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Influencing Employee Retention Through Recruitment, Selection, and Onboarding Practices

Monica Gillette

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Consultancy Project Executive Summary

Organization: Gardner-Webb University School of Education

Project Title: INFLUENCING EMPLOYEE RETENTION THROUGH
RECRUITMENT, SELECTION, AND ONBOARDING
PRACTICES

Candidate: Monica Gillette

Consultancy Coach: Dr. Jeff Hamilton

Defense Date: July 1, 2021

Authorized by: Teri Orsini, Director of Human Resources

Approval

This consultancy project was submitted by Monica Gillette under the direction of the persons listed below. It was submitted to Gardner-Webb University School of Education and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Gardner-Webb University.

Jeff Hamilton, Faculty Advisor
Gardner-Webb University

Date

Teri Orsini, Site Advisor
Director of Human Resources

Date

Abstract

INFLUENCING EMPLOYEE RETENTION THROUGH RECRUITMENT, SELECTION, AND ONBOARDING PRACTICES. Gillette, Monica, 2021: Consultancy Project, Gardner-Webb University.

According to the Society for Human Resource Management (2019), 47% of human resource managers cite employee turnover as their biggest organizational challenge. This is a critical issue within most organizations and can directly affect overall business effectiveness as teams lose internal knowledge centers and see a decrease in productivity when they have vacancies. Moreover, employee turnover can cost the organization as much as three times the employee's salary (Maurer, 2019) in recruitment efforts and lost productivity. There are three key areas in which hiring managers can proactively influence employee retention: employee recruitment methodology, the interview and selection process, and employee onboarding practices. The purpose of this project was to create a training program and supplemental resources for hiring managers that focused on these three factors. This curriculum was based on best practices outlined by the Society for Human Resource Management as well as other research leaders in the field. Although it was designed specifically for a university setting, it can easily be applied to any organization and demonstrates the best practices from a universal human resources lens and is not specific to the education field.

Keywords: employee retention, employee selection, employee onboarding, employee recruitment, human resources

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1 Introduction

1.1 Project Purpose

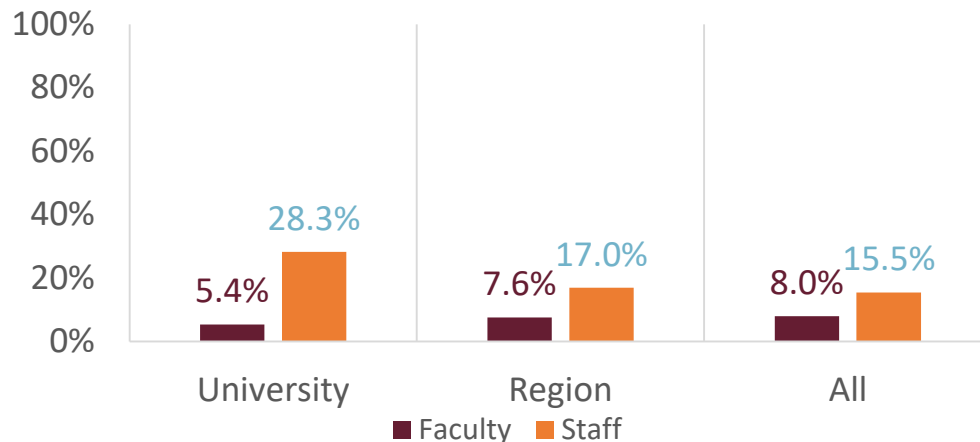
The purpose of this project is to provide resources and support for staff recruitment, selection, and onboarding to increase staff retention. As the consultant, I am ultimately responsible for the quality of the course design and content under the supervision of the Director of Human Resources. Once the project is implemented, Human Resources is responsible to ensure the course is properly distributed and accessible to hiring managers and is responsible to review course feedback and make adjustments as needed. Results will be reviewed on a term-by-term basis, contingent upon how many staff have actually been hired.

The host institution, referred to as the University henceforth, is a private, nonprofit, liberal arts, master's granting university located in the Southeastern United States with approximately 2,500 students, 1,700 of which are undergraduate students. There are 34 undergraduate majors and 66 concentrations with primary academic programs focused on Arts and Sciences, Business, Education, Communications, and Health Sciences. Additionally, there are 10 graduate-level programs. The University currently employs 296 faculty members and 287 staff members.

