20% leave within the first 45 days of employment. So, how can we design an employee onboarding program to reduce the burden on new hires? One strategy is to use a phased approach to learning – what do your employees need to know at one day, one week, one month, or one year on the job? Making phased learning goals can do wonders to simplify the employee onboarding experience, taking unneeded pressure of your new hires.

### Make it modern

One way to practically guarantee failure is to hand the employee a pile of forms and manuals, start an orientation video in the break room, and then leave them to fend for themselves. When you return, you might find them fast asleep, surrounded by donut crumbs and incomplete worksheets.

A [Harvard professor](#)<sup>11</sup> found that adding something as simple as a poll to learning activities can double learning gains and retention. Using eLearning tools

like quizzes, simulation, video, and gamification will keep new hires excited and engaged in the onboarding process. Essentially, the adoption of these new training technologies is a form of digital transformation within the learning and development industry. Companies are more frequently using technology to make the process of learning more effective. Kentucky Fried Chicken's [Virtual Reality onboarding](#)<sup>12</sup> experience is a great example. They designed a spooky onboarding experience using the latest in graphics and interactive learning to create an immersive learning environment.

### Show your interest

Traditional onboarding has a company focus – it's about introducing the employee to the company, sharing the history, introducing executives, and urging employees to commit to company values. While this sort of indoctrination has been seen as a way to retain employees, it can actually [create tension](#)<sup>13</sup>. Instead, emphasize the individual strengths new hires can apply to their job. Accepting the organizational culture may not be as important as making the new hire feel valued.



Wipro, an international IT and consulting company, capitalized on this notion in the socialization stage of their employee onboarding program. New hires were led through critical thinking exercises that identified items to help in their survival on a hypothetical island. Then those choices were used to reflect on their unique skills and how those skills would help them in their roles at Wipro. New hires were also given company swag with their respective names, rather than the company name, to reinforce their individuality. As a result, **new hires were as much as 32% less likely to quit**<sup>14</sup> than those who had participated in company-focused onboarding.

## What Not to Do

### Don't forget objectives

Any successful program is armed with knowledge and behavioral objectives for both the employee and employer, as well as a schedule for these objectives. Here are some common employee onboarding objectives:

- Employees have a clear first impression of the culture and work environment, including key elements identified by program stakeholders
- Employees meet and understand the role of HR, direct managers, and key co-workers
- Employees understand their job duties, policies, and team dynamics
- Employees develop skills that are immediately put to use with relatable job tasks and practice

As for having clear objectives, map out what employees should accomplish and understand as they go through the new-hire training.

### Don't forget who you're training

Employee onboarding has evolved and will continue to grow as a result of changes in technology. Lengthy formal introductions, training videos, and written tests are being replaced with a more responsive, user-driven experience. We see the need for onboarding programs designed with the learner in mind, and our learners are agile and exploratory people. It only makes sense that our learning program design should reflect that. By being as flexible as our learners, we foster better comprehension and development.

## 5 DESIGN TIPS FOR AN INTERACTIVE ONBOARDING EXPERIENCE

We think of innovation as seismic shifts, because we still remember when email was created, when the iPhone hit the market, or Augmented Reality became a...well, reality. But it's easy to forget that one of the most common innovations in a company is the introduction of new employees to your workforce. It happens weekly (if not daily) at most companies, but if you're not training them in a way that harnesses their excitement, then you're missing a chance to innovate.

Companies are beginning to use innovations like gamification and immersive training in their onboarding processes. However, a recent study by [The Brandon Hall Group](#)<sup>15</sup> found that nearly 50% of the companies surveyed were using very few games in their overall learning content. We know the method works, so why aren't companies using them?

Let's take a look at the onboarding [gamification](#)<sup>16</sup> AllenComm built with the [LEGO](#)<sup>17</sup>. The previous training program needed a redesign because technical requirements shifted from Adobe Flash to HTML5. Instead of continuing to use outdated software, LEGO saw the redesign as an opportunity to embrace the newest technology. The result



became an [award-winning training](#)<sup>18</sup> success for their employees. The use of new tools made the training easier on the employees and leadership alike, and it also created a more memorable experience.

### Here are five design tips that made a difference in LEGO's transformation:



#### 1. Consider the Layout

The presentation of information is the biggest factor in an employee's ability to comprehend and navigate through a given course. Before placing content within a course itself, take the time to make a visual representation of each piece of information. Organizing content in a way that feels natural and fluid to your learners will help increase their ability to comprehend and retain information.



#### 2. Think Strategically About Empty Space

One common misconception when designing any instructional course is that white space is wasted space. Designers

often feel that every section needs to have some piece of relevant content—otherwise they're not getting the most of their instructional real estate. The truth is that, when used thoughtfully, white space can help guide the learner to the most relevant parts of the course. The general rule is that each course section needs the right balance. Too much white space, and the learner gets lost. Too little, and the learner is overwhelmed.



