

TEMPORARY EMPLOYEES' ASSESSMENT OF ONBOARDING

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Abstract: The main objective of the research was to determine how temporary employees perceive the process of their onboarding in the context of the efficient performance of their responsibilities. The analysis covered the information obtained by the employee during onboarding, such as the employer's expectations concerning the position in question, organization of work, procedures and values applied at the company, as well as work evaluation terms. A quantitative research was held based on a questionnaire filled in by 286 respondents. The study revealed that temporary employees had a good opinion of the methods of onboarding. It turned out that the opinion on onboarding, especially with respect to work organization, worsened with age. The study also determined that with increasing level of education, employees' opinion worsened with regard to the completeness of information provided during onboarding and concerning work evaluation methods and the values applied at the company.

Keywords: onboarding, temporary employee, temporary work, assessment.

1. Introduction

Nowadays onboarding has become an important element of human resources management. Its perceived significance is increasing, as evidenced by multiple studies [Huselid et al. 2009, pp. 196-199; Bauer 2010; Hirsch 2017; Caldwell, Peters 2018]. The sooner and to what extent newcomers can learn firm-specific knowledge, understand the culture, and recognize other unique aspects of the organization, the quicker and the greater the extent to which they can contribute to the success and competitive advantage of the organization [Coff, Kryscynski 2011]. Many enterprises believe that onboarding is a major component of new employees' experience [Holton 2001; Infopraca.pl 2009; Survey findings 2011; Abou Hamad et al. 2018], especially as new employees are very stressed at this stage [Wanous, Reichers 2000]. They are concerned about: 1) how they will benefit as an organization member, and 2) whether it is feasible for them to obtain the

promised outcomes [Shea-Van Fossen, Vredenburg 2014]. Effective onboarding has short-term and long-term benefits for both the new employee and the organization, bearing in mind that employees effectively assimilated into an organization have greater job satisfaction and organizational commitment, higher retention rates, lower time to productivity, and have greater success in achieving customer satisfaction with their work [Bauer 2010]. Statistics compiled by Click Boarding, an onboarding software company in Eden Prairie, Minnesota, USA, show the value of a structured onboarding process or program:

- 69 percent of employees are more likely to stay with a company for three years if they experienced great onboarding.
- New employees who went through a structured onboarding program were 58 percent more likely to be with the organization after three years.
- Organizations with a standard onboarding process experience 50 percent greater new-hire producti-

vity [Hirsch 2017]. In contrast, poor onboarding leads to lower employee satisfaction, higher turnover, increased costs, lower productivity, and decreased customer satisfaction [Bauer 2010]. Ineffective onboarding destroys the benefits achieved through hiring talented employees and increases the likelihood that the hard work spent in recruiting and selecting those employees will be wasted [Smart 2012; Caldwell, Peters 2018]. It should be highlighted that even now, many organizations perceive onboarding as an expense rather than investment, representing a short-term approach to the process [Caldwell, Peters 2018]. Prior research has found that most companies provide relatively few formal onboarding practices [Survey findings 2011; Acevedo, Yancey 2011, p. 349]. Despite the increasing perceived importance of onboarding, there are not many studies concerning the practices applied in this process or its effectiveness [Klein, Polin 2012; Klein et al. 2015]. So far the implemented studies on onboarding have focused mainly on:

- rather formal training related to onboarding [Fan, Wanous 2008; Klein, Weaver 2000; Wesson, Gogus 2005];
- effectiveness of onboarding [Cooper-Thomas, Anderson 2005; Klein et al. 2010; Bauer 2010];
- effective socialization for both organizations and new employees [Bauer et al. 2007; Fang et al. 2011];
- executive onboarding [Ross et al. 2014];
- exploration of the ethical and psychological obligations related to onboarding of new employees within an organization [Caldwell, Peters 2018];
- treating onboarding as a way to the faster achievement of relevant employee efficiency [Snell 2006].

However there is still a perceivable and sizeable gap in the research of these issues concerning temporary employees. There is no research in this area in Poland. There are no sufficient studies concerning the correlation between the perception of onboarding by these groups of employees and their age and education. Considering the trilateral contractual relation between employment agencies, user employers and temporary employees, the solution of such human management problems cannot rely on the previous scientific works, concerning traditional forms of employment between an employer and employee. This situation was the reason to undertake the research described in this paper. That is why the main objective of the study was to determine how temporary employees perceived the process of their

onboarding in the context of the efficient performance of their responsibilities. The author also attempted to verify whether there were statistically significant differences in these opinions related to such criteria as gender or else the correlations between these opinions and the employees' age and education. The study was designed to verify the following hypotheses:

H1. There are significant differences in temporary employees' assessment of information obtained during onboarding related to gender.

