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# MODERNIZING TEAM LEVEL ONBOARDING PROCESS OF A MULTI INDUSTRY COMPANY

case company: Company X



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## MODERNIZING TEAM LEVEL ONBOARDING PROCESS OF A MULTI INDUSTRY COMPANY

case company: Company X

This thesis examines the company's current onboarding model in a specific team. Based on the results of the thesis the author provided valuable information to company X on how to develop the current onboarding model towards better efficiency. Also, the aim was to find out what are the main elements of a successful onboarding program, the pitfalls of the current model and to evaluate the existing model while keeping in mind new employee engagement in the case company. The research of the thesis was carried out for the current employees of the company with anonymous online group interviews. The aim of the group interviews was to evaluate the current onboarding of the company and to get different perspectives on what should be changed in it. The author evaluates the literature for a suitable approach to problem areas. The current onboarding model was examined using the feedback and findings from the group interviews. In conclusion, the author explored how the new employees can be engaged in the company through onboarding, what are the important tools for it and what are the most suitable onboarding methods in the future.

Keywords:

onboarding, team-specific onboarding, new employee, orientation program, group interview

Opinnäytetyö (AMK) | Tiivistelmä

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## MONIALAYRITYKSEN TIIMITASON PEREHDYTYKSEN MODERNISOINTI

Yritys: Yritys X

Opinnäytetyössä tarkastellaan yrityksen nykyistä perehdytysmallia tiimikohtaisesti. Opinnäytetyön tulosten perusteella tutkija antaa arvokasta tietoa yritykselle siitä, kuinka kehittää nykyistä perehdyttämismallia tehokkaammaksi. Tavoitteena oli myös selvittää, mitkä ovat onnistuneen perehdyttämishojelman pääelementit, mitkä ovat nykyisen perehdytysmallin sudenkuoppia, arvioida jo olemassa olevaa mallia sekä pohtia kuinka uusia työntekijöitä sitoututetaan yritykseen. Opinnäytetyön tutkimus tehtiin yrityksen nykyisille työntekijöille anonyymeillä ryhmäverkkohaastatteluilla.

Ryhmähaastattelun tavoitteena oli arvioida nykyistä perehdytysmallia ja saada erilaisia näkökulmia siihen, miten perehdytysmallia tulisi muuttaa. Kirjoittaja arvioi opinnäytetyössä käytetyn kirjallisuuden kautta sopivaa lähestymistapaa ongelma-alueisiin. Nykyistä perehdyttämismallia tarkasteltiin ryhmähaastatteluista saatujen tulosten ja havaintojen avulla. Johtopäätöksenä kirjoittaja selvitti, kuinka uusia työntekijöitä voidaan sitouttaa yritykseen perehdytyksen kautta, mitkä ovat perehdytykselle tärkeitä työkaluja ja mitkä ovat parhaiten soveltuvia perehdytysmenetelmiä tulevaisuudessa.

Asiasanat:

perehdytys, tiimikohtainen perehdytys, uusi työntekijä, perehdytysohjelma, ryhmähaastattelu

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## List of abbreviations

IT Information Technology

HR Human Resources

# 1 INTRODUCTION

This thesis addressed various possible development areas, such as buddy program related to onboarding and potential pitfalls during the current onboard process. For this thesis project, the author noticed that the best approach was to consider a smaller problem, team-wide onboarding which could act as a generic model for the other teams. This generic model could be then modified and retailed to fit the needs of different teams, thus making the complicated process more straightforward and enjoyable for all parties. This team-wide onboarding process can be seen as a pilot study for the company X regarding onboarding.

## 1.1 Motivation

The objective for this thesis developed along with the author's studies, and with the support of the case company. The company X has encouraged the author to write about an effective onboarding process and given the author the freedom to research and develop methodologies that could provide new insights and improvements. Improving the employee satisfaction through well-structured onboarding is a continuous company goal.

According to Bauer and Erdogan (2011) onboarding is a process where a new employee transitions from an outsider to an insider. The new employee learns the necessary knowledge, skills and behaviours that help them succeed in their new organisation.

The author saw many new opportunities for the onboarding plan in case company's business unit and possibilities to refine the current plan. Based on authors experience, it can be said that there are a wide variety of perspectives and methods to familiarize oneself with. The work materials and methods may be outdated in the onboarding and new employees will receive various instructions from experienced employees. The guidelines differ, and the expertise of many systems is challenging for the new employee.