#### 3. Use Colors to Enhance the Learning Experience

People are highly visual when it comes to learning. Though it's not necessary for onboarding programs to be as visually entertaining as a cat video on YouTube, using a complementary color palette



to enhance your onboarding program is a subtle way to hold the attention of your learners. There are many ways that complementary and contrasting color schemes can be used in a course, but the most straightforward is to simply match a color to a concept. When the color changes along with the concept, it acts as a visual cue for the learner to refocus his or her attention.



#### 4. Keep Icons Universal

Icons like next buttons, start and stop buttons, and home page buttons should maintain a design that is like those that the learner has already encountered. This makes the program easier for the learner to navigate and gives the learner a sense of orientation—it will help them realize where they've been, where they are, and where they need to go next.



#### 5. Manage Your Text

The most important thing to consider with text management is overall readability, which can be broken down into two components: font and organization.

Fonts are typically found in one of two camps: Serif and sans serif. Sans serif fonts are preferred for online reading, and serif fonts are preferred for reading in print.

Once you've chosen a font that will be easy on the learner's eyes, it's time to make sure it's organized efficiently. If your onboarding program requires a lot of reading, breaking the text into concept-specific sections or creating bulleted lists will make your content easier for learners to read.



## THE IMPACT OF EMPLOYEE ONBOARDING ON THE CORPORATE TRAINING ROI

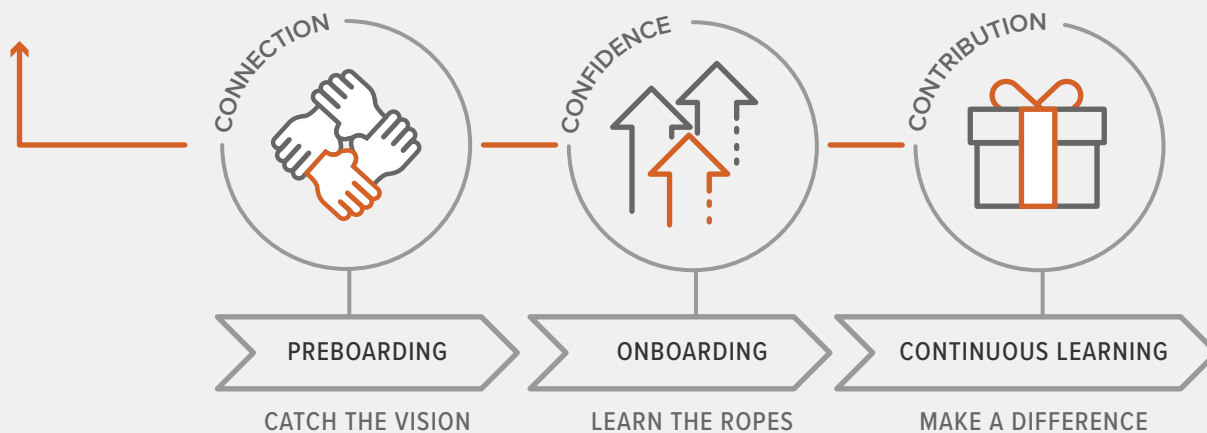
When done right, employee onboarding is an incredibly impactful process that can **improve retention**<sup>19</sup>, **shorten time to competency**<sup>20</sup>, and **increase performance**<sup>21</sup>. As employees become better equipped to excel in their new role through engaging training and internalizing your training narrative, it will show in all their interactions, and not just those directly related to their job. They internalize your narrative and pass it on through social modeling. And, while great corporate training is certainly much more than a Net Promoter Score campaign, the word-of-mouth effect is a notable bonus.

So, how can you redesign an employee onboarding program to have greater impact? One way is to reframe

and expand upon our idea of onboarding. New hire onboarding should start earlier and continue later into the employee experience. For example, our onboarding model describes a phased approach:

1. Preboarding – Forming Connections
2. Onboarding – Building Confidence
3. Continuous – Making Contributions

## DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION ADOPTION



Instead of focusing solely on the initial training event, start building professional and social connections as soon as an employee accepts their employment offer. Provide continuous support as employees apply training to their new roles. Ultimately, speed to competency, engagement, and employee performance will improve as we provide more effective employee integration and support.

However, learning and development teams often struggle to accurately measure the effectiveness of their onboarding programs. The Kirkpatrick Model describes four levels of measurement:

1. Participants react favorably to the training
2. Participants acquire the intended knowledge, skills, attitudes, confidence, and commitment based on their participation in the training
3. Participants apply what they learned during training when they are back on the job
4. Targeted outcomes occur as a result of the training event and subsequent reinforcement

The success of corporate training is grounded more so in enjoyment than behavioral change. How can we accurately measure ROI, and are the standard measurements truly informative?

