



LEADERSHIP EFFECTIVENESS: RATIONAL ONBOARDING

Onboarding a new team member while ensuring team performance requires following a good plan. Successful onboarding is a critical success factor for the business—in other words, intention, planning, candid dialogue, involvement of the team, and careful inquiry are critical to onboarding success. Many steps go into effective onboarding, and we have outlined some steps that are sometimes missed. We, at EXCN, have found that focusing on these steps will improve the onboarding experience for everyone—the new hire, the team, the leader to whom the new hire reports, and ultimately, these steps affect the success of the organization.

Here are five ways to optimize the onboarding experience, preserve or enhance team performance, and ensure the smooth transition of the new incumbent:

1. Ensure the appropriate team members are involved in decisions about the new hire; ask for their reflections—let the team know you value their opinions. Involve other future stakeholders in addition to the new hire’s team.
2. Engage the new hire—both before and after hiring—in dialogue about the team agreements/code of conduct.
3. Roles, authority, accountabilities, and decision-making rights all can shift with a new team member. Make sure all members of the team—old and new—have clarity on where those important lines lie.
4. Be clear about what is “non-negotiable” and what you would want a new hire to help you change. Ask for input and fresh ideas, and ensure the team is engaged with the new hire.
5. Create “stakeholder maps” to help new hires prioritize the relationships they will need to form in order to come up to speed effectively. Be open to their suggestions about modifications to the map.

What onboarding processes have you used that you consider great successes? What were the steps or attributes that made them so successful? Where have your onboarding efforts failed and why?

Additional resources:

- [Company Culture Is Everyone’s Responsibility \(hbr.org\)](https://hbr.org/2017/07/company-culture-is-everyones-responsibility/)
- [Is Bad Onboarding Stifling Your New Senior Leaders? \(hbr.org\)](https://hbr.org/2017/07/is-bad-onboarding-stifling-your-new-senior-leaders/)
- [Onboarding Can Make or Break a New Hire’s Experience \(hbr.org\)](https://hbr.org/2017/07/onboarding-can-make-or-break-a-new-hires-experience/)