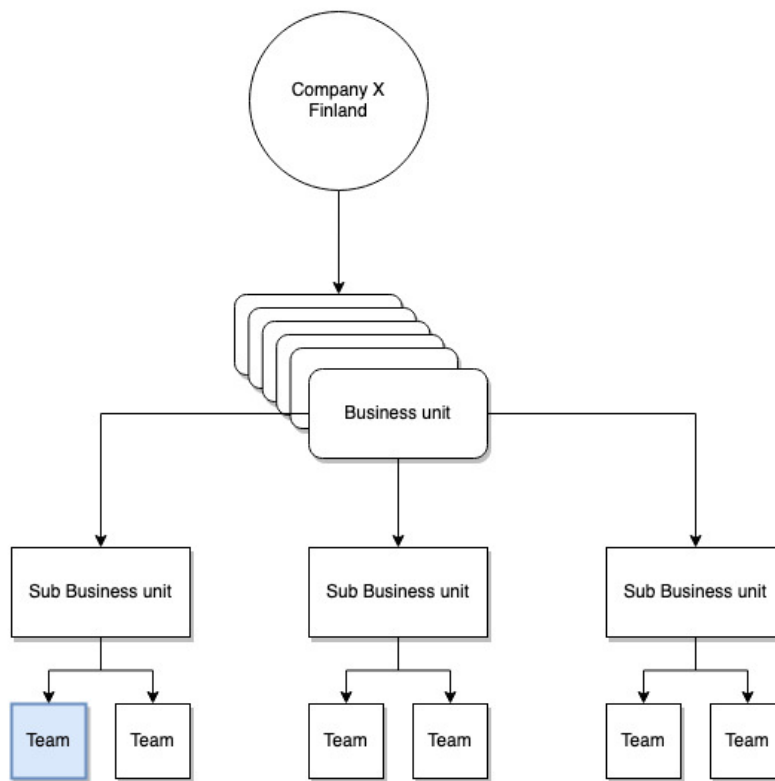
The author has always been interested in the new employee onboarding process. The author has witnessed many onboarding processes in various disciplines such as debt collection, customer service and IT. The author noticed pitfalls and successes in onboarding. This has affected the author's decision to write this thesis about effective onboarding. The author sees this kind of thesis being interesting, eye-opening helpful for the employer and that it could bring new insights to the reader.

The research questions are based on the shortcomings and possible improvements that the author has witnessed and experienced during the past year in the case company.

## 1.2 Company introduction

The company X operates in IT- and business consulting services. The company X has operation in hundreds of locations across the globe, and delivers end-to-end services and solutions, including strategic IT- and business consulting, intellectual property, systems integration, and managed IT- and business process services (Company X).

In Finland, the company X has experts around the country and is structured into six major business units. The major business units are further split into smaller business units which specialize in certain technologies or customer segments. Finally, there are teams who work with even more specific tasks and technologies. As stated earlier, this thesis focuses on team level onboarding which is illustrated in Picture 1.



*Picture 1. Organizational hierarchy of company X (Maula, 2022).*

As an example, there might be a business unit that focuses on cloud and new technologies. The sub business unit can have separate teams which can focus on public, private or hybrid cloud, and these teams further specialize in the major cloud providers like Microsoft Azure, Google Cloud Platform or Amazon Web Services. This thesis focuses on a team under specific sub business unit.

It is logical to assume that onboarding for a hierarchy of this scale is hard to keep up to date, and new ideas can be hard get green lighted in a big organization. Company X has a vast number of guides and materials that are aimed to help a new employee understand the inner workings of a multinational company with a complex structure and thousands of employees. The company has tried to generalize their onboarding, but as stated above there are also very specialized teams that need additional onboarding on top of the general one.

In this thesis the author focuses on one of these specialized teams with eight employees located across Finland. Five employees work in Turku, three in Lahti



and one in Helsinki. Two group interviews were conducted for this team and was aimed to reflect the everyday work and tasks of this specific team.

### 1.3 Current onboarding in the case company

The case company has a general level onboarding task-list that is used, but does not cover all the team-specific onboarding methods. In a typical situation, there is a buddy assigned for a new employee when they join the company. Buddy's mission is to help the new employee get started and be there to listen and answer the employees' questions. Buddy's tasks can differ between teams, but generally every buddy is responsible for making the new employee feel welcome and prepare them for their day-to-day work.

