




# The Crucial Role of Training When **Onboarding New Talent**



# Summary

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The induction period is a critical time for newly recruited employees. It will determine whether they remain with the company, and likewise whether the company will confirm their appointment. In the longer term, if an employee does stay, their induction period will have established the conditions for greater ownership of their role. It is also a crucial issue for the company, being closely associated with its employer brand and its ability to retain talented recruits.

A successful outcome is vital, and this complex process is one in which all parties need to fully engage. Demands are made of the employee and line manager, the HR-training department and a number of other involved parties, such as the IT department or general support services.

Training – no longer restricted to the confines of a classroom environment – is intended to play an increasingly important role in this successful outcome. Digital Learning is a key instrument in the employee onboarding process thanks to, its ability to strengthen the link between work and tasks on the one hand and skills development on the other.

The first part of this document sets out the main challenges and issues of the onboarding process, alongside the specific benefits of Blended Learning. The second part provides examples of best practice to help save time and avoid common pitfalls. And keen not to over-generalize, we have drawn inspiration from the tool created by CrossKnowledge and Socomec, emblematic of the opportunities provided by Digital Learning in the onboarding process.

Enjoy your read!



1.

Issues Surrounding  
the Integration  
Process.

## **The issues surrounding the integration process are key.**

The first of these centers around the time required before a new employee is operational in the role, depending on the decision that the company makes at the end of the probationary period. Employers must avoid a situation in which they are undecided as to what their decision will be!

The second issue is how to retain the new recruit if the company is satisfied with them; a significant issue within the context of the «talent war» experienced in all companies, given that Generation Y is far from lacking in opportunities or in the demands they make of employers.

These two issues are interlinked: an employee who is well integrated in their role is less likely to look elsewhere and, inversely, an employee with a sense of loyalty is often more productive than one on the lookout for other opportunities. All activities within the onboarding process must therefore focus on two outcomes: shortening the time it takes a new hire to become operational in their role and strengthening their sense of loyalty. All induction activities should therefore be evaluated in terms of whether they serve these two aims.

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**For Socomec, a global industrial group with 27 subsidiaries in the electrical technologies market, the quality of the onboarding process is key to bringing new recruits on board in a rapid, uniform and coherent manner. Onboarding issues are relevant both to the business and to employee retention in the longer term.**

 **socomec**

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These issues are not merely academic; there is real cost at stake.

## An unsuccessful induction outcome is costly

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"We have to start again from scratch!" A failed induction leads to a strong sense of disappointment on the part of the manager who dedicated a good deal of time to the recruitment process. And this can extend to the whole team or even impact the general working environment. It can affect how team members perceive their manager's competence in selecting and retaining employees and this failed outcome only adds to individual workloads.

The direct cost of an unsuccessful induction is the sum total of the recruitment, the training and the dip in productivity during the induction period. When the company needs to launch a new recruitment drive for a replacement, this cost is multiplied by a factor of 1.5 to 2.

 = **20.000 to 200.000€**

*The cost of the induction process varies between 20,000 and 200,000 euros depending on the role being recruited. The US firm CEB puts a figure of 30,000 euros on the average investment over the eight-month period before a new recruit reaches the appropriate level of productivity.*

The longer-term cost, although more complicated to estimate, can be even more detrimental when the negative impact on the team adversely affects their motivation and individual commitment. Some staff members may even begin to question the appeal of their company.

In all cases, unsuccessful induction outcomes have a real impact on the company's operating profits, especially if they occur regularly.

## Common causes of failure

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Of course, a successful integration outcome presupposes that the company has recruited the right person! The induction process relies largely on the level of care taken over the recruitment process, to the point that there is a strong argument for developing the two in parallel. The two are mutually enlightening, as seen by the growing emphasis on the «preboarding» stage (the period between signature of the letter of engagement and the employee start date), when it is important to establish strong ties with the newly recruited applicant. Ideally, the training should continue well beyond the onboarding period, and throughout the employee's career with the company.

To stay on the subject of induction, the main cause of failure is the absence of any proper plan, which should involve the line manager and HR department as a bare minimum. The lack of any such plan gives rise to a number of issues that adversely affect the quality of the onboarding phase.



**20%**

*of new recruits  
leave their job  
after only 45 days  
with the company  
(HCI, 2016).*



**74%**

*of US companies  
believe that  
onboarding  
practices are under-  
utilized within their  
organization  
(HCI, 2016).*



## Indicators of a successful induction process

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A successful induction can achieve three valuable and tangible results:

1. a new employee is more productive more quickly;
2. they are less inclined to leave the company;
3. and confirming the appointment at the end of the probationary period is more straightforward.

This third result provides a focus, as it can be used to establish the rational basis on which this decision can be made.

