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## Reducing Turnover in Small Businesses through Efficient and Effective Onboarding Techniques

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Reducing Turnover In Small Businesses Through  
Efficient And Effective Onboarding Techniques

By

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**Abstract:**

Employee turnover is a costly and common issue in the modern US workforce. As American worker engagement remains stagnant, employers must look at ways to ensure maximum employee retention. Onboarding is a universal process that all employees undergo when joining a business, as well as an effective way to manage turnover and ensure that an employee remains longer at the company. There has been a significant amount of academic attention on onboarding in large organizations, but this literature lacks investigations into how onboarding may differ in the context of a small business. Using a literature review and an analysis of current business practices, this paper serves as a resource for small businesses looking to better understand the costs and benefits of various onboarding strategies so they can develop an optimal onboarding strategy for themselves.

## I. Introduction

This paper will focus on the onboarding process, as a means to provide depth rather than just a comprehensive review of all business practices for small businesses. Onboarding is the process by which an organization integrates a new employee into the organization. Onboarding is crucial as it represents the real opportunity to engage new employees. Some research suggests that employees get roughly 90 days to prove themselves in a new job (Bauer, 2010). On the other hand, research also suggests the average company loses 1 in 6 of their new hires every month for the first three months in which they are in the position (Maurer, 2015). The turnover process is not just a capacity strain on management, but it can be disruptive to work environments as well. From a financial aspect, turnover can have disastrous impacts on a business as well.

According to a study by the Center for American Progress, the cost of losing a single employee earning \$30,000 or less per year is around 16.1% of their annual salary. These percentages increase as earnings rise up to \$75,000 (Boushey & Glynn, n.d.). These costs can be debilitating for a small company struggling to get by, which is why focusing on methods of retention as early in the employment process is critical. According to a 2017 Gallup survey, 51% of US employees were actively looking or watching for a new job (Gallup Inc, n.d.). To emphasize this point, Gallup also pointed out that engagement in the American workforce has remained stagnant for years, despite any efforts to the contrary (Gallup Inc, n.d.). Clearly, as prevalent as disengagement and dissatisfaction are in the American workforce, steps must be taken to ensure that the processes for giving employees a healthy start are stronger than ever.

One could argue that the staffing and selection process is even more important in determining the success of new employee (or candidate for a position). Indeed, the investment made by a small business to even get to the point of onboarding an employee is substantial - paying to spread awareness about their need, time to review applications and administer interviews, and costs associated with drug and background checks. All of these costs add up to a process that is not only time and capital consuming, but highly influenced by personal biases. I will instead be focusing on the process that takes place after the employee has been hired.

Therefore, the onboarding process provides a fascinating way in which to look at best practices for small businesses to exercise. Additionally, it is a universal process that happens to all new hires, making it a great opportunity for analysis. For the purposes of this analysis, I will be looking at existing research, and drawing connections between studies and practices in order to create an onboarding resource for small businesses to utilize.

Between a company and employee trying to assess fit, there is a huge amount of responsibility placed on both parties to put their best foot forward in this process. The compatibility between a person and their organization, team, and supervisors is just as relevant as their compatibility with their vocation (Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman, & Johnson, 2005). For an individual, that may mean reflecting the values of the company, being receptive to the information they receive, and modeling their behavior after the information they receive. But for a company, that means placing a large amount of energy into having standardized and high quality processes which facilitate successful

onboarding. With both parties looking to evaluate the situation and decide whether to stay or remain, a small business cannot afford the higher end of these turnover levels.

The structure of this paper will include a literature analysis of existing literature on successful onboarding, an investigation of onboarding strategies, and an assessment of small business specific strategies adapted from academic tools for onboarding available to all businesses. There exists a gap in the current onboarding research when it comes to investigating small businesses, so I will be looking at the research for larger companies, and then narrowing it down based on cost, management/human resources bandwidth, and the frequency with which it will be utilized to better reflect the realities of a small business environment.