H2. There are significant correlations between temporary employees' assessment of their onboarding and their age and education.

2. Literature review

Onboarding is a 'formal and informal practices, programs, and policies enacted or engaged in by an organization or its agents to facilitate newcomer adjustment' [Klein, Polin 2012, p. 268]. It is the process of introducing a new employee into his or her new job; acquainting that employee with the organization's goals, values, rules and policies, and processes; and socializing the employee into an organizational culture [Watkins 2016; Juchnowicz (ed.) 2003, p. 93]. It is used by organizations to expedite socialization, which we define as the learning and adjustment process by which individuals assume an organizational role that fits the needs of both the individual and the organization [Chao 2012; Van Maanen, Schein 1979]. Organizations implement specific onboarding practices to reduce the inevitable uncertainty and anxiety newcomers experience, help them make sense of their new environment, and provide them with the necessary resources to become fully functioning organizational members effective in their new role [Cooper-Thomas, Anderson 2005; Fang et al. 2011].

The results of research suggest that onboarding activities most commonly occur on the first day, though there are some exceptions and considerable variation in the timing of the experienced activities [Klein et al. 2015]. Offering and experiencing more onboarding practices is better, yet organizational resources are limited and at some point there are likely diminishing returns [Survey findings 2011]. Some studies reveal errors committed in onboarding [Caldwell, Peters 2018]. The typical new employee onboarding process provides employees with a volume of information that is overwhelming, impractical, and impossible for new employees to incorporate within a short period of time [Wanous, Reichers 2000]. Srimannara-yana [2016] noted that some organizations included too many complex tasks and information for employees to realistically digest

while other organizations offered too few items which fails to adequately prepare employees. Holton [2001, p. 73] recognized in his study of factors associated with onboarding that “the most important tactic (for effective onboarding) was allowing new employees to fully utilize their skills and abilities”. Organizations who incorporate highly effective onboarding programs honor the psychological contract expectations of their new employees and fulfill their strategic role as ethical stewards [Huselid et al. 2009]. Research evidence documents that employers who treat employees with great trust, who demonstrate a personalized approach to employees as valued partners reap the rewards of better quality, improved employee performance, and increased employee satisfaction [Paine 2003; Smith et al., 2016; Kupczyk 2018; Deloitte 2018; Ackermann 2017; Edelman 2018]. According to Bauer “an effective onboarding process includes four critical building blocks to improve performance, inoculate against turnover, and increase job satisfaction: compliance, clarification, culture and connection” [Bauer 2010]. The following is a ten-step model for quality onboarding, including steps prior to the actual arrival of a new employee by Caldwell, Peters [2018]:

1. Establish the Relationship Online Immediately after Hiring. Initiating an online relationship enables an organization to create an immediate personalized relationship with a new employee, a well-recognized element of effective leadership [Kouzes, Posner 2012].

2. Appoint a Trained Mentor-Coach for Each New Employee [Ragins et al. 2000; Van Dyne, Pierce 2004].

3. Focus the Onboarding on Relationships and Networks [Brown 2007; Rousseau 1990; Parker et al. 2013].

4. Prepare a Well-Developed and Complete New Employee Orientation Booklet. Integrating the many diverse pieces of information that new employees need in relocating; acquainting the employee with the community and organization culture; identifying the organization's values, mission, and history; explaining employee benefits and policies; completing the required paperwork and documentation; identifying key job tasks in contributing to the organization's ability to create value enables a new employee to obtain this critical information and is consistent with employee psychological contract expectations [Sutton, Griffin 2004].

5. Prepare Physical Location, Office, and Staffing Support Prior to Onboarding (cf. [Marks 2007]).

6. Assist in Transitional Logistics [Dewe et al. 2010].

7. Clarify and Affirm Priorities and Expectations [Leana, Van Buren 1999].

8. Engage, Empower, and Appreciate the Employee [Adkins 2016; Smith et al. 2016; Beer 2009; Saks 2006; Peterson et al. 2011].

9. Involve Upline in Onboarding Training and Orientation [Schein 2010; Kouzes, Posner 2012].

10. Create an Ongoing Coaching Process [Bachkirova et al. 2011].

3. Methods

A quantitative research was held in 2017 with a questionnaire which was developed based on a pilot study. The research was designed to answer predefined research problems expressed as the following questions:

- How do temporary employees perceive the process of their onboarding in the context of the efficient performance of their responsibilities?
- Are there statistically significant differences in the assessment related to the criterion of gender?
- Are there significant correlations between the assessment and the employees' age and education?

