

Insider Insight Volume 20 Issue 19 - October 12, 2009

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Whether you want to decrease turnover on your team, in your company or if you want to avoid being one of those new hires who fail in the first year, a necessary component to success is effective onboarding. Executive turnover brings lost productivity, time and revenue as replacements are recruited and assimilated into the organization, and the failure of quality talent can be traced back to the hiring manager's lack of active participation in the onboarding process.

Building on *The New Leader's 100-Day Action Plan*, which helps executives successfully map out their first 100 days, author George Bradt approached onboarding from the perspective of hiring managers in his new book, *Onboarding: How to Get Your Employees Up to Speed in Half the Time* (written with Mary Vonnegut). In his late September presentation to launch the book, held at the Penn Club in New York City, Bradt explained why new executives need the hiring managers to be actively involved in the onboarding process; "It's never a good idea to swim alone, especially in rough conditions. With 40 percent of new senior leaders forced out or quitting within 18 months, new employees and hiring managers need to work together on landmines for the benefit of all involved."

Bradt asserts there are three distinct roles for the hiring manager to play; he likes it to the components of a theatre production. His belief is that, "We play different parts, often at the same time, and a big part of our thinking on onboarding goes to the importance of everyone understanding the various roles and interdependencies."

THE THREE STAGES OF A HIRING MANAGER

PRODUCER – Recruits candidates to audition for roles, brings together internal resources, makes sure all stakeholders have the same expectations for the position and ensures that candidates are informed and comfortable with the process.

DIRECTOR – Helps the new hire meet and develop relationships with stakeholders, co-creates the onboarding plan, provides necessary tools, support and cultural guidance.

STAGE MANAGER – Keeps momentum going, provides encouragement and helps solve problems.

Bradt explained that effective hiring managers start preparing for onboarding new executives before recruiting begins. He believes to ensure the proper organizational, cultural and operational fit, everyone involved with the interviewing process must be on the same page regarding the recruiting message. Sometimes different departments have different visions for a new executive, and the results is conflicting messages for the candidates or conflicting expectations once the new hire is in place. The hiring manager must craft, and get stakeholders rallied around, a personal onboarding plan. Until you have stakeholders aligned around the role and interdependencies, you don't have an onboarding plan," said Bradt.

BUYING AND SELLING AT THE SAME TIME

Hiring managers are not just buying; they are also selling, and treating candidates as if they were clients will have mutual long-term benefits. Bradt advocates having two-way conversations as much as possible and portraying a fair picture of the organization and of the role; he also suggests hiring managers provide information about the people candidates will meet and doing everything possible to set up the most effective interviews. Bradt suggests having stakeholders at all levels interview candidates to give them ownership in the new employee's success.

Presumably, executives have conducted extensive research on a company before accepting the first interview, but Bradt suggests there is a lot more to be learned. "You should never let a candidate say 'yes' on the spot to a job offer," warns Bradt. Instead he believes it is in both parties' best interests to make stakeholders – up, down and across – available to the candidate for additional due diligence, where it is likely any "red flags" would quickly arise. Reasons to decline an offer would turn up in a month or two anyway, causing a parting of the ways, said Bradt. "The problem is, at this point, the company has lost its slate of candidates."

By giving the first choice every opportunity to meet with stakeholders for a few days and potentially decline, the hiring manager is actually preserving his second choice candidate, who is unaware that he is a secondary consideration.

ORIENTATION IS NOT ONBOARDING

Onboarding is not simply a one-day orientation, and hiring managers should continuously strive to develop better ways of integrating new talent into organizations. It is a process that, when done properly, takes months. Effective onboarding occurs when there is a well-considered written plan co-created by the new hire and the hiring manager; an actionable imperative and a targeted early win to create momentum are important components.

Effectively assimilating a new hire is the duty of the hiring manager. "Introduce them actively to people they need to know; don't just hand them a list and say, 'Go meet.'" said Bradt. For hiring managers to reduce the risk of failure for their new employees, they must take ownership of the onboarding process, providing resources and support to ensure the new hire can be the star of the show.