A recognition should also be given to the different practices that are appropriate for onboarding different types of employees. In this case, the focus will be on practices appropriate for onboarding a front line worker. Additionally, for the purpose of this paper, small businesses will refer to any businesses with between 2-15 employees. Although many companies in which managerial bandwidth and human capital investments are in short supply might find the conclusions and analyses of interest, the definition of small business for this paper will be more narrow. This definition is far more narrow relative to the US Small Business Association's definition of a small business, which varies by industry and can reach up to over 1000 employees (USSBA, 2017). However, there are major differences in the resources and organizational processes for a company of 15 and a company of 1000 - which for certain industries still qualifies as a small business under the USSBA.

A great amount of research has been done around reducing turnover within organizations both public and private. With onboarding being so critical to the determination by both employers and employees whether a partnership is going to be worthwhile, the function has gotten a fair amount of attention. But a gap in the literature exists for tools which pull together resources and literature around practices that are accessible to small businesses. The lack of research into cutting edge onboarding practices specifically adopted for small businesses is not surprising given the necessarily reactive nature of small businesses. Small businesses, not being able to rely on market share dominance, must be reactive to environmental changes rather than proactive about seeking out lengthy academic processes to investigate the problems they are facing. Large corporations also have more money to fund private research - with some academic institutions allowing corporations to “sponsor” graduate students, for which they receive research around their primary interests in exchange for tens of thousands of dollars (McCluskey, 2017). This helps move academic research into the hands of larger corporations and away from independent small businesses.

## **II. What literature suggests for large companies**

With this in mind, people-centered management has become an intense area of analysis for organizational psychologists and business academics. People-centered management focuses on the policies and practices of organizational management that help to promote the kind of behavior employers want by addressing the needs of the people within the organization.

When we discuss onboarding as an important step in the employment and management process, one of the goals is to support “people centered management”, which emphasizes taking more personal and individualized approaches to employee success. One of the foundational sources for people-centered management is Jeffrey Pfeffer, who together with John Veiga wrote a foundational piece in 1999 which detailed the correlation between greater profits and public valuation and the way employers treat their employees. The article identifies 7 practices of successful organizations: employment security, selective hiring, self managed teams and decentralization as basic elements of organizational design, comparatively high compensation contingent on organizational performance, extensive training, reduction of status differences, and sharing information. It also identifies some of the pressures and barriers that can prevent managers from following these practices (Pfeffer & Veiga, 1999).

What is interesting about this research is that it does not include references to the onboarding process. While some onboarding functions are included in training, it is crucial to make a distinction between training and onboarding. Onboarding is crucial to the establishment of longterm commitments to a business. If people-centered management is truly meant to provide individualized supports for employees, there needs to be greater analysis made toward the foundation of that relationship, which is forged in the onboarding process. If Pfeiffer and Veiga were thinking about retention strategies and ways to create a stronger bond with employees right off the bat, they would place more emphasis on high impact onboarding processes.



Dr. Talya Bauer, an authority on onboarding, created what she refers to as the “Four C’s” of onboarding: Compliance, Clarification, Culture, and Connection. The four categories can be seen with great explanation in *Table 1*. These four areas make up what Bauer, and to that extent many in the HR field, consider a holistic onboarding process. She also posits that there are several levels of onboarding, which represent the degree to which an organization leverages these four concepts in their onboarding process. For those organizations who properly leverage all strategies, they exhibit a proactive strategy. Those who do not fully leverage culture and connection, a high potential onboarding strategy can be expected, and those who utilize just compliance, some clarification, and little to no culture or connection have an onboarding process that can best be described as passive, since it only attempts to cover the legal necessities and not set the employee up for relative success. This concept is widely used as an onboarding tool in educational and professional settings (SHRM 2015; Weisberg, 2017).

Bauer makes a point of differentiating between formal and informal onboarding processes, which are the way an employee learns relatively on their own details about their job, and a written guide for helping an employee transition into their new position, respectively. Research suggests that only 32% of companies have formal onboarding processes, despite 54% of those organizations experiencing greater productivity and 50% see greater retention of new hires (Guest Contributor, 2016). While it might seem that informal onboarding processes might be easier and lower cost method, the fact remains that a good employee handbook can be worth the time and resources invested into it. This will be discussed later at greater length.

