



# TURNINGPOINT QUARTERLY TALENT REPORT (Q1 2016)

Onboarding is On-going: Engaging New Hires  
Beyond the First 90 Days



## How effective is your onboarding process?

---

If you're not sure, then you may fall into the 69 percent of businesses<sup>1</sup> that don't have a formal, new employee onboarding process in place. Or maybe you've put together a simple onboarding process that involves the basics: signing HR and benefits paperwork, assigning technology and desk space, and putting new hires to sleep with dull presentations about company culture.

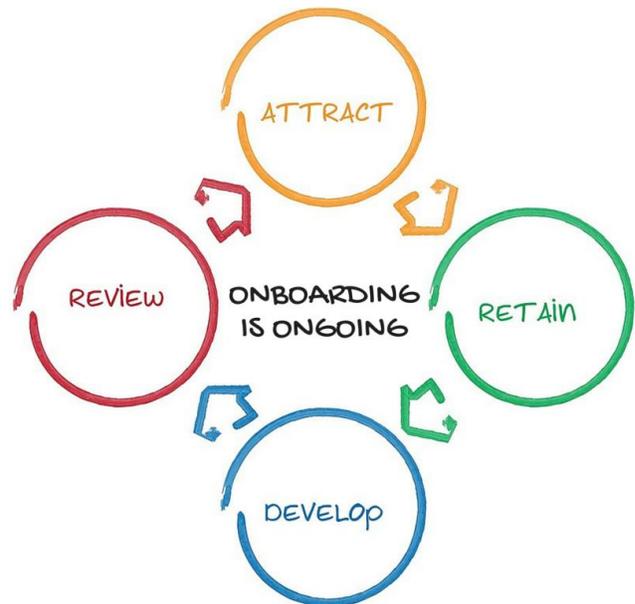
**To attract, engage and retain top talent, you need an onboarding program that is on-going.**

In most companies, the onboarding process is limited to one to 90 days, a time often called the "honeymoon period." But what happens when the honeymoon is over? According to a [study](#) conducted by Aberdeen Group, companies with short onboarding programs are less likely to retain their first-year employees. Of the employees who choose to stay, they are typically less engaged—increasing the chance that their presence will negatively affect morale, productivity, and culture.

**Top-performing companies recognize the value of engaging employees well before and beyond their first day of employment.**

You've already invested time, money and resources in sourcing, interviewing, vetting, and hiring candidates—probably as much as twice the employee's annual salary. It makes sense to design a comprehensive onboarding program to get people engaged and motivated to perform well. The faster new hires successfully transition to their new roles, the faster they are able to hit their quotas, make a direct impact on the business, and contribute to the bottom line.

But onboarding isn't a sprint. It's a marathon.



## Set a strong foundation with pre-boarding

---

Most companies think onboarding begins on the first day of employment, but in reality the process begins with the first interview. That first touch-point is an opportunity for employee-employer expectations to align. Alignment happens when companies are clear about the competencies that are needed for an employee to be successful.

"Always start with what 'good' looks like [in an employee]," advises Chief Strategy Officer Jim Ninivaggi of [Strategy to Revenue](#), "Know the competencies that you will hire, train, and develop." Ninivaggi suggests creating a competency map that outlines what employees need to do, know and think to be successful in phases—on day one, in the first month, the first quarter, the first year and beyond.

What does a successful new hire look like in six months? 12 months? You should know the answer *before* you begin recruiting for open positions.

Pre-boarding isn't only about employee competencies. It's also about communicating your company's employer brand—a unique combination of your culture, mission and values expressed in a way that emotionally connects candidates and employees to your corporate identity. In this way, pre-boarding becomes a way to stand out, differentiate and engage before day one.

Make onboarding a priority by being strategic about how you interact with employees—communicating your value as an employer and aligning expectations—*before* their first day.

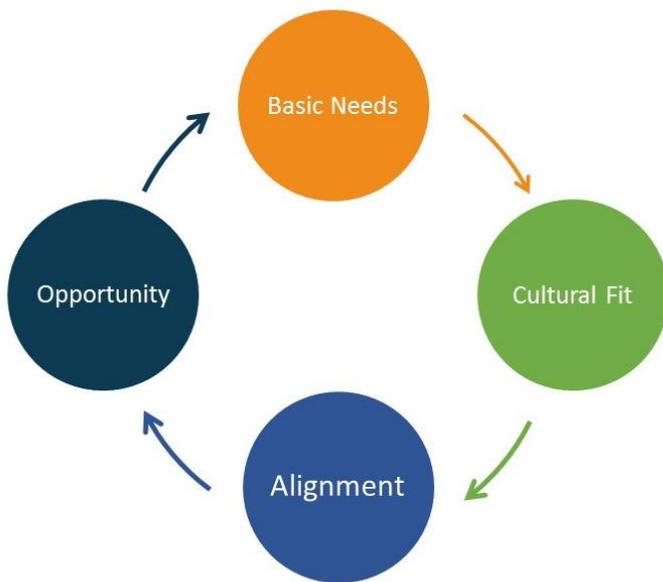
### Did you know?