The company X has many ways to onboard a new employee. The onboarding depends on the team, the tasks, and the proficiency of the new employee. When a new employee joins the company, this general level onboarding task-list is used which can help the new employee start the onboarding. The list includes among other things, a monthly conversation with the manager, and mandatory training. Including these matters, the author was able to consult the onboarding process in the company X.

In this specific team, the onboarding has been different for everyone. Four employees came into the company through acquisitions years ago when there were no similar onboarding models. Currently, the company level onboarding task lists are used and there should be an official buddy according to current company's policy (Company X, 2022). One in seven has had an official buddy in this specific team.

Company-level onboarding in first days includes:

- Onboarding task-list check-up with the manager.
- Mandatory learning material and company introductions.
- Introduction with the team and the possible buddy.
- Office introduction.

- Getting the work equipment ready for use.

#### 1.4 Research questions and objectives

The thesis aims to address the following questions in collaboration with case company X:

- 1) What is included in effective onboarding?
- 2) What is the state of the onboarding process at the case company? How effective is it currently?
- 3) How to improve the efficiency of the current onboarding plan?

The purpose of this thesis is to improve company X's current onboarding program for the new employee in the company, which could bring the company value and fresh perspectives to the team specific onboarding process. This could be used as a pilot project for the company.

The objective of this research is to discover the biggest pitfalls in the current process and to get a base for the interviews, after which a different approach will be introduced. This different approach will follow some good practices from the literature and will be fitted into the case team needs.

Thesis begins with a literature review about onboarding and then discusses the roles and responsibilities between a buddy and the new employee. The chapter 3 explain how the empirical data was collected and the methodology. Chapter 4 covers data analysis that has been used in conducting this thesis. In the end of the thesis, the research findings and analysis are discussed, and the results presented.

## 2 OBJECTIVES OF ONBOARDING

Pina-Ramirez and Davila (2018) define onboarding as a “business driver”, which verifies that the new employees are the right fit for the company. Onboarding is a process through which organizations engage new employees to their culture and with their position. Onboarding is designed to ease the new employee’s movement through the organizational threshold within the least possible time (Pina-Ramirez & Davila, 2018). This is also directly connected to investment in resources which affects company-wide employee performance.

According to El-Shamy (2003), an onboarding process that extends a long period absorbs the energy of the new employee. Onboarding starts the moment when the new employee signs their contract. It is essential that there are pre-onboarding activities and planned actions such as orientation or onboarding training events. The purpose of effective onboarding is that the new employees become productive, valuable, and positive members of the entire organization. Carefully thought-out onboarding does not mean that employees immediately learn to work their main tasks. Higher levels of communicating and collaboration between employees and across the organization are often consequences of those initial contacts (Pina-Ramirez & Davila, 2018).

Once the orientation is over, employees are supposed to know what is expected from them and how they are doing their work. The company’s Human Resource-department usually plans the orientations, but also the manager must know how the whole orientation works, since they carry out the onboarding. Orientation plays an essential role in making new employees feel warmly welcome to the company (Mullins, 2009).

The new employee should feel welcomed with the team and know regular practices, such as logging into company software and setting up the necessary resources. In addition to this, the new employee should understand the company's practices, culture, and strategies for the present and the future (Dessler, 2016).

## 2.1 Employee satisfaction and onboarding

Grubb and Lessley (2017), explain that in approximately six months, the new employees reach a point where they start participating in the company's performance. If an employee decides to leave the company, all the work has been useless, and the company has lost time and resources.

Onboarding for large companies should be distinctive in a positive way and add its own twist. This way, they can stand out from companies in the same field (Stein et al., 2010). Many onboarding processes are unable to address new employees' needs in several areas. Lacking standardized information while managers are left to improvise their solutions to integrate the new employee. An effective onboarding program avoids duplication of efforts, saving money, time, and needless frustration for the new employee and their manager. The new employee should feel warmly welcome during the onboarding, so that the future goals can be more reachable and comfortable. Clear instructions given from the beginning bring positivity and the right expectations to the employee (Stein et al., 2010).

For an organization to be successful, managers have to construct customized paths towards employee self-fulfillment along with the company's HR-department. This path requires unique strategies, organizational capacities, and visions of the company. (Stein et al., 2010)

Onboarding is a process where the new employee gets to meet the work community, the immediate colleagues within the same team and other colleagues within a company. The new employee will get acquainted with the daily work tasks, and the related employer expectations will be covered.