When Bauer focuses on “clarification”, she mentions the importance of stating expectations during the onboarding process. This is an extremely important focal point - bringing on a new individual, especially on a smaller team, can be exciting and be seen as a fun “honeymoon” type period for the employee and the employer. It is important, however, to make goals a main point during the onboarding process. While someone who is new to managing people might think that focusing on goals during the onboarding process would be onerous for the employee and would bring a sharp end to the honeymoon period, research has proven quite the opposite (A. Locke & Latham, 1991). A good manager should resist this type of intuition. Research done in the public sector showed that when organizational and individual goals (including the targets, timelines, and assessment methods) were clarified early, employees perceived greater importance around their job, had an easier time reaching those goals, and ultimately had lower turnover rates (Jung, 2014).

Research has also shown that a majority of employees prefer a review of company policies within their first week, but companies who send these materials early and engage in a pre-onboarding process have been known to retain up to 81% of their new hires in the first year (Guest Contributor, 2016). By starting this process earlier, an employer can demonstrate their excitement for the new employee to be joining the team, as well as potentially avoiding some time that might need to be spent answering policy questions in the office. This is sometimes referred to as “anticipatory socialization”, and eases the transition for an outsider into a team (Oxford Reference, n.d.). It should be noted, however, that these materials should be offered to the new hire as a resource they can *choose* to peruse, but that you will go over the policies and

answer any questions after they start. Not doing so, and asking employees to do work of any kind (including reviewing policies or filling out new hire paperwork) could constitute work without pay - an issue even if the actions *weren't* taking place before the I-9 verification process (US Department of Labor, n.d.).

Plenty of research exists on why companies *should* invest in the time and energy to create policies. Far less research, however, has been done on why business *don't* make these investments. With a lack of formalized research on the topic, we can assume that these policies come at the expense of finances, managerial bandwidth, and plausible deniability in a legal defense. After all, a company can no longer plead ignorance on an illegal action if they have a policy in place that stipulates a legally compliant process. There is also a difference in expectations that are placed on businesses depending on their size. Larger companies with more employees are often naturally expected to have more formalized policies to deal with the stricter regulations they face.

When looking for criteria against which to evaluate the strategies, it should be noted that all of the recognized challenges to small businesses can either come down to the amount of time and energy that owners can give, and the amount of capital they can access (USSBA, n.d.). Therefore, cost and managerial bandwidth become two obvious metrics. The third metric, "frequency of use / renewal rate" allows owners to gauge for themselves whether they want something that will represent a singular investment, or whether the strategy will pay non-economic dividends over time.

When it comes down to administering these onboarding activities, more research is being done into the value of online learning tools. Videos that show people

demonstrating how to do something have been found to be a powerful way to educate on various topics. Research has shown that 2-3 minute informational videos can be a very effective way to convey information (Schneider, Weinmann, Roth, Knop, & Vorderer, 2016). Disseminated over the internet, it might be possible for small businesses of various kinds to seek out appropriate videos and pass them along to employees to absorb during the onboarding process, therefore allowing them to skip having to pay for them themselves.

Dr. Bauer notes that cost inhibitors may exist to prevent small and medium sized organizations from implementing some of her onboarding proposals (Bauer, 2010, p. 15). However, what is not recognized is that there are also costs associated with establishing foundations for the “4 C’s” and then carrying them out. These costs can come in the form of legal consulting, research, compilation of documents, etc. Together, the costs can place significant strain on a small business attempting to gain footing in their market. However, these should be weighed against the costs of losing valued employees and the costs of replacing those employees.

In addition to the financial costs of delivering a successful onboarding process to new employees, small businesses are often faced with logistical issues as well. Despite all the important work that needs to be accomplished in a quality onboarding process, there is a negative impact associated with carrying an onboarding process too long into the employee’s tenure. Around 15% of employers only offer one day of onboarding, which requires a highly efficient and well planned schedule (Guest Contributor, 2016). To accomplish this, time must be set aside to create a somewhat standardized, efficient process for delivering an onboarding process efficiently. This

planning can take a substantial investment of time, and require careful consideration of process (Panapto, 2017). However, the benefits of looking organized, professional, and legitimate on the first day will have lasting impacts on the first impression an employee has at their new job. Together, the dangers of having an excessively long or an inadequately short onboarding process present risks to a business and their potential for successfully establishing a strong foundation with new employees.

