2018

Onboarding Employees Through Shared Values

Jenny Hall-Jones
Ohio University, hallj1@ohio.edu

Todd Simmons
Ohio University, ts738817@ohio.edu

Elizabeth Stermer
Ohio University, es933317@ohio.edu

Jivanto P. van Hemert
University of Dayton, jvanhemert1@udayton.edu

Megan Vogel
Ohio University, vogelm@ohio.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://ecommons.udayton.edu/jraphe

Part of the Educational Administration and Supervision Commons, Educational Leadership Commons, Higher Education Commons, and the Student Counseling and Personnel Services Commons

Recommended Citation

ONBOARDING EMPLOYEES
THROUGH SHARED VALUES

Jenny Hall-Jones, Ohio University
Todd Simmons, Ohio University
Elizabeth Stermer, Ohio University
Jivanto P. van Hemert, University of Dayton
Megan Vogel, Ohio University

ABSTRACT

How employees are on-boarded and welcomed into their new positions sets the tone for the culture of a place, the people, and the values of a new institution and can have a significant impact on employees' sense of belonging. At Ohio University, the Division of Student Affairs employs approximately 400 staff and annually welcomes around 40-50 new employees a year, 25 of which are College Student Personnel (CSP) graduate students. New employees are welcomed with an ethic of care through a five day onboarding process rooted in Bolman and Deal's human resource frame. This process includes departmental specific welcomes and trainings, along with division-wide team building, sexual misconduct training, social justice training, and suicide prevention training. This session outlined the correlation with Bolman and Deal's human resource frame and NASPA/ ACPA competencies as well as lessons learned from implementing such a process, specifically include how these trainings intersect with the learning and development of new professionals.

INTRODUCTION

The Division of Student Affairs at Ohio University believes strongly in onboarding new staff through a shared values model. Onboarding or "orientation is not just the activities scheduled for the first morning of the new staff member's first day at work." Indeed, it begins when a position is initially posted and can continue many months into a staff member's tenure at the institution (Janosik, et al., 2003). Thus this experience can be critical to incorporating staff into a new institution and shaping institutional or divisional culture. The Division of Student Affairs onboarding at Ohio University takes place through a formal week of training with department and division staff. The purpose of this training is to provide new staff with a baseline understanding of department and division values and expectations, as well as networking and team building opportunities. New employees begin the week engaged with their respective departments followed

by division trainings and team development to promote a strong sense of belonging. Trainings have evolved to align with best practices, division priorities, and based on employee feedback in support of Bolman and Deal's human resources frame to align organizational and human needs.

THEORETICAL BASIS

The way in which Ohio University's Division of Student Affairs on-boards staff leans heavily on the Bolman and Deal's (*Reframing Organizations*, 2003) human resource frame. The division embodies the family metaphor by focusing on people and utilizing strong relationship building to support staff. This is a standing institutional and divisional culture that is deliberately built upon during the on-boarding process as a means to communicate the values of the institution and division. Recognizing the central concepts in this frame as needs, relationships, and skills, significant time is dedicated to simply getting to know each other and team building. Storytelling is used as a tool to enable the people who know the material best to present directly to incoming staff and empower the leadership contribution of love that is central to this frame. This work also draws upon the work of Janosik, Creamer, Hirt, Winston, Saunders, and Cooper (*Supervising New Professionals in Student Affairs,* 2003) knowing that orientation and onboarding is just one part of an employee lifecycle that includes supervision, professional development, performance appraisals and transitions.

This approach also aligns directly with the ACPA—College Student Educators International and NASPA—Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education professional competencies of Organization & Human Resources (OHR) and Values, Philosophy, & History (VPH). This alignment while designing "orientation and onboarding experiences for newly hired professionals" (2015) is critical to the successful integration of the professional competencies. The Organization & Human Resources competency specifically includes the "knowledge, skills, and dispositions used in the management of institutional human capital" and lists "understand the relational roles partners, allies, and adversaries play in the completion of goals and work assignments" as a foundational outcome. The core of the Values, Philosophy, & History (VPH) competency strives to connect professional values with educators' current practices. This values-based onboarding approach aligns with several foundational outcomes including; describe the foundational philosophies, disciplines, and values of the profession; demonstrate responsible campus citizenship and participation in the campus community; describe the role of student affairs educators in the institution.

CRITICAL COMPONENTS

New institutional staff members require guidance to understanding the institutional culture, values, and essential relationships (Janosik, et al., 2003). In an effort to provide this guidance, the critical components of OHIO's staff onboarding process align with the division's mission of "We care. We educate and empower. We foster inclusive communities. We make OHIO strong."

Utilizing the Human Resources frame and the NASPA/ACPA competencies as a framework, the onboarding process consists of five days of training conducted by departments and central division staff. The first two day of an employee's training is managed by the departmental unit and typically consist of general expectations, job overview, as well as team development. The last three days are coordinated centrally and consistent of a division overview, sexual misconduct training, team building exercises with division leadership, a suicide prevention workshop, and a full-day social justice training.