Dessler (2017), lists the four steps for the manager to complete during the new employee onboarding process:

1. Welcome the employee into the company and team

2. Organize practical issues such as tools, personnel policy issues and expectations regarding work behavior
3. Introduce the company and operating environment to the employee
4. Start the socialization process by introducing the company's culture and working practices

If we mirror the case company's onboarding with Dessler's four steps, the first day starts with manager. Then meeting the team and becoming acquainted with the company better. First days were tangled with all the information and didn't include the official buddy. It was clear that new employee required to be self-sufficient and ask the team members for help. Little by little, everyday working manners were learned alongside the work.

According to Arthur (2019), well-organized onboarding reinforces the employee's decision to commit to the company. In the future, well-organized process will help keep employees at the company and help strengthen good public image for the company. If onboarding is successful, employers will create an atmosphere of respect which is the cornerstone of productivity. Well-prepared onboarding has goals as well as employee perspectives. In addition, materials should be exciting, but need to avoid a flood of excessive information.

Usually, organizational orientations fall into two categories: What an employee expect from an organization, and the organization's expectations of the employee. After orientation, there are usually five broad categories in onboarding info packages that are usually HR-department responsibility: the employee's commitment to other employees, expectations, benefits, procedures, and policies (Vonnegut & Bradt, 2017).

Organizations that stint on orientation events, shortchange the new employee, and miss the opportunity to communicate and help the employee internalize and embrace the organization's values, norms, philosophy, and culture. The new employees should understand the big picture and how they fit in it from the start (Lawson, 2018).

## 2.2 Performance management and onboarding

According to Pina-Ramirez and Davila (2018), onboarding could ensure a strong cultural fit, reducing absenteeism rates. The organization can expect that the workforce will be available to complete the daily work, without having to incur overtime costs to cover its needs on short notice, or resort to contingency employees on a long-term basis. In addition to increased costs, organizations must consider the effects of mental and physical fatigue on employees who work overtime, particularly over extended periods, and the subsequent risks of such practice. Also, a company's reputation for solid onboarding programs becomes a competitive advantage for top talent employees. Through onboarding programs, companies can demonstrate that they are willing to invest in the development of their employees. Therefore, the qualifications of the suitable candidates become more solid, which converts into a better qualified and more competitive workforce to achieve business results.

The onboarding should look like a continuation of the recruitment process. If an organization can provide a consistent, standardized, and strategic onboarding process. This will result in higher employee retention, performance, and engagement rates. It will be a significant advantage for the company and provide higher job satisfaction, lower employee stress levels, and lower turnover. It is essential to have a successful onboarding process to avoid new employees leaving their jobs within the first year (NSCA, 2017).

According to Watkins (2019), there are aspects that companies should keep in mind to have a successful onboarding of a new employee, and these are:

- **Understanding new employees' challenges:** flood of an information accrue amongst new employees during first days and manager should take these feelings into consideration. The new employee might seem to know how to work fast and that they possess sufficient knowledge. This can be the embodiment of fear, insecurity of losing one's face in which the manager must intervene. Another new employee type can be insecure or stressful about not learning fast

or efficiently enough. In this situation, there must be support and repetition in learning.

- **Excite their learning:** the new employee must learn the cultural, technical, and political company matters to cope with their first months of an onboarding process. Cultural matters involve team dynamics and company's unwritten policies. Technical matters involve mastering technical aspects and practical work. Political matters mean how decisions are made and whose support is needed the most.

- **Make them part of the team:** being part of a team is important and if this happens right away after joining the company, even better. The manager can point an employee to mentor or to be a buddy. This can help the new employee integrate with the team. Activities or lunches can be a great way of building up the team spirit.

- **Give them direction:** there are always questions in mind, such as "how should I do it?", "What do I need to do?". It is important that managers have time with a new employee to answer these questions. A buddy can help with these questions, but managers time is always motivating and gives a new employee certainty.

- **Help them get sense of an accomplishment:** it is essential for new employees to build credibility and confidence in the beginning when they join the company. There shouldn't be a feeling that someone is not performing as the company would like them to. Instructor, manager or buddy should remember to give compliments to the new employee when they succeed in their work.

- **Coach them for success:** there can be a time when a new employee feels stuck. Managers or a buddy should address this rapidly. New employee can't feel left alone or handled too gently. Manager and a buddy should have regular catchups about onboarding for example, once a week.

