Virtual Onboarding with a **Human** Touch —

Creating Connection, Culture and Community

2021

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Introduction

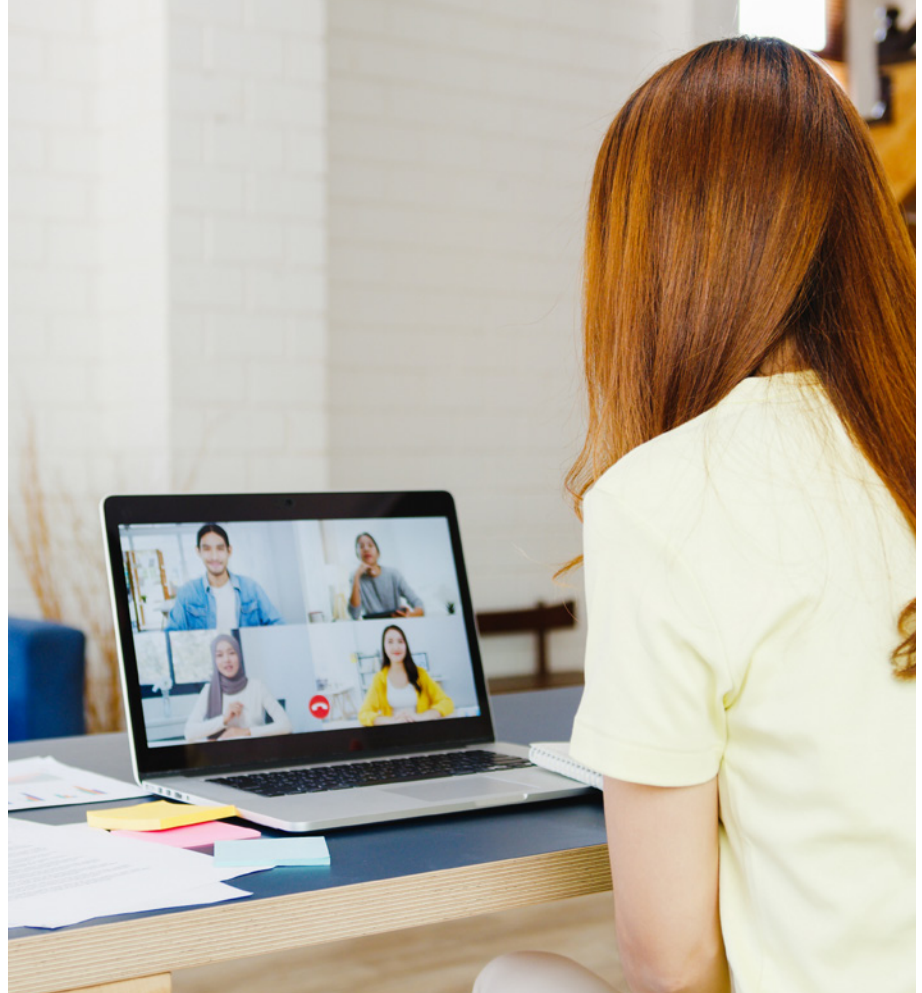**THREE TRENDS DOMINATE MODERN ONBOARDING:**

TREND 1
Leveraging recruitment and *onboarding as a key area of expressing company culture and values*

TREND 2
Organizations are taking *a more humanistic approach to onboarding.*

TREND 3
Transparency and upfront ethics statements are the key now in data and analytics.

Connecting onboarding to company values, having a more employee-centric view of onboarding and creating trust with the collection and use of data.

These trends are not solely the result of the global pandemic that caused more people to work from home or another remote location but are continuations of earlier trends.

Empowerment of the workforce, its globally-dispersed nature and a better understanding of psychology, emotional needs and inclusion have been influencing these market forces for some time.

The goals of onboarding have not changed. Productivity still matters and using onboarding to improve long-term retention rates remains a worthwhile pursuit. Finding meaningful work is important, so understanding what that means to each employee allows organizations to get more from their onboarding efforts.

The Onboarding Experience for Dispersed Employees

The ongoing change organizations must adapt to — pandemic-related ones and the ongoing move toward digitalization, the transition to a knowledge economy and generational shifts in employee values and aspirations — will require reliance on providers that can give them the tools they need to provide safety and cultural acceptance during the onboarding process.