Measurement is difficult, but it's possible. Measuring the impact of corporate training is much more manageable when:

- Content management systems (i.e., Learning Portals or LMS) integrate with performance management and business intelligence platforms
- Knowledge base and behavioral outcomes are tied to well-established Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)
- Time and resources dedicated to follow up training with data analysis

If you can manage to design your employee onboarding with those KPIs in mind, then you can begin to address some of these challenges and measure ROI. At the very least, it will be easier to measure performance pre- and post-training.



## 5 WAYS TO EVALUATE AND OPTIMIZE YOUR ONBOARDING PROCESS

Corporate training comes in a variety of flavors. Systems training is essential for improving employee performance, sales training is key to boosting revenue to the next level; and in highly-regulated industries, **compliance training**<sup>22</sup> protects a company from the existential threats posed by legal restrictions and massive fines.

Ongoing skills training should be an essential part of your development strategy. Recent surveys show 59% of L&D professionals globally identified upskilling and reskilling as their #1 priority in 2021.

Here are a couple ways to ensure your onboarding process is making the biggest impact for your employees:

### 1. Plan for New Technology and Processes

We've seen an unprecedented growth in technology adoption, and the corresponding business processes are changing faster than most L&D groups' training production—and in some sad cases, new training development takes so long that systems have been deployed without preparing employees beforehand. This creates an obvious problem: if employees aren't well-equipped to use their new business technology, then, employee behavior is likely noncompliant to new processes.

Depending on the complexity of your training, a quick review might suffice, or a thorough audit may be required. Either way, your subject matter experts should evaluate the training's accuracy on a regular schedule. And, to future-proof your training, make sure it's easy to update in-house, or verify that your vendor is responsive to ongoing maintenance requests.

### 2. Follow up with Employees after Training

If you have plenty of confidence in your training and in your employees, then a comprehensive mock audit might be more trouble than it's worth. But, for a low investment in time and effort, brief quizzes on critical subject matter can indicate how well the program is working.

Though quizzes can verify that the training is understood, that's not nearly enough. Consider

**“59% of L&D professionals globally identified upskilling and reskilling as their #1 priority in 2021.”**

LinkedIn 2021 Workplace Learning Report

surveying employees to make sure their job duties are aligned with the training content. Then, you can ensure employees are training on the regulations they need rather than wasting time learning things they don't need to know.

### 3. Personalize Training for Your Multigenerational Audience

Though the demographics of the modern workforce is shifting to be predominantly Millennial, there are currently four generations in the workplace. With this age diversity comes differences in leadership styles and learning styles. So, designing training that will resonate with each generation may prove difficult. But that is essentially the goal of personalization: to match training content, method, and modality to your learners.

Research in education shows that personalized learning significantly improves educational outcomes<sup>23</sup>.

Consider taking audience data before making generalizations about your workforce.

- What devices do your employees use?
- How and when do they access training content?
- Which motivational factors are most impactful?
- Which recreational platforms do they use most frequently?

Asking these kinds of questions can help determine user interface preferences, course length preferences and motivational factors – all of which will have an

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**“Employees with a solid onboarding experience are 69% more likely to stay for at least three years.”**

SHRM

impact on training engagement. Relevance goes beyond content and includes presentation of material, training methodology, and modalities.

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## BUDGET FACTORS TO CONSIDER WHEN BUILDING YOUR EMPLOYEE ONBOARDING TRAINING