This is not to say that all onboarding activities can be (or should be) accomplished in a single day. Around 2% of companies extend their formal onboarding for a full year when you include training videos and mentorship programs which emphasize the Four C's (SHRM, 2015). The previously mentioned online learning videos and tools are great examples of how to expand the onboarding process over time for nonessential activities that cannot be done in person, and encourage learning on the job with these resources that can be reused over and over at little to no cost.

### **III. Onboarding Strategies**

Small businesses can take a variety of approaches to solving onboarding problems differently than their larger counterparts. Internal, employee policies are not something that will always be at the top of the list for an entrepreneur or business owner. But the fact is that creating, updating, and conveying company policies is a critical component to establishing culture and leading the way for new employees. A good employee handbook can be created for any business, regardless of its size, employee rules, or industry.

A good handbook will explain what employees can expect from their organization, what they are and are not expected to do as a general employee, a

commitment from the organization regarding complaint processes and employee relations, brief company history and community or industry position, and reasons why they should be excited to work there. These can be merged together, taken one by one, or anything in between (DeMaria, 2018). What is important is that both managers and employees see their employee handbook as a valued resource that can be returned to for reliable information and guidance.

When creating an employee handbook, some businesses have tried to create aesthetic changes that would make the book more of a pleasure and less of a task to be referenced. By titling it a “Team Guide”, or “The Way Things Work”, employers can attempt to bring in some more lightheartedness to their internal policies (Christensen, 2015). Christensen also notes the importance of making the document physically attractive by using color, visually appealing layouts, or other unique and creative solutions.

Metal Toad, a software company based in Portland, Oregon, took this strategy a step further when they developed “Toad Lore”, a “Lord of the Rings” inspired “small, leather bound journal” which has been positively supported by management and supposedly well received by their employees. The employee handbook style document includes fantasy illustrations that emphasize the company culture and creativity, while laying down serious expectations for new and current employees (Winner, n.d.). An important emphasis from their former COO Tim Winner was that the rollout of the handbook was just as important as the handbook itself. He emphasized that making a bold statement about the importance of the policy and the work that had gone into it was just as important as the employees associating the document with a celebration of

a newly created employee resource (Winner, 2017). Part of what makes a good employee handbook that is engaging for employees to read and consult is creating company policies that reflect the values of the company (Christensen, 2015). By adding these types of policies, a company can support culture and compliance simultaneously while increasing engagement from their employees.

These types of investments in employee resources create value for the company by helping ensure adherence to company policies and minimizing liabilities. By making strategic investments, all four of the “4 C’s” can be maximized in order to achieve a proactive onboarding process even in small businesses that face budgetary and bandwidth constraints. However, small businesses are not exclusively limited by their size. Their attributes also give them unique capabilities that larger companies would not be able to pursue. These can be advantageous when crafting a strategic onboarding process that meets the needs of a specific business.

#### **IV. What unique opportunities do small businesses have to increase retention?**

While large businesses see relative advantages in the way of capital and more staff, small businesses also see advantages in the form of fewer bureaucratic obstacles and a greater ability to flexibly meet the changing needs of their stakeholders. To this end, small businesses can easily be caught by the double-edged sword of informal policies. While these policies take time, money, and careful consideration to formulate, and can also lead to mechanistic structures not supportive of organic small businesses, they also are a great way to set cultural and procedural norms. They can also make smaller numbers of higher quality investments into specific components of the onboarding process. Whether it is presenting company-branded gear to new

employees to help them feel valued and included, options with which to decorate their workspace, or small token items that relate to the companies values or mission, small businesses can make this smaller investments without having to worry about the aggregate costs of doing so company-wide.

