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Onboarding 101 for Small Businesses

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Things work better for new employees when all efforts to recruit, hire and accelerate them point in the same direction, integrated into one complete integrated onboarding program. Here are 16 things small businesses can do things differently (and better), grouped into the five main activities of onboarding: align, acquire, accommodate, assimilate, accelerate.

Align your organization around the need for this hire and around the details of the role

- 1) Clarify how this new hire will help the organization deliver what's important. No one should start to recruit anyone, anywhere, anytime without clarifying how that new hire will strengthen the organization's ability to deliver its priorities in line with its purpose.
- 2) Craft an onboarding timeline. This is the hiring manager's roadmap, laying out what will get done, by when, by whom through all stages of recruiting, hiring and accelerating -- a critical document.
- 3) Write a really simple recruiting brief. A recruiting brief is to recruiting like a creative brief is to advertising or like a blueprint is to a house. It guides all the recruiting activities.
- 4) Articulate messages. Messages are the simplifying tools that reduce the complexity of various ideas into the bare, easy-to-understand essentials that guide all communication. And everything communicates.

Acquire the right team member the right way

- 5) Source a strong slate of candidates by marketing before you buy. Leverage a variety of tools to recruit a broad range of possible candidates before selecting down to the few most promising.
- 6) Interview in a way that pre-sells while you shop. Act the same way while interviewing that you will while managing, so the people you want to work for you don't run out of their interviews screaming that they'd never work for someone who shows them so little respect.
- 7) Select the best of the qualified candidates by comparing what you learned in interviews, reference checks, etc. to the criteria in your recruiting brief to get as close a match as possible.
- 8) Close (and make) the offer in a way that builds a working partnership. Used car salesmen generally don't care what happens after they close the sale. You do. Think of the closing process as the start of a mutually beneficial relationship, not a victory to be won.

Accommodate by preparing your new hire to do real work right away

9) Partner to create your new hire's personal onboarding plan. Help your new employee think through what he or she is going to be doing before day one, on day one and after day one. This is the moment when he or she should take ownership of his or her own success.

10) Make sure the basics are covered with an accommodation checklist that includes everything required for the new employee to do work on day one. This is not something you have to do yourself. It is something you need to make sure someone is doing.

11) Prepare in advance to treat your new employee as a valued employee on day one. Think about the way hotels greet their guests who are staying for one night. You should do that much and more for new employees that you hope will stay for a very long time.

Assimilate your new hires by managing the announcements and proactively helping them engage with the organization

12) Stage the announcement cascade to encourage positive first impressions. Everything communicates -- including order. Think through whom you want to learn about your new employee from whom in what order and manage that cascade.

13) Use an assimilation checklist to speed development of important working relationships:

- * proactive introductions to stakeholders
- * introductions to informal, behind-the-scenes networks
- * invitation to events that allow the employee to meet others
- * assignment to special cross-functional projects
- * introduction to connecting tools like intranet, company dictionary, etc.

Accelerate delivery of better results by supporting your new hire with resources, tools and purpose-driven leadership

14) Get your new employee the right support whether it's a mentor, coach, transition accelerator, buddy or some combination of these.

15) Lead your new hire to put the building blocks of a high-performing team in place, on time. This is true whatever seat your new employee plays on the team. He or she needs to drive or understand the imperative, milestones, early wins, role sort and communication plan.

16) Adjust as you learn, seeing and managing changes as appropriate.

Author Bio

George Bradt is author of [Onboarding – How To Get Your New Employees Up To Speed In Half The Time](#) (Wiley, 2009) and [The New Leader's 100-Day Action Plan](#) (Wiley, 2006 and 2009.) He has a unique perspective on transformational leadership based on his combined senior line management and consulting experience. Bradt progressed through sales, marketing and general management roles after being educated at Harvard and Wharton (MBA) and is now a Principal of the [CEO Connection](#) and Managing Director of [PrimeGenesis](#), the executive onboarding and transition acceleration group he founded in 2002.