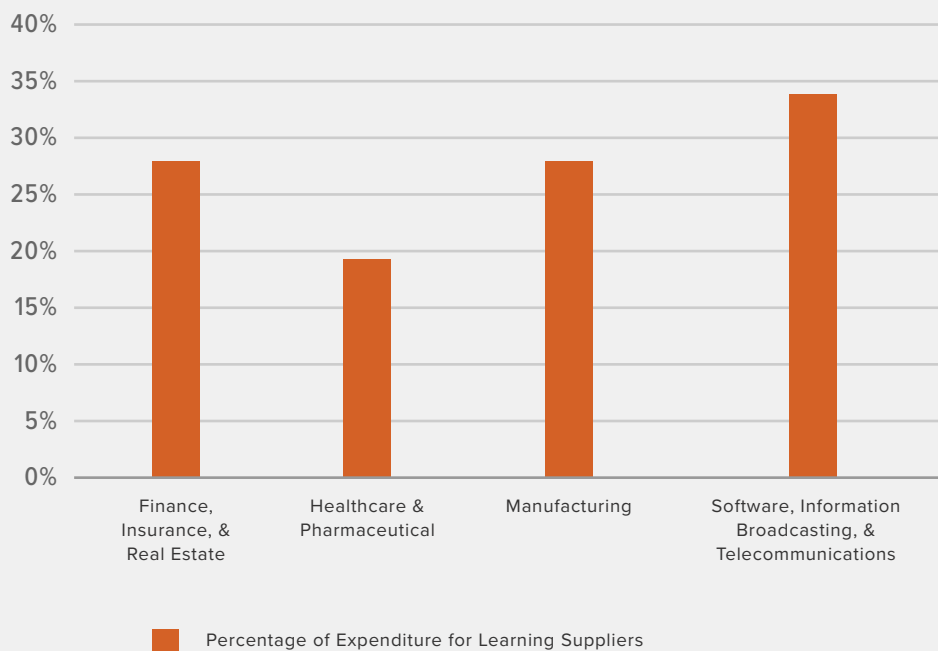
In 2021, leading organizations are adding budget to their L&D programs to “future proof” their employees by empowering them with new skills. Amazon, for example, is investing over \$700M to provide upskilling training to its employees. PwC has committed to upskill all of its employees over the next 4 years, at a cost of \$3B to invest in a workforce of 275,000.

So, how do you get your onboarding and training budget approved? Start by explaining the problem and the solution in numbers. Present the percentage of employees lost in the past years and the costs to replace those employees, compared to your target retention rate and the potential savings should you hit it; don't forget to subtract the difference between your current and proposed training budgets. Share some research around the impact of onboarding on retention. For example, a study by SHRM found employees with a solid onboarding experience are 69% more likely to stay for at least three years<sup>26</sup>. Then, give your company's executive team a recap of what's in it for the organization by reminding them of the benefits of training – like employee satisfaction, reduced turnover, increased performance, knowledge retention, and better talent.

By looking carefully at your company's needs, you can revise your budget to create more effective training and reap the rewards of happy and well-trained employees.

# IN-HOUSE VS. OUTSOURCING EMPLOYEE ONBOARDING: WHAT'S THE RIGHT SOLUTION FOR YOUR NEEDS?

Percentage of Direct Expenditure for Learning Suppliers by Industry



You're busy managing employee training, and it's up to you to determine how to best create effective training.

Here are the things to consider when deciding if you should hire a learning supplier:

1. Do you have the internal expertise required to make the training effective and innovative?
2. What are the desired outcomes of the effort for you, the business unit, the company, or the audience?
3. Is the effort highly visible or is it helping support a major change effort?
4. Is there a tight timeline that needs to be met that your current resources cannot accommodate?

## CONCLUSION

Creating engaging and impactful training for your new hires is crucial for employee development and employee retention. By investing in onboarding training that is innovative, up-to-date, and engaging, you're investing in the future of your company. Making sure learners can apply new skills—exactly when and where they need it—is an integral part of any business transformation, and we're happy to help guide you through that process.



NOTE: It would be doing your new employees and your organization a disservice if you didn't prepare your onboarding training with an eye toward equity, diversity, inclusion, and mental health.

In 2021, according to the LinkedIn 2021 Workplace Learning Report, diversity and Inclusion are top talent development priorities for a majority of executives globally with “nearly two-thirds (64%) of L&D pros globally – and nearly three-quarter (73%) in North America – [reporting] that their executives have made D&I programs a priority.”

This is as it should be. Inclusive workplaces are not only perceived as more successful, but they also have an advantage in attracting and retaining top talent. As you are building a company culture of equity and inclusion, it is important to develop your onboarding and training materials with an eye toward D&I.

If you need guidance or support, it is worthwhile to

bring in a consultant to ensure your training programs make the mark.

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## How AllenComm Can Help:

### Consulting and Analysis

Our training consultants utilize a variety of assessment methodologies to ensure your training initiatives meet your business objectives. The AllenComm Rapid Needs Analysis helps you get to the bottom of your training challenges quickly and effectively. Or we can work with you through an Extensive Needs Analysis to determine the best plan of action based on data we gather together.

### Design and Development

The training at your company needs to have an impact. Our approach to building a learning experience starts with a detailed performance mapping process to make sure our design precisely matches your business objectives and fits your learners' needs. This sets the tone for the entire project and results in an impactful training experience.



## Learning Technologies

Your company's training needs to be innovative. Our focus on using the right technology for your organization's unique training needs means we will explore the best methods to get the job done. Whether we develop a training solution with gamification and AR/VR, or we combine motion graphics and microlearning in a blended learning solution, the result will be innovative, engaging, and scalable.

**VISIT [WWW.ALLENCOMM.COM](http://WWW.ALLENCOMM.COM) FOR MORE INFORMATION.**

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## ENDNOTES

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