LEARNOVATE
Leading Learning Innovation

Onboarding in the Online Environment

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Learnovate Core Research Report

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1   Executive Summary

From the research conducted as part of this Phase I project we have identified a number of best practices relating to the Onboarding process of integrating a new employee into a business and ensuring they are providing value to the business as early as possible.

While many new recruits will be onboarded online with a view to eventually being physically present in the workplace, many employees will continue to work remotely throughout the tenure of their employment. In order to apply best practices to both situations, we will look to conduct further research with industry partners in Phase II of this project to identify if the onboarding process in each case should have significant differences, and what those differences might be.

There are a wide range of tools and technologies available to companies, with which they can facilitate an engaging and effective online onboarding process; the purpose of the next phase(s) of this project is to identify how companies can make best use of these tools and approaches to provide the best possible onboarding experience to a new employee, while also retaining the information required by the company to ensure the overall process is streamlined and effective.

1.1   Key Findings

Most of the Onboarding processes identified during this research consist of a generalised approach to new employees; the experience being the same for each new employee regardless of past experience, job role, etc.

As with a 'one size fits all' approach to learning experiences, employees can disengage from the Onboarding experience if they are receiving a lot of information that is not relevant to them or their role and does not take into account their previous work experience. For example, the Onboarding experience is often the same for graduates in their first role and for new employees who have many years of work experience behind them.

From the literature it is identified that employees often rely on trusted work colleagues more than managers and that these relationships are viewed as very important by the new recruit.

1.2   Recommendations

The use of a more personalised approach to the Onboarding experience could help to engage new employees and to motivate them in their first few days and weeks in the company. They should receive specific information and training that is relevant to them and their new role, taking into account what they have already learned and considering the case for 'unlearning'.

An element of the Onboarding process that should not be overlooked is the introduction to and interaction with work colleagues and other new recruits to the company. From the literature it is clear that relationships with colleagues should be facilitated and encouraged through the use of a structured online mentorship program. While companies often view the Onboarding process as a chance to impart knowledge to new recruits, it should also be seen as an opportunity to introduce the new employee to others, to promote interaction and collaboration and to provide the employee with opportunities to experience what it may be like to work with others in their new role, focusing more on 'organizational fit'.

Similarly, where Onboarding assignments are concerned, these assignments should relate to the new employee's area of work, their new role and potentially involve collaboration with colleagues. Providing authentic tasks and contexts helps to engage the new employee while at the same time providing them with an introduction to their new work environment. Providing new employees with problem-focused tasks also helps to reduce the feelings of stress associated with starting a new job.

We also recommend gradually introducing new employees to relevant personnel and information throughout their first week to two weeks in order to reduce feelings of stress and to avoid overwhelming the new recruit with too much information too soon.

2   Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has led to a need in the corporate environment to embrace new ways of working and to consider digital transformation at a rapid scale. In response to the requirement for employees to work from home, workplaces have had to rapidly adapt to remote working environments and setting up online supports in order to maintain workflow and assist employees with feelings of isolation and separation from both the workplace and their colleagues.

With many employees due to continue working from home permanently, or at least for the foreseeable future, companies face the challenges associated with onboarding their employees online.

While Onboarding is viewed as an essential part of employee experience, it can often be approached poorly by organisations, leading to demotivation of new recruits and even worse, to increased attrition rates and employee turnover. This poor approach could be exacerbated by the challenges of online onboarding.

While there are a number of best practices in relation to Onboarding generally, this research seeks to identify the key elements of an effective and engaging Onboarding experience. The research looks at how companies are currently Onboarding employees online and what we can learn from these practices. A State of the Market analysis will also be carried out to suggest tools and technologies to support companies in facilitating these onboaridng experiences via digital means.

This initial piece of research is to set the stage for a potential Phase II piece of work where we intend to engage industry partners in identifying the challenges they face in relation to online Onboarding, validating these problems with relevant stakeholders, and working to identify potential solution(s) to the challenges using suitable approaches and technologies.

3   What is Onboarding?

Onboarding is defined as "the process of helping new hires adjust to social and performance aspects of their new jobs quickly and smoothly" (Bauer, 2010). Often, the focus can be on the information that the organisation needs to provide to new employees to 'get going', ensuring that HR boxes are ticked and initial documentation is signed and returned by the new recruit.

Sharma and Stol in their 2020 study found that 'providing support to new hires plays a major role in onboarding success, but that training is less important' (Sharma & Stol, 2020).

Becker & Bish (2019) look at this experience from the new learner's perspective, stating that 'learning theory provides an opportunity to consider onboarding from the perspective of what the newcomer requires, not just from the perspective of what information the organization needs to impart'. It is a continuous process that starts with orientation and training and is achieved through a continuous system of providing support and feedback to the newcomer. They go on to say that 'rather than "pushing" information and training onto newcomers, new recruits "pull" support from senior colleagues and are offered a safe environment to ask questions without evoking a sense of embarrassment'.

While a key element of Onboarding is ensuring that new employees learn about their new company, including initial induction training and introduction to the company culture, the social elements of Onboarding are just as important to the new employee in providing an engaging Onboarding experience.

'The socialization of newcomers into engaged, productive, and committed employees is a critical strategy for developing the human resources of the organization into a competitive and sustaining driver of innovation and performance' (Collings & Mellahi, 2009).

Organizational socialization (socialization) is commonly defined as 'the process by which individuals acquire the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviours required to assume a work role' (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979; Wanberg, 2012). Ensuring that employees receive support and are provided with opportunities to interact with fellow new employees and colleagues helps to ensure that they feel a part of the new organisation and begin to see their role within it.

