

ONBOARDING: THE FIRST STEP IN CREATING AN EXCEPTIONAL ASSOCIATE JOURNEY

The onboarding process is not the first impression that a new hire has of a company, but it is the first time that the new associate experiences the practical application of the company's Employer Value Proposition. New hires are quickly able to determine whether the organization lives up to the promises made during the interview process.

[Research](#) suggests that a strong onboarding process can improve new hire retention by 82% and productivity by over 70%.¹ Considering there is a positive correlation between agent satisfaction and customer satisfaction² in a contact center, it is even more vital that the contact center delivers an exceptional onboarding experience.

Similar to our philosophy on customer experience, we follow the E3 model – Empathy, Ease and Empowerment – in our onboarding process.

1 EMPLOY EMPATHY FROM FIRST CONTACT

According to Businessolver's [Five Year Update: State of Workplace Empathy Study](#),³ in 2020 93% of all employees believe it is important for organizations to demonstrate empathy. Taken a step further:

80% WILLING TO SWITCH COMPANIES, FOR EQUAL PAY, IF THEY ARE MORE EMPATHETIC

74% WILLING TO WORK MORE HOURS FOR AN EMPATHETIC EMPLOYER

57% WILLING TO BE PAID SLIGHTLY LESS FOR A MORE EMPATHETIC EMPLOYER

92% MORE LIKELY TO STAY WITH A COMPANY IF THEY EMPATHIZED WITH THEIR NEEDS

To quote Dr. Brené Brown, "Empathy is feeling with people." In order to be empathetic, an organization and its leaders have to go beyond knowing what their team wants, needs and feels to understand the why. There are a number of ways an organization can employ empathy during a new hire's onboarding process.

Listening: Not just hearing what others are saying, but listening intently, without judgment, to the needs and desires of the new hire. Through deliberate questions and active listening, putting their own opinions aside, leaders develop a deeper understanding of the new hire's perspective.

Agility: Each new hire's experience is going to be different. Being flexible enough to assist and accommodate if a challenge arises can make them feel like a valued member of the team.



Inclusivity: It can be intimidating starting a new role at a new company. Building a purposeful inclusiveness into the onboarding program can help ease stress and make new hires feel as if they are a part of a team. Creating a sense of inclusivity can be as simple as having members of their team reach out to candidates prior to their start date, inquiring about any accommodations that they may need, covering DEI topics during orientation or asking about names or pronouns they go by.

MORLEY EXPERIENCE:

Example 1. The servant leadership mentality is widely embraced at Morley. Servant leadership is a philosophy embedded in a set of behaviors and practices that place a primary emphasis on the well-being of those being served. Empathy and listening are important components of the servant leadership philosophy.

“Servant leadership communication starts with empathy and listening to what others have to say,” explains Morley’s Director of Human Resources, Ricardo Resio. An advocate of servant leadership, Resio further explains, “By seeing the world from the person’s perspective, we are able to better appreciate the circumstances our associates face in their day-to-day activities. Actions derived from interactions lead to healthier, wiser and more autonomous associates, who in turn become servants to others.”

“This builds a positive company culture, which leads to high associate satisfaction, creating a more satisfying customer experience that increases consumer loyalty that ultimately drives increased profitability.”

Example 2. Morley assigns an “onboarding concierge” to each new hire to lead the new hire through the entire process. Communications can happen anytime via phone, text or email, and the onboarding concierge has been able to identify and solve issues that arise. Instances have occurred where there is a conflict with orientation dates, such as a family emergency. As a result, Morley has created a way for new hires to work through orientation materials on their own. What may have been a cause for a Day 1 no-show in the past now demonstrates to new hires they are already an important part of the Morley Family.

Example 3. Trainers call new hires a couple of days before their start date to ensure they are able to set up their equipment and to answer any questions they may have. Meeting the trainer before the start date and having access to helpful information helps the agents feel like a valued part of the new class.

Insight #1: Empathy opens the door to creating a more successful onboarding experience and, by extension, a higher retention rate for new hires.

2 CREATE AN EASY ONBOARDING PROCESS

Some organizations mistakenly believe that onboarding begins with orientation on the first day of the job. In reality, it truly begins the moment a candidate accepts an offer with the company.

[Sapling](#) reports that new hires have on average 54 activities that need to be completed during their onboarding experience.⁴ Couple that with the stress that accompanies starting a new position and the entire onboarding experience can be overwhelming.

Reducing the number of barriers and minimizing pain points throughout the journey can lead to an easier, more successful onboarding experience. There are a number of ways to accomplish this.

Communication: Developing a deliberate process for an open, honest, two-way conversation from the moment an offer is accepted has several benefits. Effective communication, in all of its forms, is a cornerstone in an exceptional onboarding program.