Remote Work is Here to Stay
What Amount of Remote Workers are Current and Projected?

15%
Before
Pandemic

75%
During
Pandemic

38%
Projected After
Pandemic
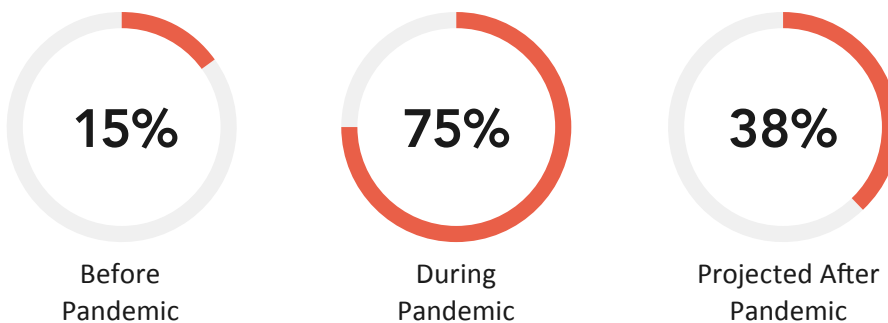
Source: Brandon Hall Group New Realities of COVID-19 Study, July-September 2020

There are some clear differences between office workers and remote or home-office workers, but some are less obvious. Remote workers often demonstrate greater flexibility in the tools they use to get the job done. However, there is a struggle to bring corporate values and culture to remote workers.

Remote, work-from-home and globally dispersed employees can also bring many other benefits to the organization, such as a different viewpoints, an expanded talent pool and increased ability to grow at scale, which outweigh any additional onboarding challenges.

Remote Workers Present Different Challenges

Organizations should be mindful of the different experiences of remote and globally dispersed workers.

1
Distractions
at home

2
Stress and
anxiety

3
Managers'
inexperience
in managing
remote workers

Source: Brandon Hall Group New Realities of COVID-19 Study, July-September 2020

Successful companies are placing more emphasis on work/life balance. Candidate experience and onboarding are now considered more important by many employers than succession planning and performance development.

Many organizations also noted the importance of fostering an understanding of company culture during onboarding. Tied directly to that understanding of company culture is diversity, belonging and meaningfulness, which speak to the overall need for connection that exists in the modern workforce.

Most Impactful Aspects of the Employee Experience and Company Culture

Employee Experiences	Corporate Culture
Work/life balance	Employees believe in what the organization stands for.
Candidate Experience	We have a diverse workforce that mirrors our community and customer base.
Onboarding	Employees feel a strong sense of belonging.

Source: Brandon Hall Group Employee Engagement Study

Remote work and employee experience place greater demands on the digital onboarding experience.

Maintaining quality and culture when moving online

Enabling connections at scale

Expanding community and supportive networks

Source: NovoEd

Onboarding matters not just because it is a good time to get employees situated and connected, but a failure to handle onboarding correctly can have a drastic effect on attrition, long- and short-term, and can lead to bad hires: those who stick around and are actively disengaged, not just unproductive but causing harm to the entire ecosystem.

Organizations Have Seen that Poor Onboarding Can Lead to Less-than-Optimal Results

Successful companies are placing more emphasis on work/life balance. Candidate experience and onboarding are now considered more important by many employers than succession planning and performance development.

10.2% | New-hire average voluntary attrition rate

12.6%* | Bad hires in past year

51% | Most new-hire voluntary attrition occurs during the first six months

28%* | Of bad hires attributable to sub-optimal hiring practices

*On average.

Source: Brandon Hall Group Evolution of Onboarding and Hiring Practices and Internal Mobility Surveys

Developing Strong Social Connections

When it comes to improving employee engagement: Trust, organizational values and teamwork are the top three employee engagement issues. Trust is a core concept for fostering employee engagement, but how is this done?

Certainly not by running through paperwork as fast as possible and using software for efficiency instead of effectiveness. The takeaway is that the human and personal aspects of employee engagement need to be embedded into onboarding.

Three-quarters of companies with highly effective learning programs report that learning begins in the onboarding stage, which makes sense because it instills cultural values and gives employees control over their own destiny, with the ability to immediately learn and grow at their new company — on their first day.