The study covered a group of 286 temporary employees (Poles) employed by Otto Work Force Polska (a temporary employment agency), working for one user employer. The survey was completed by 92% of respondents in this group. This was a target sample in which 183 were female. In the research, targeted selection was applied, which forced abandoning the statistic condition of representativeness of the research. This selection method was chosen not only due to the research objective, but above all in relation to the research possibilities (the time to conduct the research was short). The second reason was that the reduction of the number of analysed cases and minimizing the differences between them allows for the better exposition and identification of the studied phenomena or processes [Frankfort-Nachmias, Nachmias 2001]. The respondents were asked to assess their onboarding within the seven-degree Likert scale [Murray 2013] with 1 meaning positively insufficient and 7 positively sufficient. They were also required to assess the information obtained during onboarding at their latest workplace in respect of: the employer's (overall) expectations, work organization, organizational culture, applicable procedures, values of the organization, forms of work evaluation and expectations concerning the position in question. The respondents could enter their own answers to the questions, not only choose from the propositions given. The applied research techniques were CATI and CAWI. The obtained data was analysed with the IBM SPSS statistical software version 21. Alpha significance level was defined at

0.05. Non-parametric tests were applied. Correlations between the variables were analysed with Spearman's rank correlation, while the differences between the groups were verified with the Mann–Whitney U test, the Kruskal–Wallis test and the Student's *t*-test.

To complete the presented research, it was necessary to make the relevant terminology considerations concerning such terms as temporary employment, temporary employee and onboarding.

In the presented study, temporary employment was defined according to the Act of 09.07.2003 on employment of temporary employees [Journal of Laws of 2015, item 1220], as a form of employment with a closed term in which three entities are involved: the employee, the temporary employment agency and the agency's customer or user employer. The total period of employment of a temporary employee with a single user employer must not exceed 18 months within a period of 36 months. A temporary employment agency employs people and then delegates them to perform tasks for the user employer. This involves:

a) seasonal, periodical or ad-hoc works,

b) works which cannot be performed by the user employer's staff in a timely manner,

c) works which fall within the responsibilities of an absent employee of the user employer. A temporary employee was defined as a person employed according to the Act on the employment of temporary employees [Journal of Laws of 2015, item 1220].

Onboarding was defined as “the process of introducing a new employee into his or her new job; acquainting that employee with the organization's goals, values, rules and policies, and processes; and socializing the employee into an organizational culture” [Watkins 2016].

4. Results

Within the study, temporary employees were asked to assess their onboarding in the context of the efficient performance of their responsibilities. The assessment was high at 6.23, within the scale of 1 to 7 with 1 meaning positively insufficient and 7 positively sufficient (standard deviation: 1.164, $N = 276$). In order to verify hypothesis H1 the attempt was made to identify statistically significant differences in opinions with respect to gender as criterion. It was revealed that differences in the overall assessment of onboarding between females and males were insignificant ($p > 0.98$). To verify hypothesis H2 we attempted to identify correlations between the respondents' opinions and their education first, followed by age. A negative, although weak correlation was revealed between the assessment of onboarding

and age ($r_s = -.14$, $p = 0.02$). This allows for the conclusion that persons who are older have a worse opinion about the process of their onboarding. However, no statistically significant correlations were found between the overall assessment of onboarding and the respondents' education. During the study the respondents were asked to provide a more detailed assessment concerning the completeness of the information obtained during onboarding with respect to the employer's (overall) expectations, work organization, organizational culture, applicable procedures, values of the organization, work evaluation methods and expectations concerning the position in question. The results are shown in Table 1. The highest rating was recorded in the case of the completeness of information concerning expectations related to the specific position, work organization and the employer's overall expectations. The lowest rating (although above the average value) was assigned to information concerning methods of work evaluation, values important for the enterprise and its organizational culture (Table 1).

Table 1. Assessment of the completeness of information obtained by temporary employees during onboarding on the scale of 1-7 with 1 meaning entirely incomplete and 7 – entirely complete ($N = 286$).

Information obtained during onboarding	Average result	Standard deviation
Expectations concerning the position in question	6.17	1.465
Work organization	6.17	1.394
Overall expectations of the employer	6.11	1.433
Procedures	5.94	1.675
Organizational culture applied by the company	5.88	1.902
Values important for the company	5.49	2.065
Methods of work evaluation	4.69	2.556

Source: original research.

The author resolved to verify the significance of gender differences in the assessment of the completeness of the information obtained during onboarding (as listed in Table 1). It was revealed that only in one instance women assessed the completeness of the obtained information significantly higher than men: in the case of the overall expectations of the employer ($U = -3.02$, $p = 0.002$). A significant, though weak, negative correlation was found between the age and the assessment of information related to work organization ($r_s = -.11$, $p = 0.045$). This allows for the conclusion that with age the assessment worsens in the case of the completeness of the information provided during onboarding with the work organization. This

may be due to the fact that persons responsible for onboarding expected older employees to be more experienced and to require less information. However this assumption should be considered incorrect, because, as evidenced by the present study, older persons employed in temporary employment may feel that they need more information on work organization to execute their responsibilities efficiently. A similar situation was observed in the case of the work assessment and values applied within the company, as a significant, though weak correlation was found between the education of temporary employees and their assessment of the completeness of the provided information concerning:

- methods of work assessment ($r_s = -.18, p = 0.003$),
- values applied in the company ($r_s = -.15, p = 0.01$).