A quantitative study of administrators' frame preferences indicated that 67.5% of participants preferred the human resource frame, (Tull & Freeman, 2012) thus this assimilation with division-wide training aligns with the approach that will be most accessible to incoming employees. This approach can also aid employees in identifying values congruence which is critical to career contentment and commitment which can significantly impact retention to both the field and the institution long-term (Wilson, Liddell, Hirschy, & Pasquesi, 2016).

LESSONS LEARNED

Over the course of the past ten years, the employee onboarding process has evolved for several reasons, including lessons learned along the way. First and foremost, OHIO's staff have learned that all-day trainings are difficult. Therefore, significant effort is put into ensuring that the trainings are engaging, employees feel comfortable dialoguing, and that each session is interactive. Second, we've learned that it's imperative that the more dense or challenging trainings (e.g. sexual misconduct and suicide prevention) do not occur back to back. While these topics are critically important, it's crucial that employees are given the latitude to excuse themselves as needed for self-care and that frequent breaks are provided. Lastly, it's important that the training coordinators know their audience and are able to adapt trainings as needed to achieve optimal effectiveness.

The division has learned these lessons and adapted onboarding process as needed in an effort to ensure that the entire onboarding process is as efficient as possible. By effectively onboarding new staff, trainers are able to influence the division/department culture and produce stronger teams. By onboarding with shared values, staff are not forced to memorize or "know" everything in one day. This approach, however, sets them up with a foundation for a successful career at Ohio University.

GRADUATE STUDENT EXPERIENCE

Graduate student feedback includes the importance of building relationships, engaging students with all staff, being mindful of emotions, and the emphasis and commitment the division has surrounding its core values. Graduate students also emphasized the importance of making the onboarding process enjoyable for everyone so that positive relationships are formed up front and a sense of belonging is developed right from the start. Through a positive onboarding process,

graduate students feel a part of the division and have a baseline foundation of the division's shared values that sets them up for success both professionally and academically within Ohio University.

An educational benefit of utilizing a shared values approach to onboarding is the connection that it makes with the ACPA/NASPA competencies. These competencies are taught to graduate students through their coursework, thus it aligns well to expect them to integrate these practices into their assistantships, internships, and future careers. Through focusing on the different core competencies outlined by ACAP/NASPA, student affairs professionals can enhance the professional development that graduate students receive through their respective roles on campus.

A core competency that can be observed within a shared values approach to onboarding is Values, Philosophy, and History (VPH), which communicated the foundations of student affairs as well as the values that embody the profession as it continues to evolve (Professional Competencies Task Force, 2015). Through articulating values of the institution and department during onboarding activities that promote relationship building and a cohesive bond, the members of the staff that works together feel as if they have a common goal. This ability to build a team while also instilling the values of the profession and the institution allows for a shared moral responsibility to uphold these values while understanding that all members of the team are involved in this process (Dempsey, 2015).

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

As we look ahead to ways in which to continually improve the division's onboarding, it's important that we begin to assess our efforts. Ohio University's Division of Student Affairs intends to implement learning outcome-based metrics to build on current successes and ensure that these trainings are achieving the desired goals. The Division also plans to explore staff retention and ongoing opportunities for onboarding and professional development throughout the employee life cycle.

CONCLUSION

Institutions, much like people, only have one chance at a first impression. The onboarding experience can be critical in understanding a new institutional culture, developing values congruence (Wilson, Liddell, Hirschy, & Pasquesi, 2016), and building a sense of belonging. The Ohio University Division of Student Affairs new employee orientation utilizes an onboarding process rooted in Bolman and Deal's frames that includes departmental-specific trainings as well as division-wide initiatives that ensure the Human Resource considerations are at the forefront.

The Human Resources frame is a preference among practitioners (Tull & Freeman, 2012) and rooting in this frame ensures the ACPA/ NASPA competencies of Organization & Human Resources (OHR) and Values, Philosophy, & History (VPH) are maximized. This ongoing onboarding approach is one method that has proven effective through staff and graduate student feedback as well as in contrast to other institutions practices.

REFERENCES

Bolman, Lee G., and Terrence E. Deal. *Reframing Organizations: Artistry, Choice, and Leadership*. John Wiley & Sons, 2003.

Dempsey, J. (2015). Moral responsibility, shared values, and corporate culture. Business Ethics Quarterly, 25(3), 319-430.

Janosik, Steven M., Joan B. Hirt, Don G. Creamer, Rodger B. Winston, Sue A. Saunders, and Diane L. Cooper. *Supervising New Professionals in Student Affairs*. Brunner-Routledge, 2003.

Professional Competencies Task Force. "Professional Competency Areas for Student Affairs Educators." ACPA—College Student Educators International & NASPA—Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education, 2015.

Tull, Ashley, and Jerrid P. Freeman. "Reframing Student Affairs Leadership: An Analysis of Organizational Frames of Reference and Locus of Control." *Research in the Schools* 18, no. 1 (January 1, 2011): 33–43.

Wilson, Maureen E., Debora L. Liddell, Amy S. Hirschy, and Kira Pasquesi. "Professional Identity, Career Commitment, and Career Entrenchment of Midlevel Student Affairs Professionals." *Journal of College Student Development* 57, no. 5 (July 1, 2016): 557–72.