Job descriptions are part of your onboarding toolkit. Be sure your job descriptions are comprehensive and engaging. Don't simply offer a mundane list of responsibilities. Rather, describe the activities and initiatives the new hire will be participating in, along with a glimpse into your corporate culture.

## Building Engagement on Day One and Beyond

The first several days on the job are crucial. There is a lot at stake for employees and employers. New hires are assessing whether they made the right choice. Hiring managers are doing the same. In our work with clients and candidates, we've discovered four phases of engagement in the employee lifecycle:

Whether it's conscious or not, employees move through these phases—asking the following questions to determine whether they will engage, and more important, stay with your organization:



### Basic Needs:

- Do I have the tools and support to be successful? Do I know what is expected of me?

### Cultural Fit:

- Do I fit in here? Are my contributions valued and significant?

### Alignment:

- Can I align myself with the beliefs and values of my leaders and this company?

### Opportunity:

- Can I grow and advance in my knowledge, skills and responsibilities?

### Basic Needs

New hires usually don't know what they don't know, which is why every company should have an onboarding process that addresses basic, day-one needs. Typically, HR manages this initial onboarding process—ensuring legal forms are signed, assigning desk space, issuing technology, ordering business cards, and delivering orientation training. Some companies also assign internal guides or mentors who plug new hires into the social environment at work—answering important questions like:

- What time should I arrive?
- What is the preferred communication channel—email, IM, phone, etc.?

- What is the department’s dress code?
- What does my team normally do for lunch?
- How do I schedule meetings and where do we usually meet?

## CULTURAL FIT

Once basic needs are met, employees look to reaffirm cultural fit, which boils down to a sense of belonging and contribution. This is when the promises, or employer brand, you communicated during the interview process are confirmed - or broken.

For example, during the recruiting process a new sales manager was told that autonomy and creativity were key corporate values. After a couple of months on the job, however, he discovers his supervisor micromanages every aspect of his work. He feels stifled, but more important, he believes he might have been duped during the interview, and starts putting his feelers out for a new job.

### Onboarding isn’t an event. It’s an experience.

*“We did away with our traditional on-boarding training class that consisted of two days of classroom-style training. We now have a Sales Academy that integrates classroom learning with field experience over the course of several weeks. New employees are put on a learning path that enables their early- and long-term success.” ~Amy Pence, Sales Enablement Marketing Manager at [Alteryx](#)*

### People join companies. They leave managers.

*“We coach hiring managers to always give an accurate account of the position. If they say the role will be highly strategic, autonomous, and impactful, then that’s what employees should experience. Employers want candidates to be honest and candid during the recruiting process. Candidates want the same from employers. No one wants to be sold on an idea that ends up being a misrepresentation, or worse, a lie.” ~Ken Schmitt, Founder & President of [TurningPoint Executive Search](#)*

## ALIGNMENT

The foundation of your company is built on its mission and values. Naturally, your onboarding program will include training on your culture, purpose, and strengths. However, don’t expect new hires to simply “drink the corporate Kool-Aid” because you offered it.

Each employee brings his or her own unique values, mission and purpose to work. Asking them to check those at the door is unrealistic, if not impossible. Instead, design onboarding that fosters a sense of alignment between your company’s priorities and theirs.

One way to do this is to increase an employees’ sense of psychological ownership<sup>2</sup> to their work. Small interventions, like allowing personalization of workspace or creating onboarding activities around individual strengths, can go a

long way toward building early engagement and long-term job satisfaction.

## OPPORTUNITY

New hires won’t be “new” for long. At some point, employees will want to grow and evolve—whether that means advancing in roles and responsibilities or simply being assigned to different projects. When you consider the long view, effective onboarding isn’t a “check the box” activity, but rather a multi-step program that moves new hires from initial orientation training to an on-going growth and development path.

[SiriusDecisions](#) suggests creating a certification process that builds onboarding effectiveness and efficiency around three core areas:

- **Knowledge:** Do they know what they need to know?

- **Application:** Can they apply what they know in simulation scenarios?
- **Execution:** Are they able to execute in the field—retaining and developing skills over time?

The certification process can include a variety of onboarding activities—from one-on-one coaching and advanced skills building to assessment-based learning plans and just-in-time training.

**Developing key relationships is essential.**

*“HR works closely with hiring managers during the onboarding process, which includes meetings with key stakeholders and peers. It is also critical to assign a mentor to work with new hires in the first few weeks. It’s not uncommon for mentoring relationships to continue long after the initial onboarding phase. And finally, conduct employee feedback surveys to improve on what worked and eliminate what doesn’t.”*

~ Susan Penn, Global HR Executive

## Designing Your Onboarding Program

Ninety-four percent of candidates we’ve placed continue to work with our client companies after one year. After 24 months, the number remains above 90 percent. That success is due, in part, to our client’s commitment to onboarding.

To help you design the first 30- to 45-day phase of your onboarding program, we’ve created a simple framework you can adapt to your organization.