3.1 Onboarding in stages

Companies often employ a staged approach to the Onboarding process. Stage models generally describe; (a) a pre-entry stage in which individuals anticipate starting a new job with expectations of what they will experience, this is sometimes referred to as pre-onboarding or preboarding; (b) an entry stage when newcomers confront the reality of the job, which is often different than expected (Louis, 1980; Moreland & Levine, 1982), and (c) integration as the stage when newcomers make sense of information gathered, adopt new roles, and, with the consensus of group members, more or less integrate into the group (Wanous, 1992). Sharma & Stol refer to the Onboarding process as 'a continuous process that starts with orientation and training and is achieved through a continuous system of providing support and feedback to the newcomer' (Sharma & Stol, 2020). Stages are often linked to time, with early stages occurring within the first days and weeks, while the final stage of integration may continue for months or even years. Some organisations believe the onboarding process begins the day the job ad is posted.

According to the (Partnership for Public Service, 2009), Onboarding typically consists of four stages:

- forecasting and finding talent
- onboarding
- managing talent, and
- transitioning

With a multitude of different models and approaches, for the purpose of this report we will simplify the model by using the four stages outlined here (see Appendix for Infographic):

1. Pre-onboarding
2. Introductions
3. Assignments, and
4. Ongoing development

Pre-onboarding relates to tasks that new employees can complete prior to starting at their new company:

'Today, many of the routine transactional tasks previously associated with orientation can be handled electronically through a web-based portal, often before the employees first day of work. These include instructions such as how to complete benefit forms, parking information, and how to request computer accounts. Additional items can include the organization's history and profile, a welcome message from the Chief Executive Officer, employee profiles, policies, procedures, online tours, and videos'

(Fyock, 2009).

Web 2.0 technologies such as Facebook or LinkedIn can be utilised to allow new employees to create a network of colleagues before they start working (Edwards, 2009). Similarly, other stages in the Onboarding process can be facilitated with e-tools which will be discussed in more detail in section 5 and 6. Check lists are also a commonly used tool to manage the onboarding process (Graybill et. al, 2013) and shall be incorporated into our online Onboarding Model as appropriate.

Another point to note is that onboarding programs can vary in length (one week to more than six months) (Graybill et. al, 2013). Klein et. al (2015) state that 'the optimal timing of a specific onboarding practice may depend on the needs of the new employee, the specific practice, and how many practices are being offered'. As part of our next phase of research (Phase II) we aim to identify best practices relating to Onboarding online and the optimum amount of time that this process should take for a new employee in order to promote motivation and engagement with the process. We aim to do this in collaboration with industry partners to validate our assumptions and potential framework at each stage of development.

3.2   Key elements of the Onboarding process

Regardless of the number of or length of the stages involved, most Onboarding processes strive to provide a number of elements. In general, the main elements of this Onboarding process involve:

- a discussion of job expectations and evaluation criteria
- company mission, vision, and values
- company culture

(Graybill et. al, 2013)

Providing the new employee with opportunities to meet and interact with their manager is often viewed as an important part of this process; however, an unexpected finding from a study conducted by Korte, Brunhaver & Sheppard (2015) was the heavy influence of co-workers on the socialization process. Initially, they believed that 'managers were the main influence on newcomers, yet we repeatedly witnessed the emergence of co-workers as a major influence'. Therefore, it is important that these introductions and interactions are facilitated as part of the Onboarding experience.

While it can take some time for new employees to become valuable members of the company, often referred to as a 'productivity delay', there is also a difference between how quickly graduates will become productive members of the new company versus new employees who have come from a similar role in another company.

In addition to the 'productivity delay', there is also a chasm between the skills and knowledge that new graduates' formal education offers, and what industry requires (Sharma & Stol, 2020). Sharma & Stol also highlight the many studies that refer to 'a prevalent skill gap of newly hired employees who have recently graduated'.

As noted by Kowtha (2018) 'many graduates may enter organizations with unrealistic or idealized conceptions of their profession leading to maladjustment and other counterproductive outcomes. Results here indicate that organizations need to pay specific attention to these professionally socialized graduates and if needed, divest them of misconceptions at early stages'.

This is why a 'one size fits all' approach to the Onboarding experience fails to engage many new recruits. The process should incorporate employees' past experience and acknowledge previous knowledge gained, as well as addressing 'unlearning' where relevant.

4   The importance of Onboarding

Onboarding is critical for a number of reasons, according to Workforce Management (2009a).

> *'First, large amounts of time and money are invested in searching for and recruiting new employees; therefore, organizations cannot afford to disenfranchise a new hire at the beginning of his or her tenure. Second, onboarding assists organizations in ensuring that new employees are up and functioning as soon as possible. Third, if the onboarding process is implemented properly, it will enhance new employees' transitions into the organization and help them become more engaged'*
>
> (Workforce Management, 2009a).

Retention rates indicate that, in practice, onboarding is problematic, with reports that on average 17% of new hires leave an organization during the first three months of employment (Ellis et al., 2017). Furthermore, it has been reported that "half of all senior outside hires fail within 18 months in a new position and half of all hourly workers leave new jobs within the first 120 days" (Bauer, 2010).

It is also interesting to note that 'studies indicate that employee engagement is partially influenced by the new employee's handling of the job during the first 30-90 days of employment' (Fyock, 2009). Watkins (2013) suggests that the first 90 days are crucial and decide the success of a newcomer in his or her job. With Onboarding being a major event in the first 90 days, it should be looked upon as an opportunity to maximise the experience for the employee in their first few months at a new company.

According to the Partnership for Public Service (2009) 'an effective onboarding program should give new employees the tools and support needed to succeed and identify new hires that are not a good fit for the organization'. The Onboarding process and follow-on probation period should be used to identify those who are a good fit for the company and those who are not, once these processes are carried out effectively. Part of this is ensuring that new employees understand what is expected of them as well as understanding what the new recruits need in order to succeed in their new role, right from the offset.