The analysis of the revealed correlations leads to the conclusion that better educated employees have a lower opinion about the completeness of the information provided during onboarding, and concerning the methods of work assessment and values applied by the company.

5. Discussion and recommendations

The obtained test results allow for the formulation of the following conclusions:

- The level of onboarding of temporary employees is high. On the one hand, this suggests the relevant care taken of this group of employees and their potential for efficiently carrying out their responsibilities. On the other hand, the employees' reporting of some incompleteness of the information delivered during onboarding suggests that these actions are not entirely effective and require improvement. This concerns especially information concerning forms of remuneration, organizational culture and the values which are important for the company. Therefore the obtained research results suggest that the implementation of the process of onboarding of temporary employees is not yet entirely correct, as in the case of fixed-contract employees [Hirsch 2017; Huselid et al. 2009, pp. 196-199; Caldwell, Peters 2018].
- The opinion on onboarding, especially with respect to information about work organization, worsened with age. This may indicate that less time is devoted to older employees in this aspect or that the persons responsible for onboarding expected older employees to be more experienced and to require less information.
- Women's assessment of the completeness of the information provided during onboarding was

significantly higher in the case of the employer's (overall) expectations and expectations concerning the specific working position.

- With the increasing age of the respondents, the assessment of the completeness of information provided during onboarding worsens in the case of work organization. This may mean that older employees are perceived to be more experienced and to require less information. It should be highlighted that temporary employment is sought by people of lesser professional experience. In any case, companies differ in their work organisation, so during onboarding employees should be provided with complete information, regardless of their age. It may transpire, as evidenced by the presented research, that older employees assess the provided information concerning work organization as insufficient, and consequently they may be less efficient in their work.
- With the increasing level of the respondents' education, the assessment of the completeness of the information provided during onboarding worsened in the case of the methods of work assessment and the values applied at the company. This may suggest that people responsible for employees' onboarding believe that better educated employees do not need much information and therefore provide them with less information. Certainly, this is not correct, especially as deficiencies in the information concerning remuneration terms may have a negative impact on employee efficiency. Another conclusion seems reasonable, too, i.e. that the values applied by the company are an important issue for temporary employees, more so for employees with higher level of education.
- It should be also considered possible that better educated and older employees obtain the same information as the others during onboarding, but that their respective requirements were higher. Thus it seems reasonable that the onboarding scheme for temporary employees should take into account their age and education, as well as ensuring that the information they obtain are complete and allows them to work efficiently.

The presented research results allowed to confirm hypotheses H1 and H2. The assessment of the information obtained by temporary employees during onboarding was shown to correlate with gender in certain areas. Similarly, some correlations between the assessment and age and education were found.

To conclude, in relation to the unusual, trilateral contract between user employers, employment agencies and temporary employees, the temporary

employees' perception of onboarding should be studied regularly and treated as an important factor of their efficiency at work.

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WDROŻENIE DO PRACY W OCENIE PRACOWNIKÓW TYMCZASOWYCH

Streszczenie: Celem głównym badań było ustalenie, w jaki sposób pracownicy tymczasowi oceniają sposób ich wdrożenia do pracy z punktu widzenia wykonywania jej w sposób efektywny. Analizie poddano informacje, jakie pracownik otrzymywał w trakcie wdrożenia do pracy, takie jak np.: oczekiwania pracodawcy, w tym na danym stanowisku pracy, organizacja pracy, kultura organizacyjna, obowiązujące w przedsiębiorstwie procedury i wartości oraz sposoby oceny pracy. Opierając się na kwestionariuszu ankiety, przeprowadzono badania ilościowe wśród 286 osób. Okazało się, że pracownicy tymczasowi wysoko oceniają sposób wdrożenia ich do pracy. Okazało się, że im starsi byli pracownicy tymczasowi, tym gorzej oceniali poziom ich wdrożenia do pracy, szczególnie dotyczący organizacji pracy. Ustalono też, że im bardziej wykształceni pracownicy, tym niżej oceniają kompletność udzielonych im podczas wdrożenia informacji z zakresu sposobu oceny pracy i wartości wyznawanych przez przedsiębiorstwo.

Słowa kluczowe: wdrożenie do pracy, pracownik tymczasowy, praca tymczasowa, ocena.