Nearly six out of 10 companies overall say they want to improve their new-hire experience, which is not surprising, but how do employers tackle this issue?

Top Three Most Important Actions to Employee Engagement

1 — Create an atmosphere of trust. *TIED*

1 — Hold leaders more accountable for driving the organization's mission and values.

2 — Improve the effectiveness of leadership development.

3 — Enable teamwork, collaboration.

Source: Brandon Hall Group Employee Engagement Study

74% of Companies with Highly Effective Learning Strategies Report that **Learning Has a Measurable Impact on Onboarding/Time to Full Productivity**

The Following Elements of the Onboarding *Process* Need to Improve

56% — New-hire experience

56% — Collaboration *(mentors, peers, managers)*

55% — Assimilation into culture

Source: Brandon Hall Group New Realities of COVID-19 Study, July-September 2020
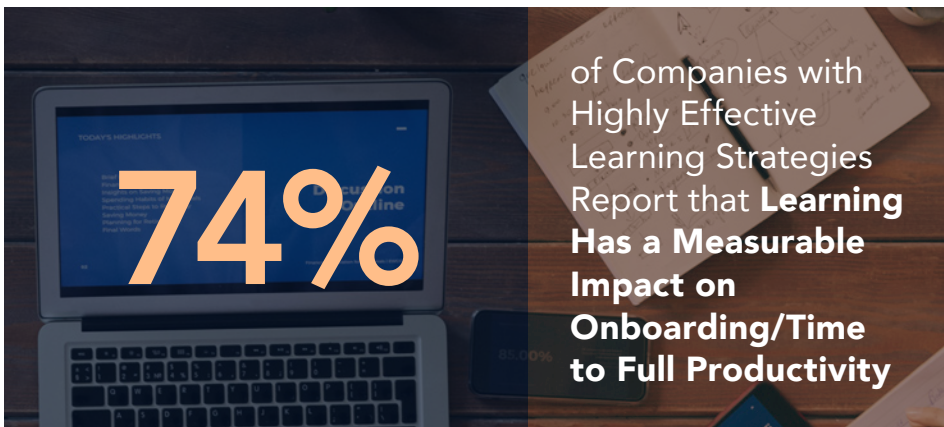
Companies seeking to improve their new-hire experience say they need to improve their technology, which shows a lack of connection between the business issues and their current onboarding technology. Onboarding, at least at scale, can't be done manually. It must be accomplished through automation technology to complement process improvements.

The right process can have a dramatic impact on the employee experience, such as linking mentoring and coaching to onboarding. Although these two functions often reside in different departments

in the organization, it is imperative to shift to the right mindset or philosophy, or build a process that links the two then have the right tools to make those connections happen seamlessly and quickly.

Which of the following elements of your onboarding _technology_ would you like to improve?

1 New-hire experience

2 Collaboration (partners, vendors)

3 Assimilation into culture

Source: Brandon Hall Group New Realities of COVID-19 Study, July-September 2020

A Gap in Mentoring in the Onboarding Process
Organizations Currently Connecting Mentoring with Onboarding

**49%** Currently use coaching and mentoring during onboarding

35% Plan to use coaching and mentoring during onboarding in next 12 months

16% Have no plans to use coaching and mentoring in onboarding

Source: Brandon Hall Group New Realities of COVID-19 Study, July-September 2020

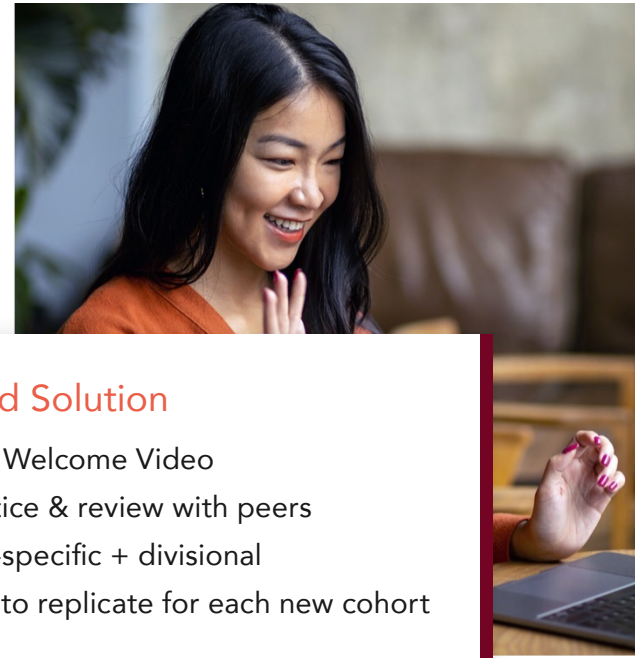**Increasing Emphasis on Culture, Connection, Community**