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In their study, Becker & Bish argue that 'the problem of premature turnover may stem in part from a lack of recognition of the role of learning in onboarding and how organizations can best facilitate such learning' (Becker & Bish, 2019). They note that 'if learning outcomes are more immediate than even proximal outcomes, then these may be central to explaining the premature turnover of new hires'.

Becker & Bish make a very interesting point about all newcomers being treated the same: 'Much of the literature to date has viewed new employees as a homogenous group and a "blank slate" ready to take in the information provided during onboarding, regardless of previous experience. As a result, the learning needs of particular talent segments are overlooked'.

An interesting quote came from the Partnership for Public Service (2009) which demonstrates exactly how a poor Onboarding process can have a profound effect on a new employee: 'I was sent to a conference room where someone from HR helped me complete a bunch of forms. I was not introduced to anyone. I had no one to go to lunch with and no one had set up my computer access so I sat there and stared at the wall. By the end of the day I felt like I had made a terrible mistake in leaving my old job' (Partnership for Public Service, 2009).

Due to the high cost associated with recruiting new employees, 'the need for new employees to be fully functional and engaged as soon as possible, and the need to communicate performance indicators, the need to share best practices is important' (Graybill et. al, 2013).

According to Sims (2011), 'coupled with downsizing, an unsure economy, and competition to secure the most talented employees, companies now design and implement creative onboarding programs tailored to their specific needs'.

It is important to remember that joining a new workplace comes with its share of stress and anxiety for a newcomer (Sharma & Stol, 2020) and this should be taken into account when designing the onboarding process for newcomers. 'Orientation programs should include emotion-focused methods, along with problem-focused methods, to reduce stress' (Sharma & Stol, 2020) and ensuring that new recruits feel welcomed and relaxed not only helps them to integrate into the new company, but it helps with their retention and learning of new information; learning under stress can impair memory formation (Schwabe & Wolf, 2010).

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Companies should seek to continually improve the Onboarding experience for new employees and ensuring that they receive feedback on the process from those who have experienced it is an important element of this continuous improvement.

As stated by Klein et. al (2015) 'in general, organizations should be evaluating and updating onboarding programs to include those practices that are effective and revise or eliminate practices that are not providing the desired results'. Questionnaires can be provided to employees on completion of the process or at regular intervals throughout in order to gather information on what is working and what could be improved. How this can be achieved online will be discussed later.

5   Facilitating online Onboarding

From their study of specific Onboarding practices for the socialization of new employees, Klein et. al (2015) identified that it is important to new employees *how* onboarding experiences are offered or experienced. Interestingly, 'newcomers viewed practices as more helpful when they were required (as opposed to encouraged)' (Klein et. al, 2016).

As stated previously, Pre-Onboarding or Pre-work is a stage of Onboarding that can be completed before the new employee begins work at their new company. Tasks such as completion of documentation, reading of company policies and procedures and receiving general information relating to parking, cafeteria, etc. may also be provided to the new employee at this point in order to prepare them for their first few days of employment.

While in the past this information has been posted to new employees, these activities are easily facilitated online once the new employee has access to email or a smartphone App. Providing this type of information to new employees may be further enhanced by providing the employee with a map of the company, identifying where they will work and other areas of note in order to help them to begin to familiarise themselves with the layout of the organisation to remove some of the first day stress. It is also useful to provide the new employee with details relating to the next stage of the Onboarding process and what is expected of them once they enter into this process. Providing them with a map of activities and tasks will help to set expectations and ensure that the new employee understands the steps involved in their Onboarding and why they are important.

The second stage of the Onboarding process (Induction/Orientation) is usually facilitated on-site and involves introductions to the new employee's manager and to other departments within the company, often facilitated by a presentation to the Onboarding group on the purpose of each department. This stage often incorporates training that is required to be completed by the new recruit prior to entering their work environment such as basic health and safety awareness training, manual handling, documentation training, etc. There are a number of approaches that can be used to facilitate these tasks online.

For example, the use of synchronous communication tools can be used for new employees to 'meet' their new managers and to discuss their role in more detail. Videos can be created to

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provide introductions on specific departments and topics, as well as providing training to the new employees, followed by an online assessment. Currently much of this type of training can be considered 'read and understand' where the employee signs to say they have read the relevant procedure, but the use of digital tools can help to make this a more engaging and effective learning experience for the new employee, thereby helping to improve the Onboarding experience generally.

It is important to gather feedback from the new employee throughout the Onboarding experience in order that the company can improve the experience for new employees. It can be useful to provide them with a pre-questionnaire in advance of the Onboarding process to gather information on what they expect from the experience and then to follow up on how their expectations matched up with the actual experience. Questionnaires can easily be facilitated online and providing the employee with their initial responses can help them to frame their answers to a later questionnaire.

It is important to note that where employees continue to work from home, training on ergonomics is going to become even more important in order to ensure there are no negative consequences for the employee based on their home working environment and associated poor practices.

The third stage of the Onboarding process relates to the completion of Onboarding assignments and further integration of the newcomer into their new workplace. Providing them with short, achievable assignments helps the new employee to adjust to the new work environment while also providing them with a sense of accomplishment as they make their way through the Onboarding process. Providing them with a roadmap of activities as well as an associated timeline helps to keep them on track and allows them to manage their time more effectively.

Ensuring that tasks are relevant to the new employee and their new department/role also helps with motivation and engagement as tasks that are unrelated to the new recruit and the work that they will be undertaking can cause them to disengage from the process. A variety of assignment types can be facilitated online, from problem-solving to collaborative tasks that can help the new employee interact with others.

The fourth stage involves an ongoing process of follow-on work and continuous learning and development, and integration into the workplace over time. This may involve assigning a 'mentor' or 'buddy' to the employee in order to provide them with structured support and a point of contact to whom they can go for advice and assistance. As noted by Klein et. al, (2015) 'two specific practices viewed as highly beneficial but offered slightly less frequently are assigning a fellow associate as 'buddy' and encouraging a newcomer to observe a fellow associate for a period of time'.

