Prospectus – Virtual Onboarding for New Hires

Design Problem and Goals

With the advent of Covid-19, innovations in technology to accommodate remote work and school have skyrocketed. In person activities have been impacted dramatically and more and more organizations have experienced first-hand what it might be like to employ a workforce that is almost entirely remote. But what about those face-to-face interactions like welcoming a new employee to an organization? Activities like onboarding employees in person has become increasingly challenging for organizations in 2020. This organizational socialization is critical for new employees and has been proven to increase employee retention, engagement and job performance.

The goal of this design is to provide a virtual onboarding experience for new hires using various technologies to acclimate, engage and socialize employees joining a new organization. The goal is to re-create an onboarding experience in an online environment to achieve the same results of employee retention, engagement and increased job performance that a traditional in-person experience would achieve.

Design Type

Microsoft Teams will be used to create virtual onboarding environment using the resources and apps available to include community chat, file sharing, video conferencing, hosted videos, planner boards, knowledge wikis, and a survey tool for feedback. Using theories and instructional concepts based on legitimate peripheral participation, the Onboarding Ambassador will manage and lead the new hire cohort through their first 90-days of employment.

Teams is designed to address many of the in-person activities conducted at work in an online environment all in a centralized location. These tools can re-create many of the in-person interactions like meeting with your manager, attending meetings, and chatting with co-workers using the apps available. By carefully designing the activities and creating a community of new hires with disperse geographical locations, the goal is to teach the requisite knowledge needed to acclimate to the organization while successfully building relationships with co-workers and teams.

Learning Objectives

At the end of the 90-day onboarding program, new hires will be able to:

1. **Explain** how their role contributes to the mission and vision of the organization and its relationship to other departments.
2. With assistance from their direct manager, **plan** their developmental journey and goals for the first year.
3. **Develop** and present at least 2 ‘wild ideas’ to their manager that will contribute to innovation within their department or organization.

Difficulties

Leadership Support – Without support from upper-level management, lack of adoption and participation by managers and co-workers could be an issue. Their participation and support of

the program is an important aspect of the socialization of new hires. Onboarding new hires should not only be a directive from leadership but the responsibility of all employees in the organization to strive to create a culture where it is inherent.

Scale – For larger organizations scaling this implementation could become overwhelming, especially for managers that have high turnover or a large number of direct reports. Many Teams sites and Onboarding Ambassadors would need to be created and identified to manage the process. The 90-day program might be more suited to smaller organizations (100 – 2,000) that are primarily centralized with workers that are categorized as professionals.

Motivation and Participation – Experienced new hires may want to get right down to work and believe they can hit the ground running from their past experience. Needing only to know about their benefits and vacation time, some may feel that onboarding is a waste of time. Managers should communicate and place a high level of importance on this activity during recruitment and employment and make it a requirement of their job duties to participate and complete all the required activities.

Technology – Some new hires may not have experience with the Teams platform. Gathering information from new hires on their previous experience and developing a few supplemental activities for those individuals will assist in moving past learning the technology and engaging in the activities.

What's Been Done

Microsoft Teams – An educational application of the Teams environment is currently available. Many of the aspects of this design can be adapted to a business environment where they are utilizing Teams as their technology of choice.

Namely – This software provides a centralized onboarding experience focusing mostly on HR activities and performance. Some socialization and recognition channels are included in the software similar to Facebook. However, for companies that already have Teams, this would be an additional cost.

SilkRoad Technology – Having worked for this organization, they have a robust onboarding solution called Red Carpet. This software not only integrates HR activities but department specific sites that are customized. Performance management and social and cultural acclimation are also included in this solution.

ServiceNow – This company has an entirely virtual onboarding with a six-hour day one session utilizing Zoom video conferencing. They are using partners across the organization to present content to new hires during day one and provide a second day question and answer session.

LinkedIn – Because of the pandemic, LinkedIn moved their in person one day onboarding to a week-long program. This program includes regular check-ins and an hour long first day session on company culture, values, and products.

SHRM Article - ServiceNow and LinkedIn Virtual Onboarding Programs

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What's Been Said

1. Study was conducted to determine which onboarding activities led to the greatest gain in perception, socialization and impact. Onboarding practices were categorized into the following areas; inform-communication, inform-resources, inform-training, welcome and guidance activities. Ten specific onboarding practices were identified that had the greatest impact to the socialization of newcomers. (Klein, Polin, & Sutton, 2015)

2. Establishing trust in both education and the workplace is more closely being examined as an important part in technology enhanced learning. Using face to face interactions to gain trust may lead to gains in participation and training effectiveness. (Short, 2014)

3. Empirical testing of the social exchange theory model was applied to the virtual team environment in organizations. Constructing a social exchange model in an online learning promotes interdependent relationships which encourage the sharing of resources and information. (Lin, Chiu, Joe, & Tsai)

4. The ad hoc assignment of individuals to teams may impact trust, learning and teamwork. These teams will go through the normal stages of team development, by establishing trust within the team it will increase collaboration and learning. (Fransen, Weinberger, & Kirschner, 2013)

5. Designing learning in COI environment should include social, cognitive and teaching presence. Designing instruction to include all three may result in deep meaningful learning. (Lambert & Fisher, 2013)

Wild Ideas

1. Write a Wiki – Assign each new hire a subject matter area within the company and have them research as much information about that topic they can find given the resources available. The new hire will write a WIKI on their assigned topic and become the expert for the cohort. Online using Teams and the WIKI app.

2. Scavenger Hunt – Design a scavenger hunt to familiarize new hires with the company website, internal portal and various departments in the organization. This can be done individually or in teams, depending on class size. Present prizes to the individual / team who completes the task first. Online using Teams and various assets available online.

3. Skill Exchange – New hires partner with other new hire or employee and teaches / mentors the other on a skill they possess that their team mate does not. Each team member presents to the group what they learned and who taught them. Independent video meeting with screen presentation.

4. Interview Your Boss – Have each new hire interview their boss and present a 5 min biography to the cohort. Presented to the cohort via video conference.

5. Know Your Company – New hires work with their cohort to create a 2-minute pitch about the company or products / services. Presented to the Onboarding Ambassador via video conference.

References

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