As a whole, small businesses have different legal rules applied to them than their larger counterparts. For instance, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) only applies to businesses over 15 people (SHRM, 2014). This trend is followed through multiple laws, wherein different standards are applied to companies based on their sizes. While many of these laws may not directly impact the onboarding process and the laws that apply therein, there is still the need to educate employees on the laws that do apply and those that do not. Making sure that employees understand laws and regulations that do and do not apply helps establish legal compliance, a culture of legal transparency, and clarification about the duties and expectations for the position - allowing you to focus on three of the four C's at one time.

It is important for employees to understand that a company is operating with a knowledge and acknowledgement of laws and regulations that do and do not apply to their operations. Not making this distinction for a new employee could potentially imply that the company is ignorant about regulations and chooses to be so rather than confront them and change their behaviors. This not only challenges a culture that a company might be wanting to establish, but also the clarification of whether or not they are supposed to raise legal issues, and the obvious compliance factor of whether or not they are expected to raise legal issues the company may be creating.



One of the most obvious advantages of a small business is the ability to connect with people more regularly as members of a small team. This constant interaction provides opportunities for mentorship. These socialization practices can be long term and serve as a form of onboarding that not only influences the amount of time someone will stay in a position, but the success they will have at that job as well (Chao, O'Leary-Kelly, Wolf, Klein, & Gardner, 1994). These socialization practices can take the form of more formal mentorships, in which meetings take place between the new employee and a more senior employee to go over the junior's performance and questions, or more informal in which there is just someone who is more experienced paying closer attention than normal to the behavior of the new employees.

In a larger company, organizing these types of mentorship programs as a part of the onboarding process would involve coordinating more people, and be more difficult as roles get more specialized and discreet within a larger organization. For smaller organizations, who might work in more cooperative environments, and therefore have more opportunities for shorter more frequent coaching opportunities throughout the day, opportunities can exist to make mentoring more of a priority. In these cases, mentorships can also present a lower cost because the mentors are already on staff within the organization.

Even if a small business decides not to engage in a mentorship program, research has clearly pointed to the importance of supervisor and employee relationship, and the influence they have over turnover intent. Research suggests that the greater prepared supervisors are to deal with their employees by having diversity and conflict resolution trainings can help keep new hires engaged even from the

beginning of the onboarding process as these traits become visible to employees (Ghosh, Reio, & Bang, 2013).

## **V. Assessing Each Strategy for Small Businesses**

It goes without saying, keeping an attitude consistent with the culture of the organization is important during the onboarding process. For most businesses, this might include being welcoming, responsive, helpful and positive. However, going back to the research of Pfeffer and Vega, the emphasis on people-centered management can be an important tool when demonstrating that the needs of the individual employee must be met and addressed during the onboarding process, and that they must *feel* as if that is the case. If the goal is to have an employee feel and act a certain way based on those feelings, then the only true criteria against which options can be evaluated are the feelings of the employees.

In *Table 2* the aforementioned strategies are outlined and sorted by the “C” category or categories which most closely apply. The idea is that cost and required bandwidth should be balanced against the frequency of use. If they do not, then the practicality of the solution must receive a closer investigation for the specific company considering them. Assessments of the results for each metric and strategy are made relative to the other strategies. All five of the strategies have relative results for cost, required management / human resources bandwidth, and frequency of use.

### *Employee Handbook*

Although an employee handbook is essential, it takes a lot of work to make a quality document. While compiling documents that are available online may not take a lot of effort, but doing a great job with this type of document takes more effort. Online

resources provide good information for how to go about creating a robust employee handbook, but one thing that is for certain is the process is not to be taken lightly or copied directly from another company (Smith & Harris, 2014). To go further and make it aesthetically pleasing and properly rolled-out takes even more work, which can be draining for staff and budgets. However, some companies have found great success by investing time and resources into creating policies that are easy to understand, reflective of company values, comprehensive, and fun to consult. For example, unless a merger or major change takes place at the business, most of the expenses are non-recurring. Occasional updates can be made to the handbook, along with regular improvements, without having to go through the process over again. This gives it a higher long term return on investment compared to some of the recurring investment alternatives.