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**This is the very question addressed by the Socomec onboarding tool, as it allows the employee to pass through successive “doorways” (which can take a variety of forms, including a simple appraisal), culminating in the confirmation of their appointment once all the stages are passed.**



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This decision can be based on various indicators that take into account the following “five aspects of the induction process” (Féfaur, 2016):

- 1. Organizational induction** (provision of an email account, telephone, medical appointment, practical information, and so on);
- 2. Business-specific induction** (processes, activities, objectives, planning, tools, etc.);
- 3. Social induction** : from direct contacts (team, line manager) to more remote contacts (support roles, senior management) to company partners (clients, suppliers);

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4. **Cultural induction** (identifying and sharing the company's values, social etiquette, aspects of its culture);
  5. **Digital induction** : the ability to participate fully in the company's digital transformation).

For example, business-specific induction can be based on indicators involving the development of skills that enable employees to become operational in their role more quickly, and on productivity indicators. The employees' social induction can be evaluated using indicators of participation in group activities. It will be possible to measure digital integration by analyzing their rate of use of the Digital Learning portal, as well as their ability to use the company's digital tools.

Digital Learning has become so important in the onboarding process because it best serves the five aspects which we have just highlighted.

## Digital Learning: a key instrument for a successful induction

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Companies have long since acknowledged the importance of welcoming and training a new recruit, if only by way of a welcome pack and an induction course. But the complexity, cost and increasing unsuitability of a traditional course that could last for weeks have dissuaded them from using this option. Today, Digital Learning removes the need to deliberate between a long training course or no training at all.

### — The profile of an effective onboarding program —

What sort of induction training do new employees and their managers expect?

First, it should clearly address each of the five aspects of induction and determine which are required and which are optional. It will, for example, focus carefully on business-specific induction and on developing the relevant skills, whereas a digital induction will depend on the employee's hierarchical level. The organizational induction may involve no more than providing easily accessible information resources.

Since the new employee will no doubt already possess some of the required skills, the induction training will need to focus on those skills that are lacking. Trying to provide overly-detailed training from scratch would cause both the company and employee to lose valuable time, and risk the employee losing interest.

The skills gap can be appraised during meetings between the line manager and employee, or via self-evaluation tests completed by the employee, with support from the HR department where needed. These different approaches can be combined. Digital tools should be used to make sure that these evaluations are aligned throughout the

onboarding process especially if the results are to be used to adapt the training program in a prescriptive mode.

Generally speaking, the use of feedback will play an important role throughout the induction process, as the training is further enriched by observations made on the ground (how well the employee carries out the tasks assigned to him by the line manager). The induction training must begin with the tasks required of the new employee, based on activities that are analyzed in order to adapt the training directly to the employee's individual needs. Here again, digital tools are used to facilitate sharing between the employee, the line manager and the HR-training department.

Such training, closely aligned to the work role, will be delivered in short sequences using practical problem-solving content, addressing requirements that have become apparent when carrying out a specific task. The full range of available formats should be used in order to maintain interest. However, a significant proportion of training will use the following resources:

- video, a popular format in new practices;
- referral to peers or experts and to the line manager in particular;
- a catalog of custom or generic e-learning content;
- technical sheets for e-reading

## — The power of Digital Learning to aid onboarding —

The best way to improve onboarding is through the Digital Learning we've just described. Digital training can be accessed remotely, either synchronously or asynchronously, and must be geared toward the operational requirements of the employee or the manager.

Across all organizations, Digital Learning proves particularly effective in bringing new hires on board in a rapid, uniform and coherent manner

with regard to the cultural information with which all employees should be familiar. It can also be used to adapt the training to specific local requirements, which is useful in the field of compliance (company compliance with local regulations).

With regard to the business-specific induction, there is no better way to develop strength: the new employee will receive training to match their skills requirements exactly. Drawing on the different resources available, Digital Learning can address each type of requirement, whether relating to a technical point, a desired behavior, a specific task, understanding of a process or use of business-specific software. This response will be readily available and accessible in real time from a PC, tablet or smartphone. These learning analytics will allow increasingly greater customization of the training – customization that is already possible in the training portals, and desirable too, since it affords the new hire degree of individualization within the uniform process.

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### **Implementation via Blended Learning**

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It is important to maintain consistency in any Blended Learning program. This implies creating a well-designed Blended Learning architecture: each resource or training session will need to be designed as a constituent part of a bigger whole (the induction training pathway) with a meaningful outcome.

This Blended Learning pathway must find its roots in the workplace situation and the skillset that it requires. In this context, we can look at 70:20:10 Blended Learning, comprised of structured training incorporating informal and social learning. With this new Blended Learning, we can go beyond a linear onboarding process, offer much more than a quick welcome, the signature of various documents, and a dull presentation of the company's history and processes.

This is a collective blended learning architecture, integrating HR and management, under the leadership of the training department.

