GROWERTALKS

Features

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The Root of Long-Term Engagement

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Just as early root health is the foundation of explosive plant growth in its influence on a plant's ability to develop properly and produce high yields, so is the importance of a thorough onboarding program for new hires in a company. The warm and fuzzy feeling a new employee can get from a positive onboarding strategy is worth its weight in gold. One of, if not the most important things, a company should constantly be conscious of is their company culture. A company's culture is displayed when a new employee begins the interview stages. First impressions are critical, and this starts with not only having a solid interview process, but an onboarding one as well.

Effective onboarding

A constant turnover of employees is expensive, averaging 33% of an employee's base pay and as high as double an employee's annual salary! After managing a restaurant for many years, I learned this firsthand. To fully train one employee, say in the kitchen (think grower), it can cost a business around $3,000. You must factor in the time of the new hire, the time of their trainer, the administrative time taken, the potential mistakes made and even their uniform. Everything has an associated cost to the business.

The roots of retaining and developing talent are established during the onboarding process. Unfortunately, 75% of Human Resource professionals believe their company's onboarding procedures are underutilized. A recent Gallup study showed that only 12% of employees felt their company did a great job onboarding. Unfortunately, only 29% of new hires feel prepared and supported to excel in their new position.

The act of following through on an employee's onboarding has many benefits for a company. Each one of these benefits builds on top of the other, ultimately creating either a strong or ever-changing company foundation. A better employee experience leads to higher engagement. Higher engagement leads to better retention. Better retention creates a stronger culture. A stronger culture makes employees more productive. More production can lead to better business outcomes, which in turn makes your company more attractive to potential employees or clients. This is the reason why a strong onboarding experience is extremely important. Seventy percent of employees who experience a beneficial onboarding process will stay with the company for three or more years. Employees who have positive

relationships with their coworkers are seven times more likely to be engaged.

There are numerous ways to design an onboarding program due to the wide variety of products, services, markets served and variety of roles needed in each company. A template of the basic steps integral to successfully developing a tailored and innovative onboarding process to fit a company best includes:

Preboarding (Ordering quality inputs and plant material): Occurs before the start date and can include facility tours, a welcome aboard care package, company or product education materials, and making sure the new hire has a go-to contact for conversation ahead of starting.

Orientation (Effective propagation SOPs): The completion of all paperwork, review of the employee handbook and major policies, administrative procedures, and initial introductions to other employees they will interact with.

Foundation-building (Establishing healthy root development): Ensures the onboarding process consistently embodies an organization's culture, mission, employee value proposition, brand and other foundational elements. Best-in-class onboarding programs usually last anywhere from 60 to 90 days after orientation and the foundation step takes up most of this time. The new hire is coached on one responsibility or company element at a time, and then tasked to apply that singular responsibility for some time.

Mentoring (Plant health technical resources): The most successful onboard programs align new hires with a mentor they can lean on for guidance, insights about company nuances and overall support.

One common misconception is that some companies substitute onboarding with orientation. Orientation is the first three to five days in which the new employee is introduced to those who they'll be interacting with. A time when they're given an overview of the rules, regulations, values and goals of the business. They're usually provided with materials that need to be completed during this process. Many companies confuse orientation and onboarding as the same thing when orientation is just the first step of a true onboarding process.

Everything in the foundation-building should be personalized to the duties and responsibilities of the position. This part of the process should include training materials detailing the process, organizational management structure, methods and channels of communication, and the overall goals of the position. It should include a time frame in which the new hire can shadow or train behind employees who work in the same capacity and teach them how specific responsibilities are to be accomplished. All new hires should be allowed to practice doing these duties one at a time alongside their trainer who can offer productive feedback on their efforts. Many successful onboarding programs provide an interactive packet in which the new hire can document what they've experienced during the process. These packets usually include explanations of the equipment, technology and processes they'll be responsible for. They also function as a source of information the new hire can reference during and after their onboarding period. Maintaining a consistent onboarding and including these steps will help to ensure that all employees are trained to the level needed to be successful.

Psychologically, an onboarding process is extremely important for the new employee. During this period, they're developing new relationships with their coworkers, learning new and valuable skills to help the business, and developing a perception of their new reality. If the process is detailed, streamlined and rewarding, then the employee will have a positive outlook and stronger determination to be successful. They often share this with their network, in turn enhancing the company image and potentially attracting potential employees to the business. If the process is disorganized, confusing and negative then the new employee may not last long with the company. A revolving door of disengaged employees is extremely expensive for a business. Training and development take time and resources, and the more you do it, the better off the financial health of the business is.

There are many residual benefits of a successful onboarding program. The business gets a "test drive" of its newest members through the process. During this time, unique attributes can also be discovered that can add additional

value to the hire. If a new grower shows they're technologically savvy, this can be focused on, and potential changes to process and responsibilities made. This is just one example of an additional benefit.

If a business can successfully onboard its employees, the benefits supremely outweigh the cost of doing so. Progressing through the structured process may feel daunting or unnecessary, but the health of the business is at stake. Developing a repeatable process will allow it to become more efficient over time and ensure a solid foundation where the business can continue to grow. **GT**

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