Source: NovoEd

Culture

Connection

Community

Compliance

Clarification
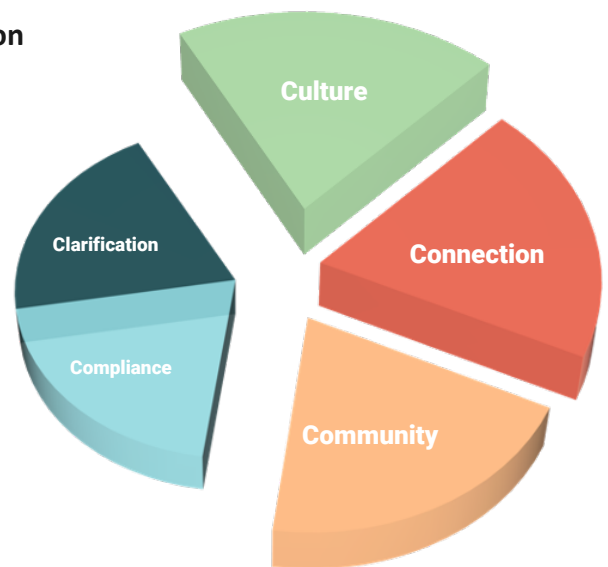
How Technology Can Help: Case Studies

Maintaining Quality & Culture when Moving Online

SALES ENABLEMENT

Challenges

- Time to productivity
- Greater strategy and culture adoption
- Deeper learning

NovoEd Solution

- CEO Welcome Video
- Practice & review with peers
- Role-specific + divisional
- Easy to replicate for each new cohort

Fortune 500   **Telecommunications**

Source: NovoEd

An American data communications and telecommunications equipment provider was looking for consistent, high-quality onboarding experiences.

Many companies feel forced to choose between quality and culture-building because they often follow a model of intensive, centralized upfront onboarding with checklists of things to do afterwards (which is often impossible now because of travel restrictions and expenses). Other times, onboarding is led locally, frequently with paperwork and checklists from HR and role-specific responsibilities from the direct manager, which can lead to inconsistent information around company strategy, values, mission and culture.

What they found was that it was important to introduce culture and values consistently across their global organizations to provide opportunities for practice and application.

They implemented a system wherein new hires can quickly develop experiences to draw upon before fieldwork (e.g., sales calls). They partly did this by standardizing processes and engaging managers and mentors at the right time for a review of new-hire progress (e.g., approval of a sales deck).

Enabling Connections at Scale

Nestlé PURINA   NEW-HIRE ONBOARDING
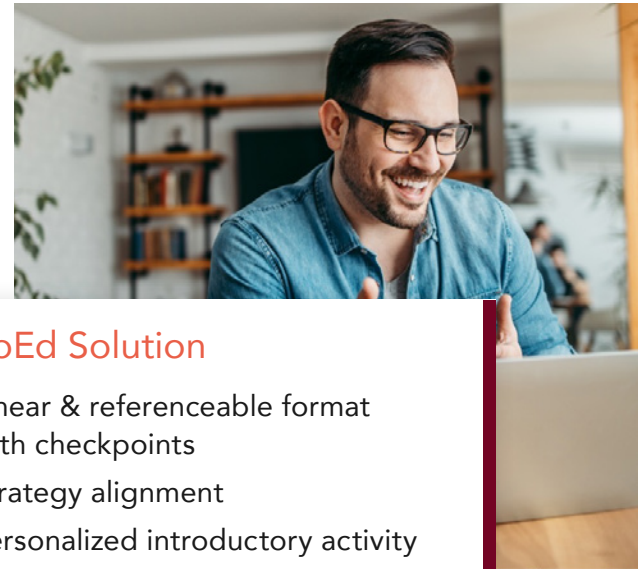
Challenges