While the mentorship element of the process often involves a 'shadowing' type activity, there are ways to ensure that a new employee has access to a buddy or mentor online, which can be facilitated both asynchronous and synchronously, where necessary. Providing a level of structure to these interactions is key, particularly when they are being facilitated online, and the use of a calendar function for 'office hours' may be useful in this instance, where a specific online mentoring tool is not being used.

6   Tools to support online Onboarding

Several tools can be employed to make the online onboarding process both efficient and engaging. These tools can be utilised at different stages during the onboarding process. Before describing the tools it is necessary to review our Onboarding stages and highlight what typical actions occur at each stage (Table 1).

Table 1: Key activities categorised by the 4 stages of onboarding

Stage / Phase	Key Activities
Pre-onboarding (Pre Work)	- Employee may need to send documents to the HR team, provide digital signatures, bank details, medical certs. - HR may assign a checklist for employees of documents required or tasks to complete before their first day - HR or hiring manager may send a welcoming letter or video, outlining some basic information for the employee to know about the company - HR may send a welcoming package with trinkets, information, manuals, stationery, etc.
Introduction/ Orientation/ Induction	- HR will give an orientation where they will outline your role, the organisation structure, a tour of the facility (virtual tour?), social groups, where to go for information. - HR will send a checklist of tasks for the employee to complete i.e. accounts to set up, check hardware, return documents, etc. - Organise meet and greets with manager(s). Manager will outline the role, expectations etc. - Meet and Greets with colleagues. Colleagues may share information on which tools they use, how they work together, how often they meet etc.
Assignments	- First tasks set. A number of onboarding tasks may be set. These are the first assignments for the new employee. - HR will set a learning and development path. What kind of training? Upskilling? Personal development? Role specific? Organisation Specific? Health and Safety?

Ongoing Work/ Development	● Employee ingrates with team and carries out work
	● Employee progress is monitored. Tasks are tracked on project mgmt. software. Checklists are filled out.
	● Periodic check-ins with Manger, progress report, review of role, meeting expectations
	● Surveys of employee satisfaction and self-perceived progress in role

Based on the activities outlined in Table 1, we will split the tools into the following categories.

- Digitised Documentation Tools (6.1)
- Introduction Tools (6.2)
- Checklist Tools (6.3)
- Project Management/Workflow Tracking Tools (6.4)
- HR Mgmt. Tools (6.5)
- Mentoring Tools (6.6)
- Social and Communications Tools (6.7)
- Learning and Knowledge Base Tools (6.8)
- Learning Management Systems (6.9)

While many of the tools described in this section carry out multiple features, we have attempted to categories the tools based on what they are primarily used for during the onboarding process. However, it should be noted that some organisations may use these tools for different purposes. One thing that will be clear after reading this section, is that there are many tools available for facilitating online onboarding. In Phase II of this research the will explore how companies can deploy these tools in a structured manner. The infographic in Appendix 1 points out where some of these tools may be deployed in the onboarding process.

6.1   Digitised Documentation Tools

This is important in the pre-onboarding phase in particular. Tools that effectively remove the need for paperwork and minimise the number of documents that need to be posted or uploaded to email. Several tools exist which allow new hires to upload photos of documents to an App or support digital forms that employees can fill out and sign electronically.

6.1.1   ClearCompany

This platform supplies features to assist with managing employees throughout every stage of their lifecycle, including onboarding. It combines a variety of core HR functions within one platform. In particular it allows for the automated online delivery, tracking, collection, and storage of all the necessary onboarding documents and forms. The employee can keep track of which documents they need to submit (Figure 1).

Cost: ClearCompany does not have a free version and does not offer a free trial. Price based on quote.

Figure 1: Onboarding document tracking dashboard (documents based on U.S. requirements)

6.1.2   WorkBright

WorkBright allows new employees to use their mobile devices for various onboarding procedures, specifically management of documents and data. New employees can use smartphones/tablets to upload photographs of relevant documents and securely capture signatures electronically. An API allows users to integrate the solution with ATS, ERP and payroll systems. All employee communications and forms are handled within the app, with a secure audit trail tracking each interaction.

Cost: WorkBright does not have a free version but does offer a free trial. WorkBright paid version starts at US$158.00/month.

6.1.3   Collage

Collage is a HR management platform, features include employee record keeping, new hire onboarding, benefits administration, time off tracking, recruiting (ATS), performance reviews, HR reporting, and a fully-managed payroll. New employees can sign contracts and documents with electronic signatures, as well as upload their tax and banking information. Collage also supports automated training through schedules and task-banks. Collage supplies question templates such that new employees can form the right questions for their employers or colleagues to help them with their learning.

Cost: Collage does not have a free version but does offer a free trial. Collage paid version starts at US$10.00/month.

6.1.4   DocuSign

DocuSign is a digitised documentation tool which allows documents to be shared and signed, which particularly effective in the remote onboarding process. All-important onboarding documents can be managed and audited in one place. The tool can also be integrated with popular HR systems such as Workday.

Cost: DocuSign has a free version and offers a free trial. DocuSign paid version starts at US$10.00/month.

6.2   Introductions Tools

Greetings and introductions are important to make the employee feel welcome and part of the team and can be particularly effective during the pre-onboarding phase to familiarise the employee with the company culture and some of the people they will be working for or with. The following tools offer features and templates to support this.

6.2.1   Wistia Video

Create customised videos with embedded links or calls to action which direct employees to take a next step. This is particularly useful for sending greeting or instructional videos to new remote hires, and embedding links to follow up material, for example an employee handbook or map.

Cost: Freemium model with pro-licenses starting at $99 per month and more advanced plans available for large companies

6.2.2   Kin

Kin has multiple onboarding features, including onboarding checklists, document management and digital signatures. Kin also offers a customized welcome page for each new employee that links them to tasks, paperwork, and workplace details like location, start time, and team member bios.