### *Mentorship*

Mentorship can often be included in people-centered management, as an attempt to familiarize people with their coworkers and socialize them in a way that also continually trains them for their position. Having one-on-one mentorships for employees can not only increase their cultural connection, but influence retention as well (Stewart & Harrison, 2016). While the cost is relatively low, since it mostly involves paying people for time not directly spend doing their normal activities, it does require mentors to have enough time that they can spend working with mentees on the issues in question. However, the benefit of this strategy is that it can continue in perpetuity, and continue to deliver results as the bond becomes stronger and people become more comfortable with each other.

### *Online Training Videos*

Online training videos are similar to employee handbooks in that they can be created for an upfront cost and then updated or redone as time goes on to continue to look relevant. However, just like with the employee handbook, getting creative with designs and layouts can help support timeless designs that need fewer aesthetic refreshes to look nice. Videos can be done on very low budgets - especially today, with high quality video on cell phones. Simple instructional videos can be extremely helpful, and comfortable to access for employees familiar with YouTube and other video sharing sites. As long as processes stay consistent, these videos can continue to be relevant, making them extremely helpful tools that may need to be referenced more or less frequently depending on the job functions. This could be built onto via an online platform for employee networking and information sharing, especially if the team is virtually connected and not sharing a physical space.

### *Welcome Kits*

One popular strategy is the utilization of welcome kits. Although very little research exists on the effectiveness of these kits in the onboard process, they are widely used and a popular online recommendation for small businesses trying to impress new hires (Duffy, 2016). When it comes to company engagement, branding employees with gear like jackets, water bottles, hats etc can be an attempt to promote company culture with new employees. Without going overboard, this can be a moderate expense that requires very little management oversight. The frequency of use for this strategy, because it takes place only at the beginning of employment, is also

low. This can grow in cost if you have high turnover and are constantly paying to outfit people with new personal equipment.

### *Manager Workplace Diversity & Conflict Resolution Training*

Having managers trained in workplace diversity and conflict resolution can be a great way to not only demonstrate the values of the company, but to help ensure that they reinforce the values of the company culture on a daily basis. The cost can be high to pursue the strategy aggressively and proactively seek quality programs within a professional development plan that is continual. However, costs can be reduced by offering tuition reimbursement for managers who attend trainings outside of the company. This helps ensure that only individuals who really need the trainings are receiving them. While the training and development of these skills does take time for management away from their normal duties (another source of cost for this strategy), the trainings make themselves part of normal interactions once they are administered. To that end, this strategy can be used very frequently, as it should ideally permeate into all interactions that managers have with their employees.

Wrapping all of these strategies in the banner of a company's culture is crucial to having a healthy onboarding system. The culture of the organization should be evident in every facet, even those that do not explicitly deal with culture of the organization. Not doing so, and siloing culture into a discreet portion of the onboarding process, undermines the value of the company's culture and can look inauthentic to new employees.

When evaluating these strategies, the assumption is that the quality of the strategies follows best practices. In other words, using any of these strategies means

putting forth the necessary work to make it of appropriate quality. It may make sense for an organization to utilize formative and summative assessments with employees using anonymous feedback systems (Google Forms, Survey Monkey, etc) to give the company specific information that relates to their onboarding practices. Even verbal conversations during the first few months as onboarding practices continue informally and formally can help guide current and future onboarding practices. There are great online resources on how to conduct these types of evaluations using probing questions to employees (Falcone, 2018; Maurer, 2018).

## **VI. Conclusion**

A great onboarding process allows a business to embed someone successfully into an organization. It allows them to cement their culture, strategies, and operations within their employees base and increase retention as a result of a more engaged transition period for both the employee and the company. These practices are scalable and has a positive impact on the company relative to losing the employee and having to search for a replacement.