- Scale
- Standardization and consistency of both message & processes
- Global audience
- Networking

NovoEd Solution

- Linear & referenceable format with checkpoints
- Strategy alignment
- Personalized introductory activity
- Live webinar with SME
- Discussions

Fortune 100   **Food + Drink**   **8,000 Employees in EMENA**

Source: NovoEd

Nestlé, the Swiss multinational food and drink processing corporation, is the largest food company in the world. Its subsidiary, Nestlé Purina PetCare, Europe, Middle East, North Africa, is the world's second-largest pet food company.

The challenge they had is the same as other global organizations: a need for consistency across the onboarding experience. In implementing their successful program, they found that global connections are important so they set up cross-functional networking opportunities.

There was also a need to stop recreating existing resources and programs. By automating and streamlining the process, they found they could more efficiently scale and start onboarding on Day One — no need to wait.

As a result, they could run their training either as a self-paced model, or cohort based weekly, monthly, quarterly, or whatever fits their hiring needs. New hires had a choice of self-paced training and weekly/monthly meetings with cohorts. This would allow cases where job orientation and culture assimilation can begin before the start date (e.g., firms that do intakes, college grads, etc.).

Expanding Community & Supportive Network

StanleyBlack&Decker SALES & MARKETING DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

Challenges

- Formerly in-person model
- Knowledge retention of 40 hours classroom-based content
- Technical product & application-based training
- Limited class sizes, Dispersed field reps require travel

NovoEd Solution

- Asynchronous and referenceable
- Digestible content delivered in the flow of work
- Structured assignments to demonstrate proficiency
- Increased roster in virtual setting with added mentor support

Fortune 100	Manufacturing	60K+ Employees

Source: NovoEd

Stanley Black & Decker is a Fortune 500 American manufacturer of industrial tools and household hardware and a provider of security products that used NovoEd for sales enablement and onboarding in a five-week program.

For new-hire sales trainees, Stanley Black & Decker moved a formerly in-person program online for the first time and designed an activity-driven learning experience with practice and feedback.

Teaching Teams	Participant Groups	Peer to Peer
- Facilitators, mentors, and teaching assistants	- Cross-regional teams	- New hire sales trainees

These combined support networks facilitate an organic experience that might not have been as effective in person, such as:	- 24/7 access to facilitators and mentors - Individualized feedback & evaluations on all assignments	- Diversity of learning content modality - Immediately apply learning concepts within 24 hours

Key Takeaways and Best Practices

Best Practices for Virtual Onboarding

Put culture and context at the core

- Use storytelling and case studies to bring mission and values to life.
- Encourage discussion and feedback.
- Provide opportunities for practice and application.

Create activities that foster connections

- Get creative with collaborative 'ice-breaker' activities.
- Use breakout groups to encourage conversations.
- Organize new hires into teams to produce a common deliverable.

Engage current employees to establish community

- Bring managers and mentors into the onboarding process.
- Provide peer support from buddies.
- Encourage cross-functional and cross-divisional interactions.

Source: NovoEd

One final takeaway is to think about the effect onboarding might have on processes beyond new-hire productivity and learning. Even apparently unconnected business issues such as succession-planning and inclusion are affected by the first impressions made by organizations. There are some challenges to be sure, but there are many positive effects that go beyond the scope of this book. The most important thing is to begin immediately. Although the post-pandemic era may bring some of us back to the way things were, there is only one direction that onboarding is going: into the future. The future that needs to be created has to be digital because of the agility required for onboarding in a volatile workplace; it must be supported by technology that allows for a more humanistic approach. Finally, organizations must embrace a forward-thinking, personal approach to onboarding.

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About NovoEd

NovoEd's collaborative learning platform empowers organizations to design and deliver experiential learning that accelerates business performance on a global scale.

Since the company's founding at Stanford's social algorithm laboratory in 2012, global corporations, executive education providers, and training firms have relied on NovoEd to develop high-value capabilities through purposeful practice and application, coaching and mentorship, and group collaboration. NovoEd's proven approach to learning connects diverse groups of learners, mentors, and leaders in a high-impact online environment.

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Select Awards

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