Cost: Kin pricing starts at $5.00 per month, per user. There is a free version. Kin offers a free trial.

6.3   Checklists for employees

Checklist can help make the onboarded process seem less daunting for an employee. These checklists can be carefully managed by the HR team to ensure the employee is aware of what documentation they require or what tasks they need to complete for their new role, and also managed in such a way that the employee is not overwhelmed with outstanding tasks. The following tools help manage these checklists.
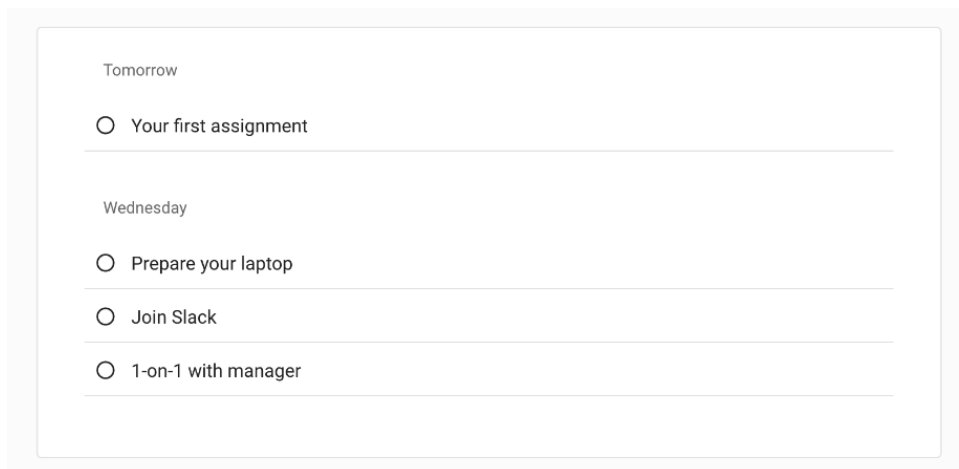
6.3.1   Chief Onboarding

Tool for managing employee onboarding, assigning checklists, task lists and information, with the option to use a Slack plugin to guide employees through the process. The tool also contains a chatbot which can be integrated with slack to provide employees with smart FAQs.

Cost: Chief Onboarding pricing starts at $49.00 as a one-time payment. There is a free version. Chief Onboarding offers a free trial.

6.3.2   Click Boarding

This tool allows the employer to share task lists and checklists with the employee during onboarding, as well as manage forms and documentation, share video greetings, messages etc. Figure 2 shows a typical employee checklist.

Cost: Click Boarding does not have a free version and does not offer a free trial. Based on quote.

Figure 2: Typical onboarding checklist

6.3.3   HR Partner

HR partner is a general HR tool for managing employee records, recruitment and tracking applicants. It also contains a number of onboarding checklists for different types of roles and training checklists for new employees. It also has a section for a new employee to create a bio of themselves to introduce themselves to the company (Figure 1).

Cost: HR Partner does not have a free version but does offer a free trial. HR Partner paid version starts at US$100.00/month.

Figure 3: Employee Introduction

6.3.4   Typelane

Typelane is an onboarding tool which offers features such as Reminders, checklists, and feedback and communications tools for tracking the employee onboarding and offboarding paths.

Cost: Pricing based on a per-onboarding journey basis. Quotes can be sought for large organisations

6.4   Project Management/Tracking/Workflow

These are typical tools for project management which offer templates and features for managing the employee onboarding process. They may offer a range of features including document sharing, messaging, task lists, milestone management and employee forums.

6.4.1   iDoneThis

This tool allows the employee to compile what they have worked on, the system will send a daily recap to the team, allowing everyone to keep informed of what each team member is doing. Each person can document what work they have completed each day, giving team members rewarding feelings and a sense of pride in their accomplishments.

Cost: $29.00/month/user

6.4.2   Kissflow

Kissflow is a workflow management tool which can be used to automate many different processes within an organisation. It has an onboarding template which allows the employer to automate the onboarding process. Once the flow has been set up, the employer can assign tasks and checklists to the employee and then track what has been completed and review employee progress.

Cost: Pricing starts at $480/month for 30 users

6.4.3   Quip

Quip is a real-time software platform for sharing and editing documents. Its collaboration features allow it to bring new employees up to speed on ongoing projects. New employees, or those added to a collaboration later, can easily get up to speed with the help of conversations displayed alongside the material that is being worked on. The platform also supports calendars, videos, images, and Kanban boards.

Cost: Quip has a free version and offers a free trial. Paid version starts at US$30.00/month for a team of 5.

6.4.4   Asana

Asana is a well-known and popular project management tool to help teams organize, track, and manage their work. However, it also has numerous features to support remote onboarding. It offers features such as various means of communication and information sharing, time tracking, onboarding checklists, meeting setup features and onboarding project tracking.

Cost: Asana has a free version (up to 15 people) and offers a free trial. The Asana paid version starts at US$10.99/month.

6.4.5   Scoro

Scoro enables its users to manage and track projects, keep track of finances, manage client bases, compile, and send quotes and invoices, and get enterprise-level reports. It also contains many features to support the onboarding process. Its dashboard provides an instant overview of the entire team, allowing for tracking of progress on onboarding tasks, real-time reporting of completed work and file sharing.

Cost: Scoro does not have a free version but does offer a free trial. Scoro paid version starts at US$26.00/month

6.4.6   Basecamp

Basecamp is a project and work management tool which consists of to-do lists, milestone management, forum-like messaging, file sharing, and time tracking. Basecamp is used to get new hires up to speed with the organisation and to create an onboarding checklist for them, as well as a place for chatting, brainstorming ideas, planning and executing projects, and sharing documents and pictures.

Cost: Basecamp has a free version and offers a free trial. Basecamp paid version starts at US$99.00/month.