1. Creates a sense of inclusion for the new hire.
2. Sets a positive tone for the rest of the experience.
3. Helps clear up confusion and uncertainty that may arise at any point.

Include others: Including other current members of your team such as trainers and managers as part of your communication plan can further create a feeling of unity in the new hire.

Automated processes: Creating an employee onboarding platform that thoughtfully manages administrative requirements enables new hires to complete forms, sign up for benefits, and learn more about policies and procedures before their first day on the job. By creating this self-paced interface, the actual first day on the job can be filled with more dynamic activities that are likely to be truly engaging.

Two-way feedback: Asking for feedback is a great way to understand pain points in the candidate's journey and assists in increasing retention rates, referral rates, and first-day show rates. Candidates who are asked for feedback prior to their start date are 91% more willing to increase their relationship from the start.⁵ Further, providing constructive feedback to the new hire helps ensure that both leadership and the new hire are on the same page with expectations and builds trust between the two parties.

MORLEY EXPERIENCE:

Example 1. Morley leverages a human capital management system for automating pre-onboarding tasks. Using a portal for new hires enables us to help them find their inbox, provide relevant information for their associate journey and automatically send them tasks to complete based on what they've completed so far. In addition, digital signature tools are used for some forms that create a seamless way for sending back and forth items that require a signature.



Example 2. Feedback is collected through surveys at different points in the new hire's onboarding journey. During the beginning stages of COVID-19, Morley modified the survey questions to gain insight on new hires' thoughts, feelings and expectations after rapid transition to a remote environment. Using feedback collected, the talent acquisition and onboarding teams have been able to take processes such as collecting I-9 forms, setting up IT systems and coordinating orientation days from emergency response mode to permanent, exceptional experiences.



Insight #2: Using insights gained from new hire feedback at different points during their onboarding journey, organizations can build dynamic experiences that drive Day 1 show rates and overall retention.

3 EMPOWERMENT

According to Gallup's ["Create an Exceptional Onboarding Journey for Your New Employees"](#) report, it takes new employees an average of 12 months to reach their full performance potential.⁶ However, the typical onboarding program lasts roughly 90 days. To truly empower a new hire, organizations can find unique ways to extend this process and build ongoing opportunities to prepare their associates for a successful career.

Training to build confidence: Provide a personalized approach to training, considering both soft and technical skills that put new hires in control of their success. By giving them meaningful tasks early on, organizations can provide hands-on training designed to build confidence.

Culture: Create and communicate a culture built on a foundation of trust, i.e., people are encouraged to identify opportunities for improvement, so the associate is comfortable raising their hand when needed. When employees provide feedback and see your organization making changes based on that data, they feel more confident in sharing constructive feedback that can improve your onboarding process.⁷

Don't overlook new hires' suggestions: Each new hire comes with a unique experience and perspective. Dismissing their input because they are new may cause them to not feel valued and dissuade them from offering feedback in the future. Instead, ask follow-up questions, explain why an idea may or may not work and express appreciation for their innovative initiative.

MORLEY EXPERIENCE:

In a recent [A Day in the Life](#) feature article, Morley's Deanna Jammer shared how she goes the extra mile in training new hires and helps guide them throughout their career journey.

"Once new [team members] finish their initial training, I usually have one sit with me for a few days for one-on-one training. I train each person as an individual according to how they retain information and begin to work on their own. Training does not end when this person goes to their desk; it is a continual process. There are many departments within [our group], and I feel that I could go to anyone and ask for help or clarification in something that pertains to their area."

Insight #3: An extended, robust onboarding journey can help the new hire build confidence and trust in the organization while setting them up for success in their new role.

LOOKING FORWARD

These same onboarding strategies can be applied throughout the tenure of the associate's career. A continuous cycle of listening, providing feedback and making process improvements helps to create empowered associates. Empowered associates are engaged associates and engaged associates are more productive and profitable.⁸ Further, providing training throughout the associate's career can decrease turnover, capability gaps and boredom while increasing engagement and productivity.⁹

Sources:

- ¹ Brandon Hall Group Research Brief: [The True Cost of a Bad Hire](#)
- ² ICMI: [Employee Engagement in the Contact Center: Metrics and Drivers](#)
- ³ Businessolver: [Five Year Update: State of Workplace Empathy Study](#)
- ⁴ Sapling: [10 Employee Onboarding Statistics you Must Know in 2022](#)
- ⁵ The Talent Board: [CandE Research Takeaway #7 – Feedback Loops Are Critical](#)
- ⁶ Gallop: [Create an Exceptional Onboarding Journey for Your New Employees](#)
- ⁷ SHRM: [How to Create an Effective Onboarding Program](#)
- ⁸ HR Cloud: [How Employee Engagement Leads to a More Productive Workforce?](#)
- ⁹ EduMe: [7 Statistics That Highlight the Value of Continuous Learning](#)

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