## INTERACTIONS

A vital part of onboarding is building on a person's innate desire to belong. During this phase, companies and hiring managers create activities that acclimate employees into the corporate culture—building their psychological commitment to the company and their work. Recommended activities:

- Assign a “new hire buddy” or mentor
- Lunch with key internal contacts, including:
  - Immediate supervisor
  - Fellow department team members and/or direct reports
  - Cross-functional leaders (e.g. head of Operations, Finance, IT, Supply Chain, Manufacturing, Engineering, Merchandising, Legal, Sales, Marketing, etc.)
  - Other key influencers in the organization (varies)
- Provide organizational chart to give big picture perspective
- Establish weekly check-in meetings to address issues and ensure alignment
- Provide calendar of important events such as upcoming tradeshows, client meetings, internal trainings and events
- Share the internal communication best practices and the reality about how "things actually get done"

## INTELLIGENCE

New employees also need quick access to the tools, information, and resources that will enable their success. These suggested activities ensure new hires hit the ground running:

- Assign training on various software tools, such as CRM, marketing automation software and social media tools
- Identify how to access “go-to” employees, knowledge centers, and information repositories
- Review current analytics, metrics, margins, customer base, pipeline, quotas, etc.
- Discuss current or upcoming issues internally with staff, peers, and externally with customers, vendors, suppliers, referral partners
- Review of upcoming new product/service launches
- Discuss YTD activities, efforts, and results
- Analyze and review of customer feedback (e.g. NPS Score, online reviews, social media engagement, etc.)
- Review of brand, collateral, website, and other relevant marketing initiatives
- Analyze lead generation effectiveness and lead source tracking

## IMPACT

Although sales success is rarely immediate, it is important to set the stage for success by building in specific, actionable metrics for new hires. This includes:

- Creating clear and realistic quarterly and annual sales goals

- Identifying high-margin products and services, then devising a strategy to increase sales of these items
- Scheduling ride-alongs or demo “sit-ins” with team
- Creating a lead scoring and distribution process
- Developing marketing calendar and scheduling sales calls
- Creating customer retention and engagement strategy
- Development of any necessary mitigation plans to remedy potential issues with other departments
- Tracking YTD numbers against quotas

While we’ve presented the 3i Onboarding Approach as a 60- to 90-day model, onboarding is an on-going, iterative process that follows an employee throughout his or her tenure at your company. There is a constant need to build interaction, intelligence, and impact. We support clients in designing onboarding programs that continue well beyond the first few months.

## Offboarding Employees

In a perfect world, your best people will stay with you for decades and deliver above-and-beyond performance expectations every day. But the reality is that people move on. The tenure of U.S. employees is currently about four-and-a-half years<sup>3</sup>. Despite your best efforts, good employees will leave.

But that’s not a bad thing. There are some benefits to turnover, including the opportunity to:

- Introduce fresh thinking to your business as new employees come in
- Develop your employer brand outside of the business, which eases recruiting efforts
- Expand referral network for new customers and new employees

And, former employees may boomerang back to your company armed with a fresh perspective and an existing skillset you can trust.

Naturally, losing good employees has its challenges. You must replace lost talent while also ensuring tribal knowledge doesn’t disappear when your employee walks out the door. Here’s where a strategic onboarding program can help.

For example, what if your onboarding activities involved having a select group of new hires track their journey in your company—capturing lessons learned and tidbits of information gleaned during their employment? You might assign these “ambassadors” to write blogs on the company Intranet for a set period of time or about a specific knowledge area. The activity serves a dual purpose—engaging employees to make meaningful contributions at work *and* creating an archive of “tribal knowledge” that can be used long after the employee leaves<sup>4</sup>.

### SMBs Have the Advantage

Talent acquisition is a key focus for all companies—large and small—but the agility of small- to mid-sized companies put them at an advantage. Did you know that compared to large enterprise, SMBs are...

- 1.7 times more likely to have employees who exceed performance expectations
- 2.x times more likely to reduce their cost per hire
- 12 percent more likely to build a talent pipeline of interested and available candidates regardless of hiring needs

**Bottom-line: Think big. Act small<sup>4</sup>.**

## Conclusion

---

Done well, onboarding leads to early productivity, highly engaged employees, and a “great place to work” corporate culture. Beyond this, an effective onboarding program will help you reduce the cost of hire, increase employee retention, and drive down turnover expenses.

### ***What are you waiting for?***

TurningPoint Executive Search advises employers on how to design onboarding programs that improve engagement and retention. [Learn more here.](#)

## Company Information

---

TurningPoint Executive Search  
(760) 434-5401  
[www.turningpointsearch.net](http://www.turningpointsearch.net)



---

<sup>1</sup> *Welcome to the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, Onboarding*, November 2014, Aberdeen Group

<sup>2</sup> *How to Make Employees Feel Like They Own Their Work*, December 2015, Harvard Business Review

<sup>3</sup> *Employee Tenure Summary*, September 2014, Bureau of Labor Statistics

<sup>4</sup> *Talent Acquisition: A Lesson in Agility from the SMB Market*, February 2014, Aberdeen Group