6.4.7   Trello

Trello is a popular platform for project management, checklists, and overall workflow management in the same vein as Asana. Trello has a specialised employee onboarding template which will provide a roadmap for a new employee in terms of what they need to do their first

day, first week etc, who they can ask about specific things and where they can find information on important topics such as payroll and annual leave.

Cost: Trello pricing starts at $12.50 per month, per user. There is a free version. Trello offers a free trial.

6.4.8   Typeform

Typeform is a web-based SaaS survey and online form building tool. In terms of employee onboarding, the platform provides a survey tool to get feedback directly from employees throughout the employee onboarding process.

Cost: Typeform has a free version and offers a free trial. Typeform paid version starts at US$35.00/month.

6.5   HR Onboarding Management

These tools support the HR tasks which need to be completed during the employee onboarding. These tools could be considered enterprise solutions that seek to support all elements of human capital management, including onboarding.

6.5.1   Bamboo HR

HR management software which includes Applicant tracking system (ATS), time tracking, payroll processing, benefits administration, employee engagement and employee satisfaction tools, automated reminders, and workforce data analytics to manage all aspects of the employee lifecycle. Bamboo HR contains numerous onboarding tools to track progress and satisfaction of employees. Welcome email templates and team introductions make it possible to quickly introduce new workers to the business and the rest of the team, and the platform's onboarding path tool and document management features makes it quick and simple to sort all of the information and paperwork needed for new employees to get to work.

Cost: BambooHR does not have a free version but does offer a free trial. Quotes available.

6.5.2   Click Boarding

Progress tracking, documentation handling and checklist. This tool allows the employer to share task lists and checklists with the employee during onboarding, as well as manage forms and documentation, share video greetings, messages etc.

6.5.3   Zenefits

Zenefits is a Human Capital Management platform which supports core HR functions such as time tracking, onboarding and employee record keeping. Zenefits offers templates for onboarding documentation, onboarding programmes, learning paths and checklists. Integration with G Suite, Salesforce, Slack, and Office 365 is supported.

Cost: Zenefits has a free version and offers a free trial. (Further upgrades based on quotes)

6.5.4   Gusto

Gusto offers HR tools and HR services to help with managing employee onboarding, running payroll, administrating health benefits, and engaging employees and teams using one integrated platform. It is particularly useful for navigating new hires through direct deposit forms, tax documents etc. Employees can introduce themselves through the app which is useful for remote workers

Cost: Gusto does not have a free version and does not offer a free trial. Gusto's paid version starts at US$45.00/month.

6.5.5   Namely

Namely is a HR platform that integrates various key HR functions such as payroll, talent management, and benefits. Built in the style of popular social media interfaces, this tool offers core employee management features such as to manage payroll, benefits, and time.

Cost: Namely does not have a free version and does not offer a free trial. (Quote based)

6.5.6 SentricHR

SentricHR organizes all important onboarding processes, documents, and employee information in one platform. In particular the tool allows employees to enter key onboarding data easily, such as documents and payroll information as they join the company.

Cost: Based on quote

6.5.7 Talmundo

Talmundo is an interactive onboarding tool. Employees can engage in learning and instructional material before and during onboarding and communicate with employers. Features include messaging, engaging quizzes, interactive modules, employee handbooks and multi-media training. Includes a chatbot for employee support. The tool integrates with multiple ATS and HCM platforms.

Cost: Talmundo does not have a free version and does not offer a free trial. Quote based on size

6.6 Mentor Management

6.6.1 MentorcliQ

MentorcliQ tool which assigns mentors to new employees and allows them to manage and maintain the mentor relationship. It supports automated matching based on role and expertise. Employers can track the number of hours employees and mentors have spent together (Figure 4). The tool also supports virtual mentoring for remote employees.

Cost: MentorcliQ Employee Mentoring does not have a free version but does offer a free trial. (Prices on quote, aimed at companies with 200+ employees)
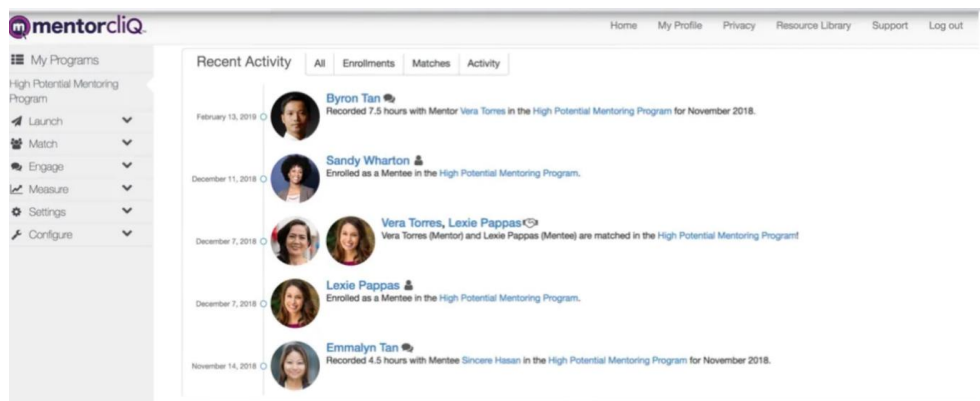
Figure 4: Mentor tracking using MetrorCliq

6.6.2   Qooper

Qooper allows for automated profile collection, mentor-matching, follow-ups, check-ins, and reporting. By matching employees to mentors who suit their job role and background, organisations can set goals for employees and support them in achieving the goals through mentoring, peer collaboration, group discussions, and personalized learning.

Cost: Quote based

6.6.3   MentorNet

Mentor matching platform that encourages the use of short weekly mentor meetings during the onboarding process. Pairs communicate weekly during MentorNet's four-month mentoring cycle in which prompts are presented for discussion. Following a cycle, employees may invite their current mentor or a new one to begin a new mentorship. As the employee advances, MentorNet provides discussion prompts relevant to their current stage of onboarding development.