When deciding a buddy, it is crucial that certain characteristics are being pursued: good communication skills, work competence, interpersonal skills, professionalism, acceptable time- and organizational skills, flexibility, and patience (Lawson, 2016).

### 2.3 Regulation of onboarding

When a new employee has signed the contract with a company, the employer has several provisions of Occupational Safety and Health Act that are binding them to arrange the onboarding. This is the responsibility and duty of the employer.

Important matters in Occupational Safety Act 2002/738 are that employers shall give their employees necessary information on the risk factors and hazards of the workplace and proper teaching and guidance must be provided to the employee when starting a new position (The Centre for Occupational Safety, 2022).

Occupational safety act in Finland 2002/738, mom. 14 §:

- 1) The employee is always acquainted with work, workplace work equipment, work and production methods, as well as to safe working practices, especially before starting a new work or task, when starting a new work or task or when changing work tasks and introducing work methods;
- 2) Guidance and education given to the employee in order to prevent the inconveniences and dangers of the work, in order to avoid the inconvenience or danger to the safety or health caused by the work;
- 3) Guidance and instruction given to the employee in the event of adjustment, cleaning, maintenance and repair work, as well as in the event of disturbances and exceptional situations



- 4) The introduction and guidance given to the employee supplemented.  
(Finlex 23.8.2002/738)

## 2.4 Onboarding in practice

The ideal onboarding process provides enough information to the employee to quickly become independent and understand the operational environment. This is one of the main issues regarding the onboarding process in the case company. At the beginning of the work, when working with a small amount of information, it leaves the new employee confused. If the fundamental practices must be learned independently, it is not easy to understand the company's operational environment. In the case company, it is important that the new employees are kept up to date regarding its goals and vision. One of the challenges is that the work tasks are hectic, and there are various matters to learn. This is not effortless to train step-by-step. Several issues that affect the success, length and content of the onboarding depend on the new employee themselves. If the new employee has earlier experience from similar work tasks, it helps accelerate the process. Outdated guides and documents can decelerate the onboarding process.

To perform an effective orientation for the new employees in future, the onboarding should be planned well, and the responsibility areas should be defined clearly. There should be a mutual feeling of shared responsibility in the organization, and in an ideal situation, the whole team including the buddy participates in the onboarding process. There is also a need to plan and prioritize the instruction steps, i.e., what to teach first, how to do it and what can be postponed. New employee should be considered as an individual, as everyone learns differently.

Good communication skills play an important role for avoiding miscommunication between a new employee and a buddy. A buddy must be a professional in their work and their interpersonal skills need to be at a good

level. An unskilled buddy or a trainer should not onboard others (Solomon, 2014). Which implies that the buddy must know what their tasks are and what kind of support they need to give to the new employee.

The research results support Diane Arthur's (2019) theory that buddy programs are essential for onboarding. One-to-one relationships between employees from the same department or the same team offer encouragement and assist in everyday work. The new employee can become acclimated to the work environment, and these buddy programs are part of an effective onboarding. The new employee must have sufficient skills to provide results which ensures that work satisfaction is maintained.

Mäkeläinen (2013) writes about five steps of learning, and these can be implemented on any type of onboarding practice or onboarding program with the respect to the new employees' pace of learning. These five steps are presented below.

### **1. Preparation.**

Onboarding begins with preparing the employee on what to expect in the company. The manager and the buddy can go through the schedule together with the new employee. This way the new employee can ask if there is anything unclear. The buddy's task is to be motivating and to encourage the new employee in the beginning. They should also assess the new employee's level of knowledge and skills. This preparation part requires review of a schedule based on the employee's knowledge and expectations. This part prepares a new employee on what to expect during and onboarding period (Ahokas & Mäkeläinen, 2013).

### **2. Teaching and compliance.**

The actual teaching for the work begins after the preparation phase and this part is conducted completely by a buddy. A buddy should tell the dos and don'ts in the task to new employee using the work instruction training method. This part teaches the basic level knowledge and skills to new employee. Teaching begins by asking an employee to observe the task and then buddy teaches how the work is performed and at the same time

explains justification why the company uses this method before new employee start to perform work independently. This part gives a first peek to a new employee on the actual work but not the skills to work yet independently (Ahokas & Mäkeläinen, 2013).