The aforementioned strategies present a range of options that are available to small businesses based on their needs and circumstances. By properly leveraging these strategies, a small business can create an ideal onboarding system. The aforementioned initiatives do also not represent a comprehensive list of onboarding strategies. However, they do represent a cross-section of initiatives that deal with all four C's of the onboarding process. It is up to each business to determine their specific needs and the circumstances surrounding their options, the options should be considered as a spectrum and a modular proposal. That is to say, options can be

strengthened, weakened, included, or excluded depending on the strategy that a manager or management team is willing to pursue. This allows a business to tailor an onboarding plan that covers all four of the C's for the highest return on investment.

While this paper evaluates practices based on cost, managerial bandwidth, and frequency of use, data is not available to make authoritative statements about the efficacy of these initiatives. Because the wide range of previously mentioned variables would influence respondents, an environment would need to be consistent enough to do true data analysis. Not only do these strategies need to be evaluated at the level of a small business, but the criteria that drive the decision making process for small businesses need to be evaluated further to see how they relevant they are, and how - if at all - these preferred criteria change over time.

The reality is that while the three criteria used above might be some of the most applicable for determining the success of these strategies, they do not measure what is the ultimate measure of whether or not an onboarding process is successful - the reception by the employees themselves. If an onboarding process is not well received by the employees in question, those feelings are exactly what determine whether or not they are likely to stay at the company. Therefore, without being able to measure those metrics, it is difficult to make any judgements about the true effectiveness of onboarding practices. A great example of a strategy that would be more appropriately accompanied by this type of data would be company gear, which might vary wildly in reception based on the personality of the employee in question. Establishing the activities, length of time, and process for onboarding are essential to achieving a

proactive onboarding process that will retain employees longer and improve productivity.

The Four C's present an interesting lens through which to view literature applicable to onboarding within small businesses. If the goal of this paper is to give employers the resources to administer effective and efficient onboarding processes, then it should also be emphasized that while no universal panacea exists for the onboarding process, using qualitative and quantitative analysis can be useful for all firms to decide what is best for their own company. All businesses should approach onboarding with the expectation that their employees will get a quality deliverable that will continually be improved upon. All small businesses should approach both onboarding and their evaluation of onboarding techniques with specific goals and expectations for their company and employees. Founded on their business strategy and culture, effectiveness should constantly be evaluated through methods appropriate and available to that specific business.





## Tables

| The Four C's of Onboarding   |   |
|--|---|
| <p><b>Compliance</b></p> <p>Teaching employees basic legal and policy-related rules and regulations. The lowest level of the Four C's.</p> | <p><b>Connection</b></p> <p>Vital interpersonal relationships and information networks that new employees must establish.</p> |
| <p><b>Culture</b></p> <p>Providing employees with a sense of organizational norms (formal and informal).</p>                               | <p><b>Clarification</b></p> <p>Ensuring that employees understand their new jobs and all related expectations.</p>            |

Table 1 - These are the Four C's of onboarding as defined by Dr. Talya Bauer.

| Evaluation of Onboarding Strategies in the Context of a Small Business                 |  |        |                            |                               |
|--|--|--------|----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Strategy   | 4 C's  | Cost   | Required Mgmt/HR Bandwidth | Frequency of Use/Renewal Rate |
| Well written formalized policies in an appealing employee handbook with a good rollout | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Compliance<br><input type="checkbox"/> Culture<br><input type="checkbox"/> Connection<br><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Clarification | High   | High                       | Medium                        |
| Mentorship   | <input type="checkbox"/> Compliance<br><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Culture<br><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Connection<br><input type="checkbox"/> Clarification | Low    | Medium                     | High                          |
| Online videos  | <input type="checkbox"/> Compliance<br><input type="checkbox"/> Culture<br><input type="checkbox"/> Connection<br><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Clarification            | Medium | Medium                     | (depends on circumstances)    |
| Welcome Kits   | <input type="checkbox"/> Compliance<br><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Culture<br><input type="checkbox"/> Connection<br><input type="checkbox"/> Clarification            | Medium | Low                        | Low                           |
| Managers trained in workplace diversity and conflict resolution                        | <input type="checkbox"/> Compliance<br><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Culture<br><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Connection<br><input type="checkbox"/> Clarification | Medium | Medium                     | High                          |

Table 2 - The onboarding strategies in question as measured by the specified metrics

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