Cost: Based on quote

6.7   Social & Communication Tools

6.7.1   Slack

Slack is a text and video chat tool which allows employees to communicate formally and informally. Slack is useful for both work related communications and remote social interaction among colleagues. It also has plugins to allow for integration with other office tools, such as Dropbox, Google Docs and various chatbot tools.

Cost: Free for small organisations, with pro-plans available for larger organisations with access to more features and plug-ins.

6.7.2   Video Conferencing Tools

The emulation of face-to-face meetings in online onboarding can be crucial for employees to build rapport with colleagues and managers. Google Hangouts, Zoom, MS Teams, Skype and WebEx all offer similar video conferencing features. Breakout rooms, a feature where participants in a larger chat can be split into smaller groups for a select period can be a quick and effective way for new employees to interact with each other during group orientations.

Cost: Various, with most tools offering free versions and pro-licenses with monthly subscriptions

6.7.3   Social Media and Messaging Tools

As mentioned earlier, Web 2.0 tools can greatly enhance the online onboarding experience. Social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn can be used to create online introductions for new hires and allow them communicate with new colleagues. Even simple messaging systems such as Whatsapp and Telegram can be used to create peer and social groups, allowing new hires to feel included in the informal company culture.

Cost: There are many free social media platforms. LinkedIn has a pro-license with onboarding and learning resources available.

6.8   Learning Platforms and Knowledge Bases

These tools allow organisations to create learning and development paths for their new employees.

6.8.1   Chatbot

Chatbot builder (chatbot.com), which allows customised chatbot templates to be built and embedded on your company website, which can then be used for communicating with employees or for training purposes. Templates are offered which can direct new employees through queries and FAQs during their onboarding.

Cost: Starts at $50 per month for 1000 chats per month with upgraded plans for busier sites.

6.8.2   Obie.ai

AI platform which enables access to frequently asked questions, documents, and the company knowledge base. This allows knowledge to be shared between employees. The platform can guide new employees through the onboarding process, is integrable with Google docs, slack and Dropbox so that employees can access documents. New employees can ping the responsive chatbot, Obie, to help answer any and all of their questions. Obie can point them to particular steps and pages in process documents, for instance, or help them identify and access company assets, like presentation templates or logos.

Cost: Starts at $59 for basic plans with increased costs for more users.

6.8.3   Eduflow

This online learning platform allows for the creation of learning experiences. It also contains tools and templates for onboarding new employees, such as learning flow, videos, document submissions and peer reviews. New employees can set up a profile to help introduce themselves to their colleagues.

Cost: Eduflow has a free version and offers a free trial. Eduflow paid version starts at US$19.00/month

6.8.4   ProProfs Knowledge

This platform provides a self-service knowledge base, which includes FAQs (Figure 5), manuals, documentation, and more. The platform contains templates that allows the employer to create online employee handbooks to familiarize new hires with work dynamics, policies, vision, mission, and the role that remote employees are going to play in the organization.
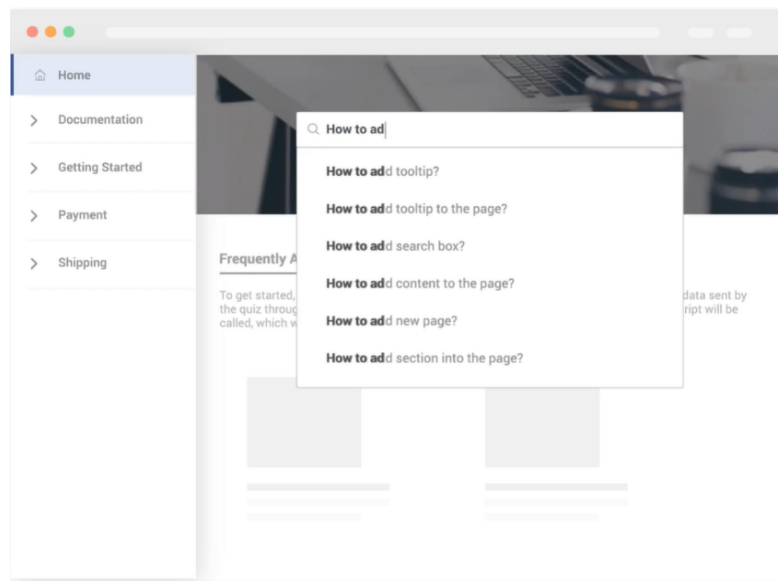
Cost: Paid version starts at $48

Figure 5: Smart FAQs for new employees

Travitor

Travitor is a video learning platform where organisations can easily create courses by adding videos, slides, documents, quizzes and SCORM lessons. In an onboarding context, Travitor allows the user to create and track learning plans for new employees. It also contains features that allow for communication and feedback to be shared between employers and employees.

Cost: Free trial, price based on quote

Lessonly

Lessonly is a cloud-based learning management system that allows users to build, share and track training materials and activity from a singular interface. Features include easy-to-use lesson creation, insights to track metrics & coaching functionality to provide targeted feedback. New employees can be assigned bespoke learning paths, which can include skills development,

learning about company culture and knowledge sharing. It also features the ability to track work and other projects, as well as supporting integration with other platforms like Slack, Salesforce, and Namely.

Cost: Lessonly does not have a free version and does not offer a free trial. Price based on quote.

6.9   Learning Management Systems (LMS)

A number of Learning Management Systems which are used in corporate environments contain onboarding features. Having the onboarding program embedded within an LMS can allow organizations to track and assess the employees progress and capture their feedback in various ways.

6.9.1   Cornerstone

Cornerstone is an LMS which supports compliance and development training. It contains a library of exclusive and configurable content. Organisations can set a list of short term and long term trackable assignments and learning objects for new employees and can capture progress using various assessment tools.

Cost: Cornerstone LMS does not have a free version but does offer a free trial.