**3. *Skill experimentation and culture / training.***

This part gives the employee a chance to test their learnt exercise and skills. The employee should try a skill in practice and give their feedback on overall performance. At this stage employees are taught the norms in a company culture. The new employee also begins processing to master the work independently (Ahokas & Mäkeläinen, 2013).

**4. *Ensure connection / learning.***

This final step ensures everything that has been learned. At this point a buddy can encourage an employee to work alone. In the meantime, the buddy can assess employee's knowledge, agree terms of a follow up and give feedback. (Ahokas & Mäkeläinen, 2013).

## 3 METHODOLOGY

The author interviewed two groups as unstructured interviews in this thesis. The objective was to gather reliable data about the current onboarding process and its changes over time. The aim is to research why onboarding is essential in the case company and what should be included in the onboarding process.

### 3.1 Data collection process

The data collection of this research was collected in group interviews. Group interviews have been conducted in two parts with recording via Microsoft Teams online. With these group interviews, the author was able to discover the minds of employees and open the discussion. The author ensured that the interview could be recorded and reminded interviewees that the interview was anonymous, and these group interviews were done in the same day. The author decided to do group interviews because there is an advantage that results are obtained faster, and interviewees can help each other with remembering matters that they might not remember on their own (McLeod, 2014).

The research design is a general plan aiming to answer the research questions focusing on the interviewees point of view. With these interviews, the aim is to discover what is the state of current onboarding process and how it can be improved. Based on interviews, the author would compare the results and see if onboarding should implement further theory building.

The group interview was chosen as a data collection method because questionnaires are a good way to collect data from all aspects of onboarding. One of the successes in the group interviews was that the flow of discussion was consistent and fluent, and the interviewees shared many relevant aspects related to the onboarding process at the case company. These aspects will be presented and analysed in data analysis chapter. The interviews had no shortage of comments or open questions when the author asked if there was anything to add or comment. The group interview questions were sent to the

participants a week in advance via e-mail. This way the participants were able to prepare themselves for the nature of the questions. The author ensured that everyone could say their opinion by asking them one by one each question.

The interview was used to identify the challenges and current state of the onboarding process and this way, start answering the research objectives. Eight participants attended, including the author who interviewed the participants. The interview was done in two parts and lasted one hour per group. Same questions were used in both of the interviews.

### 3.2 Employee interviews

The group interviews were done in Finnish because the team members speak Finnish as their native language. Interview questions were translated to Finnish and this way ensured that the interviewees could speak more openly, and the flow of discussion would be more consistent. In the first group interview, all three participants had started their career at the company X about the same time. All of them came to the company through acquisitions and did not have a buddy who would have helped them to onboard the company more efficiently. All of them have over 10-years of experience in the case company X.

The second group interview included last four interviewees. One interviewee has been in the company for over 30-years. The other three interviewees have been with the case company for over 4 -, 2 and 1 year. One of these interviewees had an official buddy and came to the company through an official work search. Two interviewees also came to the company through an official work search and didn't have an official buddy assigned.

The author saw that one of the important tasks is to listen to interviewees and distinguish important matters from less important ones and find the relevant factors. The interviewer has less control than in an individual interview because interviewees respond to each other's responses in addition to their own. According to Saunders (2009), at the same time during the group interview, the interviewees can raise their own issues, and this is called group dynamics.

Because of group dynamics, a group interview may provide much more effective material than an individual interview.

## 4 DATA ANALYSIS

The group interviews were recorded, and author reminded about the anonymity of the process. The analysis was done by transcribing the interview recordings and verifying that the notes done by the author during the interviews matched with the recordings.

The topic will be explored with the following group interview questions:

- How long have you worked in company X?
- How was the onboarding process, in your opinion? What was good? What could be improved?
- What kind of instructions did you receive when you started your work at company X?
- How quickly do you feel that you were able to begin performing the actual work? What would have speeded up the process?
- What kind of support did you get from your supervisor?
- If you had a buddy, what was their role? How often did you communicate and how? Was the help valuable to you?
- On a scale of 1-5, how important do you think effective onboarding is in our specialization?
- Is it clear to you how your own goals are linked to the company's organizational goals?
- Any comments/ideas that you want to point out?

The author has written this chapter based on the questions and answers from the group interviews.

