Onboarding with an Outward Mindset: Creating a Culture So Good Your Employees Don't Want to Leave

A company's culture is characterized by how people interact with one another and work together. But do we remember to check in with each other in the hustle and bustle of our day-to-day responsibilities?

For a new employee, the onboarding process sets the tone for what the company's culture is truly like. Onboarding can include many things: paperwork, interviews, training, policy, procedures, and more. However, if our onboarding process only consists of tasks that need to be completed — are we making the right first impression?

What a Typical Onboarding Process Entails

When a new employee is going through their onboarding process, they are given an overview of the company and their job responsibilities. A typical onboarding may look like getting a tour of the building, receiving all the IT equipment, going

over the employee handbook with HR, and meeting with the team members.

Once the standard onboarding boxes have been checked off and the bustle of adjusting to a new role dies down, everything returns to day-to-day normalcy. Employees and teams settle back into their roles and refocus on their goals and responsibilities. Often, swept up in the rhythm of our work, we—the employees, teammates, managers, and leaders—end up becoming hyper-focused on our responsibilities, seldom stopping to think about how our work might be affecting others. As a result, this inward mindset causes challenges for the organization as a whole.

Fundamental Flaw

There is a fundamental flaw in the way we set people up in their work. A start like completing the series of tasks in their onboarding process gets them focused on being accountable just for what they do and can achieve. It's vital to achieve results in our roles, but if we are not aware of how our work impacts those around us, we won't know the challenges we might be causing for others. And yet, we often unknowingly invite our new hires to approach their work this way.

For example, let's say someone in my role forgets to list a billing address for an order. This will cause a headache for the team member working in finance since they'll have to spend time searching for it, and if they get it wrong, they will have to recall invoices. What we think is a slight mistake can open a Pandora's box of problems for our colleagues. When we make the decision to only worry about our responsibilities, we become heedless of how our work might be impacting others.

Onboarding an Effective Way

As it's important to know how someone in your role positively or negatively impacts another's ability to accomplish their objectives, it's essential to meet with them and learn from them.

As part of their onboarding process, invite new hires to learn about their colleague's needs, challenges, objectives, and how their jobs intersect. Then, have the new hires reflect on how they should be doing their job differently because of what they have learned from their team members. Making this a standard practice would create and sustain a positive culture since it would encourage employees to feel seen, heard, and understood. In fact, it's an exercise we should all continually take part in.

"If we don't measure the impact of our efforts on the objectives of those we are serving, we will remain blind to important ways we need to adjust and will end up not serving others well." — The Arbinger Institute, The Outward Mindset: Seeing Beyond Ourselves