6.9.2   Talent LMS

Talent LMS is a multi-feature platform for sharing learning content and tracking employee development. It encourages organisations to formalise and track (Figure X) their onboarding process using its system. The platform also provides a library of paid training and compliance content that can be used for onboarding, allowing new organizations to quickly implement a white labelled onboarding process without having to generate too much of their own content.

Cost: Talent LMS offers a free demo with further use based on a quote.
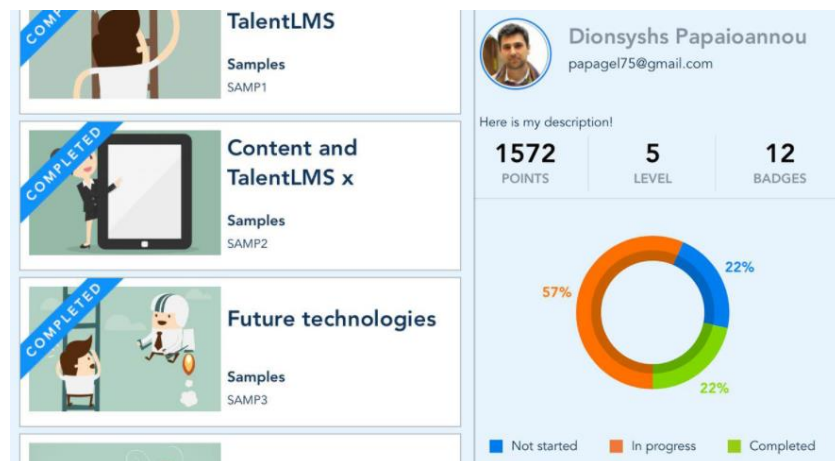
Figure 6: Tracking of learning objects on Talent LMS

6.9.3   Absorb LMS

Like the other LMSs listed here, Absorb allows organisations to embed their onboarding process on their platform. Organizations can tailor learning and compliance training content. implement a variety of quiz and survey tools, group learners into different categories, generate badges and certificates, and the platform allows for easy integration with other corporate tools and social media platforms.

Cost: Absorb LMS does not have a free version but does offer a free trial.

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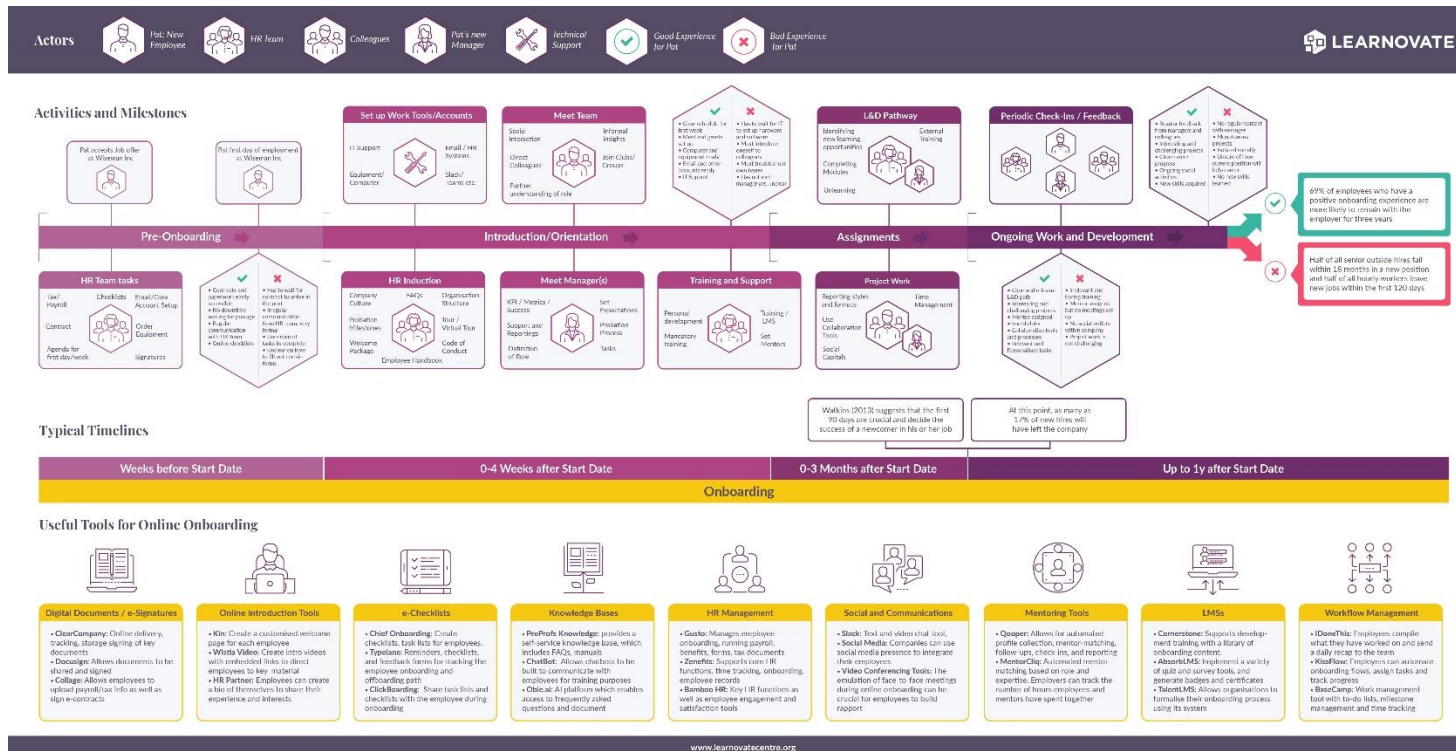Workforce Management (2009a), "Onboarding: a critical element in strategic talent management", *Workforce Management*, Vol. 88 No. 7, p. S10

8 Appendix

Figure 6: Onboarding process