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Created in partnership with CrossKnowledge, Socomec's onboarding procedure is based on the Blended x platform. Every new hire is given access to a digital portal, from their very first day, and to "onboarding weeks" or "onboarding days" organized at company headquarters. The digital aspect of the program allows to reach employees in 16 countries. Every new employee is set up on a pathway specific to their individual job description, which helps to contextualize this key stage of their integration within the company. Whether this involves visiting the different plants within the group or introducing Socomec's product offers, this face-to-face delivery will play a key role in sharing experiences and forging ties between new employees. Networking is set up between key stakeholders, directors, and with numerous experts and professionals. This blended approach gets very positive feedback from new comers, with an 88% global satisfaction rate.



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## Implementation via the training portal

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The training portal is another powerful means of achieving coherence and forging ties with all aspects of the onboarding program including its design, the UX (User eXperience) it provides, the relevance of the information available, the ease of navigation of the content provided for performance support and training, its support for Blended Learning, the opportunities for dialog via social tools with experts, team members and the like. In short, the opportunity to embrace a wide variety of content and services via a single portal, accessible to all new starters, a key factor in the success of the onboarding process.

## Measuring a successful onboarding process

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The onboarding process is a game of metrics, restricted to a short window of time and with the pressure of a decision looming at the end of the probationary period.

### — The level of productivity of the new employee —

Calculating productivity is commonplace in business lines governed by hard numbers like sales, customer relations, or quality control. This figures-based culture is now extending to all business lines, particularly with the advent of Big Data and Analytics. Today, performance indicators can measure much more than just productivity alone. Quantified targets will be set, with milestones to take into account the increasing competence of the new employee. Reaching these targets provides the basis for discussions, followed by any adjustments needed in the form of additional training and support. A meaningful conversation, based on figures, will be a valuable contribution to the transparency and success of the onboarding process.

### — The commitment of the new employee —

How can we inspire the highest level of commitment in a new employee? To answer this, we first need to identify the indicators that can be used to measure it. A number of these indicators are not well suited to the probationary period. Staff turnover? This is a global indicator used to recognize failings (exiting staff, whereas clearly we want to avoid the new recruit leaving). Rate of absenteeism? Another negative indicator (recognizing areas that are not working, whereas we are seeking to develop areas of weakness; further, it is unusual for an employee to abuse absenteeism during the induction period). We could pick out various other HR indicators that are ineffective in terms of onboarding.

But there are other more relevant indicators, starting with those available on the LMS platform: time spent on training sessions, scores obtained, number of training sessions started, etc. Beyond these quantitative aspects, it is a case of monitoring the level of commitment of the new employee. Rate of ownership of the portal will therefore be a useful indicator, as will employee contributions on the learning social network within the portal.

### — Indicators specific to Blended Learning —

On the HR/training department side, and in order to continuously improve training tools, the indicators set out above should be used alongside measures related to resources. The key indicators of successful training are well recognized:

- coverage of requirements (number of themes to be covered)
- number of references in the catalog of training modules (ability to address ad hoc training requirements),
- rate of usage and rate of adoption of Blended Learning,
- rate of adoption of the training portal,
- average time between acknowledging the need for training and providing a solution (time to learn),
- average time between training and application of new learning in practice (time to skills),
- rate of transfer of knowledge to a workplace situation, etc.

Another key indicator is obviously the unit cost (average cost of a training session, regardless of the resource chosen), which is greatly reduced with distance learning (particularly synchronous courses).



## — **Cost of acquisition of a new employee** —

The company can draw from the notion of client acquisition cost, which consolidates the sales and marketing costs involved in converting a prospective client to an actual client. On this basis, the “new employee acquisition cost” will be the cost involved in converting a new hire to permanent staff; this would be the aggregated cost of communication (employer brand), recruitment, training and support, low productivity during onboarding, etc.

It is well known that it is easier to retain an existing client (focus on client satisfaction, quality of client relationship) than to convert a prospective client to an actual client. To extend this principle to onboarding: the company must make every effort to retain new talent. This approach is nothing new to those organizations that put talent at the core of their growth strategy.



# 2.

13 Training Best Practices for the Onboarding Period.

In order to assist HR-training departments in developing and overseeing an effective and streamlined onboarding program, here are 13 practical best practices that are easy to implement. As we have mentioned, Digital Learning has a vital role to play here.

## #1 **Structure the onboarding program over time**

The plan will set out an ordered and prioritized list of actions to be carried out, together with due dates (related to how the onboarding is segmented: by day, week or month), persons involved, resources, etc. This plan will be shared by all stakeholders and integrated within their agendas. It helps to think of this in terms of an onboarding journey, then to illustrate the stages, modes of transport, place, people encountered, activities, and so on. The plan will be based on a small number of indicators (plan metrics) chosen according to relevance and together comprising the Onboarding Dashboard.

