

All Aboard!

A pharmaceutical company learns how to align its talent with strategy to engage employees and achieve business sustainability.



The following story was told by Nettie Nitzberg, principal of WOW! transformations.

CLIENT>>

A mid sized global pharmaceutical company

PROBLEM>>

The company had been without an employee onboarding program for several years. It sought a best-in-class method to differentiate itself from competitors, create greater employee engagement, and attract and retain high-performing talent.

DIAGNOSIS>>

During an action learning initiative for high-potential employees, an onboarding program idea was born. Nitzberg was hired to help the company implement the program.

METHODS/TOOLS>>

Nitzberg worked with a variety of internal staff during a 12- to 15-month period to launch the program. She branded the

initiative as a means to jumpstart culture assimilation from the day employees were hired, and to cultivate employee career development throughout their lifetime of service at the organization.

Once they accepted their positions, new hires were provided access to the company's web portal where they were welcomed to the company; introduced to the organization's culture, history, and structure; and given HR paperwork to review. A new-hire toolkit was also sent to the hiring manager and HR staff to help them prepare for a new employee's first six months of onboarding through administrative and development tasks.

A peer sponsor program was developed in conjunction with the onboarding initiative. Employees seeking development opportunities were selected and matched to new hires as mentors. All new hires, as well as those promoted internally, interns, and co-op students, completed the onboarding program—even senior-level executives.

In addition to the web-based and peer sponsor components, the program was comprised of half-day

workshops conducted quarterly. The classroom-style sessions provided new hires with information about their roles within the global organization. Participants completed an innovation exercise, discussing how the company could improve its processes and better serve the community. The workshops also focused on mobility and career development within the organization, educating employees about the training and development opportunities available to them, including a focus on charitable giving. Finally, new hires enjoyed quarterly "launch lunches" with their classes—a time to share information, meet the company's executives, and network.

RESULTS>>

New employees' rates of productivity increased as a result of the program. Because employees engaged in development discussions and planning within their first several months on the job, retention also increased. Additionally, the toolkits activated the performance management process on employees' day of hire.



LESSON LEARNED:

Onboarding is a talent management initiative. As such, it should be housed within the talent management function and treated as a long-term process (including preboarding, onboarding, and postboarding) to be most successful.