



ONBOARDING LEADERS

Perhaps it's a matter of semantics, but consider that every company, everywhere, needs to move on from the notion of employee onboarding and reframe their efforts as onboarding leaders.

That adjustment by no means translates to deemphasizing the necessary grounding in functional or technical expertise or required human resources (HR) and cultural orientation. It simply means that today, regardless of what you are being hired to do, a dedicated element of any effective new employee onboarding needs to be intentionally dedicated to leadership.

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Why? Because in a global work environment that is increasingly being defined by inclusivity in action, leadership is key! From day one, employees are challenged to help solve problems. In large part, these problems are the natural consequences of disruptive change that present themselves with ever-escalating complexity, each of which has the potential to produce rampant uncertainty. Our world (more than ever) demands that we not only care about leadership but that we also cultivate it as soon as possible.

What are the kinds of leadership challenges new hires can expect upon arrival? Here are three to consider:

1. The Modern Workforce

Employees entering the workforce these days are different. We have not only universally accepted that reality, but we have also embraced it. When those employees arrive, they are increasingly working from “wherever,” on schedules that often reflect [their personal work-life balance priorities](#).

The more organizations appeal to individuality, the more attractive they will be to those seeking employment. Conversely, the more an organization caters to individuality, the higher the probability that conflict (of one sort or another) will rear its ugly head. From day one, employees need to be armed with the skills to actively listen to others (peers and supervisors), acknowledge and respect different perspectives and actively contribute to a resolution that prioritizes the achievement of stated objectives.

2. Change Leadership

For the most part, we have come to grips with the reality that we don't manage change — it manages us. In response to that insight (and, again, quite literally from day one) employees need to recognize the implications of [surviving, and thriving, in a dynamic environment](#).

Change leadership is a people-centered approach that is fueled by transparency. It requires that employees at all levels embrace agility. And new hires need to know that embracing agility is messy. In essence, it translates to

people, regardless of tenure or seniority, confronting unforeseen circumstances collaboratively and iteratively from a foundation of trust. In that regard, new hires need to perceive themselves as leaders the minute they walk through the door.

3. Performance Leadership

Traditional efforts to manage performance initiated with a manager documenting the performance goals of those on their team. It was then fueled by the frequency and the quality of the feedback and culminated with a formal appraisal from the manager that focused upon what had been accomplished, as well as how those results had been achieved.

In a world increasingly engulfed by the unexpected, hitting performance targets is a function of ongoing communication primarily initiated from “the bottom up,” as opposed to from “the top down.” Managers and employees continue to align on performance goals, but employees play a far more prominent role in both contracting for a leadership style on an ongoing basis and assessing the degree to which objectives have been achieved.

Perhaps in fairness, organizations have always hired leaders. They simply no longer have the luxury of waiting two or three years to start treating them that way. 🔄

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