#### 4.1 The importance of the onboarding process at the case company

The group interview revealed that the onboarding process is essential for the teams in case company X. Four out of seven interviewees came to the company through mergers or company acquisitions. These four interviewees pointed out that the onboarding process was quite different than it is today, if there was any onboarding at all. It must be considered that those who have come through acquisitions also need efficient onboarding as much as the new employees who join the company through different channels. During the onboarding, two interviewees could not get to the office because of the COVID-19 pandemic, and these employees did not receive as much help as they might have needed.

The author believes that this research provides different point of views on the importance of onboarding process for the company management.

##### 4.1.1 Employee satisfaction

The author finds that the research participants were all unanimous on the importance of the onboarding process. All the interviewees agreed that the onboarding process is currently disorganized and defective. There are no clear instructions, and it is not systematic enough. The onboarding process is primarily implemented along with everyday work, like work training. All interviewee identified that the onboarding process is something that needs development and felt like there is hardly any investment in the development of the onboarding process. Interviewees felt that there was also too much inefficiently spent time in the onboarding process.

According to the four interviewees who came to the company from acquisitions, they did not have a proper onboarding process or did not remember having any sort of onboarding. They immediately began to work on specific tasks. Interviewees pointed out that the management of company X was different than in the company they worked for before the acquisition. The new practices took a



lot of time to manage and implement. All the Interviewees agreed that the work tasks were unclear, and no one claimed responsibility. Performing work tasks required a lot of own effort.

"We have onboarded ourselves", – Interviewee A.

All interviewees agree that colleagues' support was significant, and a buddy would have been an essential addition to the onboarding. One of the interviewees said that onboarding at the office has been pleasant, because of active and helpful colleagues with the work tasks. The interviewees commented about maintaining working guides, hoping that instructions would be up to date in the future.

#### 4.1.2 Performance management

Both groups interview revealed that proper onboarding could improve motivation, satisfaction, and employee's performance. This manifests in effective onboarding and reveals that the state of the onboarding could be more effective in the case company. All of the interviewees pointed out that when entering the company, the person must have the energy and motivation to solve working habits on their own. Outdated work instructions can be confusing and take up more time asking others. Asking another employee constantly takes work time away from that employee and disrupts their workflow.

Interviewee C mentioned that delays in their work equipment's availability were slowing down their onboarding. They felt like there should be work equipment such as a computer and essential credentials ready when joining the company, so that the new employee can start right away with their onboarding.

"Equipment and credentials faster. If you don't have these right away, it is time wasted. It would have saved a great deal of time. "– Interviewee B

All of the interviewees emphasized the importance of a buddy. Just one out of seven interview subjects had a buddy. All of the interviewees felt that a buddy

could help the new employee in a meaningful way in the beginning, and it is also essential, that the buddy works with similar work tasks.

The one interviewee who had an official buddy mentioned, that a buddy helped him/her with practical matters, as an example with work hour recordings, but could not help them with the actual work, because this buddy worked on different types of tasks. It would have been faster to ask the buddy who is working in similar tasks, than to ask other employees.

All the interviewees pointed that it is essential to have effective onboarding in our specialisation, and it is a must to have help with daily work tasks if one doesn't have earlier experience. This specific work is quite hard to teach because it consists of problem solving in a multi-domain setting with customer specifications.

#### 4.2 Practical perspectives for onboarding process at the case company

Interviewees were asked in the group interview what kind of instructions they received when they started their work in the case company. All the interviewees agreed that the information was scattered and felt minor, but mandatory company practices and house habits were shown. Those who came from the company acquisitions said that there weren't almost any guides for them about their daily work. Interviewees learned by themselves, using company's intranet and by asking from their colleagues. Interviewees mentioned that information and guides differ significantly, so it is hard to keep up the date.

Interviewees were asked how quickly they felt they could start performing the actual work and what could speed up the process. Interviewees who had worked the longest in the company, said that they had a so called "act first, think later"-situation. They started working right away. Other interviewees found a colleague who to ask about work matters in one month's time.

Four of the interviewees didn't have the general task list which includes an onboarding task-list that should be nowadays provided to all newcomers. Three

interviewees had this kind of a task-list but did not find it very insightful and felt that it was confusing for them. The managers or colleagues helped them with onboarding.

All the interviewees felt that they received assistance from their manager on daily matters or got work related information.

“The manager has been present and was interested in my doings” – interviewee A

The interviewees talked about the managers with good spirits despite the scheduling issues the managers are seemingly facing. Interviewees mentioned that when they started working, there were more communication with their manager. The managers have been changed over time and it has had an effect on the amount of communication between the interviewees and their manager. Interviewees speculated that the amount of communication decreased because the manager workloads have increased and it reflects on the time they spend on their respected teams.