## #2 **Align the training to relevant business skills**

It is crucial that the entire induction period be focused on maximizing business-specific skills. These are the skills most likely to enhance comfort and productivity in the new employee, gain recognition from the manager and other team members, and ensure a sense of loyalty.

## #3

### **Individualize the training**

It is important to value the previous experience, know-how and expertise of new employees. Rolling out a generic training program would be frustrating for them, costly for the company and would water down the efficiency of the department. The induction training must endeavor to close the gap between the skills new hires must master and those that they already possess, and where possible will adapt to suit their preferred style of learning.

## #4

### **Set milestones for the onboarding program**

The onboarding program can take several months to complete and so its various stages must be carefully sequenced: preboarding (from the letter of engagement to new hire's start date), first day, first week, etc. Further milestones can be set, like the start or end of an intensive sequence of skills development or the assessment of applied learning in practice.

## #5

### **Break the training into short, readily accessible sequences**

Induction training is not the time or place to bombard new hires with information, much of which would be better given at a later time. It is more a case of creating a series of short sequences, each focused on a specific question that is practical and accessible as part of the normal workflow.



#6

## **Inform and train continuously**

This follows on from the previous point. Short sequences in varied formats – directly relevant to a problem to be resolved or a pressing lack of information – make for continuous training, closely linked to the job role.

#7

## **Use situational scenarios**

The training provided to new employees must be practical and focused on real-world work situations in order to help them quickly reach the expected level of performance. This means they must proceed to practical exercises as early as possible, starting with situational scenarios, in order to ensure that the learning is worth the effort required.

#8

## **Harness new uses of the Internet and collaborative working**

Use videos, quizzes, collaborative working on training resources, dialog with experts, gamification, and to strengthen the commitment of new employees and foster in applicants a positive image of the company at an early stage.

## #9

### **Provide a sense and meaning through Blended Learning**

As we've seen, Blended Learning offers consistency while also providing sense and meaning. To maximize the effectiveness of the training, it makes sense to have access both to "pull" resources (self-service for new employees) and "push" resources (where participation is required, particularly for compliance training). Using Blended Learning during induction will prove beneficial at a later stage in certified training programs, which are highly valued by employees.

## #10

### **Centralize content and services in a single portal**

Using a single digital portal to centralize and streamline access to training content and services, is vital in addressing issues such as:

- The volume and variety of information associated with the five aspects of onboarding mentioned earlier,
- the number of persons involved and the frequency and intensity of their communication during this key period,
- the need for near real-time evaluation of progress achieved.

This portal is produced by an LMS platform, with the potential to extend to other dimensions of talent management, such as performance management.

## And don't forget...

### #11 **Get to know employees and keep them informed prior to their induction**

Thanks to the Internet and social networks, employees have a good knowledge of the company, its markets, its products, its reputation, its chief directors, even of their own line manager, before even taking up their position. This should work both ways! Anything that helps create links with new employees before they take up their position is helpful in preparation for the induction process.

### #12 **Bear in mind the generation factor**

Induction training must be tailored to suit the preferred uses of generations Y and Z, who are accustomed to using the Internet, smartphones and social networks to communicate and keep themselves informed. With an overlap between professional and private life, these employees challenge the traditional distribution of training time and working time, and have a desire to access training "ATAW" (Anytime, Anywhere), mainly on their smartphones. To reciprocate, the company could authorize young employees to work on personal projects, providing opportunities for developing interpersonal and social skills that could in turn benefit the company. The requirement for transparency shown by these generations will be reflected in a training portal that objectivizes the training initiatives, training modules and exchanges within the Learning Social Network.



## #13 **Succeed at the first impression**

The first impression is always the strongest – especially when it's a bad one (Henri Jeanson)! Particular attention should be paid to the first day of integration, and to the part that training will play in it; a detailed script of this first day (within the context of the onboarding plan mentioned above) will be useful.



## Prioritize the human aspect

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E-learning in its most narrow sense (online self-training) cannot cover all the essential requirements; face-to-face dialog between the new starter and their line manager, and between colleagues, is vital to maintain high levels of motivation. Priority should be given to the human aspect, as this alone can ensure the successful completion of the integration period, without ignoring the feedback that digital tools can provide throughout the onboarding process.

## Onboarding is a culture

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The primary goal is to combine tools, the human aspect, an induction plan, effective Blended Learning, best practices, and all the other aspects covered here into a true onboarding culture, able to strengthen and optimize the integration of new employees in the long term.

After all, this culture is a projection of the company's global culture. It is understandable that it should assume such importance since onboarding is a determining factor in how new hires will perceive the culture of the company. The onboarding process, with its time limitations, makes an ideal testing ground in which to develop a sustainable company culture that is capable of attracting, developing and retaining talented staff.

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