Interviewees felt that organization’s goals and frameworks of the work were unclear or confusing.

#### 4.3 Proposal for onboarding development

Referring to group interviews, it is essential to have up to date instructions and credentials for different platforms. There was mutual understanding on why acquiring credentials takes time, but nonetheless the wishes was that the process should be developed and improved.

Interviewees said that the orientation sessions should last for 30 minutes per session. They felt that an hour-long session for a work task related orientation is too lengthy.

The interviewees suggested that a good practice would be to have shorter sessions with documentation. With this procedure, the new employee could

implement what they have learned and ask questions afterwards if they feel the need.

There should be clear instructions for the buddy according to the group interviews. The buddy's duties, time schedules and task priorities should be also clearly defined. Every team should have a specific task list for a buddy. As aforementioned in this thesis, a buddy is essential, especially in these specific work tasks. When the buddy provides proper, structured guidance, it speeds up the whole onboarding process.

The author proposes these key elements should be considered based on the data gathered from the interviews:

- Working tools and credentials should be prepared before joining the company
- Team specific work manual what is up to date.
- Clear instructions on proceeding with daily tasks
- Buddy should be assigned who works with similar tasks
- More attention paid to the company general onboarding task list
- Consistent communication with the manager and weekly team meetings
- Work related documents must be up to date
- Maximum length per orientation session should be an hour, and the session should be complimented with documents.

## 5 CONCLUSIONS

This thesis addressed three major research questions. First question aimed to answer what is effective onboarding in the case company. The second one was to address the state and effectiveness of onboarding in the company. Lastly the research aimed to answer how the efficiency of the existing onboarding plan could be improved.

The thesis highlights the importance of an onboarding process as an essential part of company's processes. Several factors affect the success of an onboarding process, and it can have various objectives.

The onboarding has a direct correlation between employee satisfaction and learning speed. Onboarding indicates how the company takes care of its employees and it is the first process that new employees face. This creates first impressions about the company, and first impressions can be hard to overturn. Properly executed onboarding significantly accelerates new employees learning as there is a clear program to be followed, a buddy who to ask without hesitation, and visibility for the new employee to know what is ahead.

New employees gain deeper understanding of the company culture and can identify who will support them and whom they will need to support in given situations.

Developing a systematic, team-level onboarding process at the case company is necessary because the company has general practices but no team-specific guidelines on what to follow.

The process should start with information and then proceed step-by-step. This research recommends that the onboarding process should reflect the company values and discuss how those are interpreted in practice. Based on the research the case company has not considered all the aspects of effective onboarding on a team-level, and this can create problems which can reflect to employees' satisfaction. At the end of onboarding, the organization should provide the new employee with the opportunity to discuss the possible areas

that still require attention and it should be done with the manager or the buddy. Additionally, it is a valuable chance for the company to develop the onboarding process for the better.

Before the thesis work was initiated, the author started compiling a document for best practices. It consisted of problem-solving methods, information about tools and other general information aimed to help the existing team members as well as the newcomers who would later join the team.

When the thesis work started, it was clear that at least one part of the team specific manual would cover onboarding. During the thesis work, the onboarding section of the manual was updated based on the interviews, literature and authors own experiences. The most important angle that the thesis brought to the manual was the tools and methods for effective onboarding and how to properly utilize them. The research done in the thesis also helped the author highlight certain development areas like importance of the buddy system, effects of outdated documentation and employee dissatisfaction that small things, like missing credentials bring.

The manual was received well by the case team. The structure, content, conventions and the general blueprint of the document was approved by the case team and future document updates will follow the same standard. The work guides and best practices are in a weekly use and the onboarding practices have been initiated with two new members. During the time of writing the thesis, the new members were not taken into the interview groups since the data collection was already finished, but teamwide plans are to continue improving the manual with the feedback of the new employees.

The case company has vastly potential opportunities for better onboarding and achieving strategic growth objectives. To implement the proposed onboarding process and other suggestions mentioned in this work, the author also suggests the organization appoint a HR manager or a specific employee to develop these matters at the company level. Even if onboarding is one of the most important HR practices, yet it should not be the only form of new employee inclusion in

the case company. Ideally, this research improves the quality of onboarding, while also providing a valuable perspective on effective team level onboarding.

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