In review of the University's 2020 Strategic Plan and their internal Comings and Goings Report July 2017, the issue of staff turnover is raised as a critical weakness of the overall institution and a growing trend in comparison to the previous 2 years (Figure). Specifically, staff turnover in 2016-2017 was significantly higher than two benchmarks, a regional group of master's level private universities in the South and the national trends. While this was partially affected by a voluntary early retirement program, staff turnover only decreased to 25.1% when excluding those who retired in 2016-2017, which is still higher than the benchmarks.

Figure

Faculty and Staff Turnover Rates



Moreover, the University 2020 strategic plan identified staff turnover as an institutional weakness and stated,

While our faculty turnover is lower than regional and national benchmarks, our staff turnover, at 25% for the 2016-17 fiscal year, is notably higher. A number of factors contribute to this. The high-quality labor market of our urban city provides a rich employment pool from which to draw, helping us recruit talented, energetic and high-potential staff. It also provides steep competition for our talent. While our compensation is generally in line with comparable universities in metropolitan markets, we cannot compete with local businesses and thus, the majority of staff who leave the University do so for compelling career growth opportunities. The well-documented fluidity of the millennial generation is also at play. Regardless of the causes, the result is a time-consuming cycle of talent acquisition, onboarding and off boarding that is both expensive and results in lost productivity.

The data from the Comings and Goings Report July 2017 identified four key factors of statistical significance that impact the retention of employees: faculty vs. staff, age, race, and length of employment. Faculty are retained at a higher rate, likely due to the tenure options provided. Younger employees (20-29) and older employees (over 60) have lower retention attributed to retirement for older populations and better job prospects and career exploration for younger populations; however, two keys factors impacting retention, race and length of employment, were not as easily explained. Non-White employees were retained at lower rates, particularly in the 2014-2015 academic year, than their White counterparts. Additionally, new employees, identified as those who have been with the University less than 18 months, were retained at significantly lower

rates, indicating potential issues with the recruitment, selection, and onboarding process for new staff employees.

The loss of productivity and institutional knowledge created by frequent turnover can deeply impact a department's ability to effectively reach goals while placing a strain on remaining employees to pick up the remaining work. In addition to expanded workloads, departments also incur lost time recruiting, interviewing, and training new staff members, which decreases outputs and can significantly impact morale as remaining employees see others frequently leaving. Given that the University is experiencing the highest percentage of turnover with new employees, as defined by 18 months or less of employment, the cost of this turnover has a significant impact on the financial stability of the institution as well as its productivity as it relates to department outputs. Staff turnover was estimated to cost the University \$2.5 million in 2016 alone. Additionally, long-term turnover of new employees can damage the University's brand as an employer, take time away from critical university imperatives, and distract supervisors and employees.

Although senior leadership was aware of this issue, little time or resources were available to address it, as human resources did not have the capacity or skill set to effectively do so. However, the following steps were taken in 2016-2017 to begin mitigating this issue:

- Onboarding checklist for managers -- for those who use it, creates a warm, welcoming landing for new employees (studies show new hires often decide in their first few weeks of work if this is the place for them. Most new hires were often job-seeking when they were hired and may not hesitate to accept a better offer if one presents itself)
- Skill tests for administrative positions (Excel, Word, PowerPoint, Outlook, office skills, writing skills)
- Use of Harrison Assessments for higher-level positions to determine how suitable the candidate is for the job

Human Resources also launched the REPS (Royal Employee Peer Support) program in the fall of 2018 to assist new faculty and staff in transitioning to the university and learning the campus culture. Additionally, the following items were identified as potential next steps:

- Dedicate resources to recruiting, selection, and onboarding
- Make an institutional commitment to Counseling For Improved Performance
- Teach supervisors the art of off-ramping
- Dedicate resources for professional development
- Address retention of non-White employees

To address these challenges, this consultancy project focused on creating resources and training to support the recruitment, selection, and onboarding of new employees.

1.2 Associated Documents

- Appendix A – New hire survey
- Appendix B – Staff recruitment, selection, and onboarding course resources
- Appendix C – Professional Literature Review

1.3 Project Plan Maintenance

The consultancy project began in the fall of 2018 as a partnership between the consultant and the University under the supervision of the Vice President for Strategic Planning and the Director of Human Resources, all of whom made up the project team. The initial plan was to create in-person workshops and supplemental resources for hiring managers related to recruitment, selection, and onboarding new staff members. The project team decided to start with the onboarding practices first, as they were identified as critical factors impacting turnover and could provide immediate improvement to the process. Once the research and resources were created for onboarding, the project work would then shift to recruitment and selection. All changes, adjustments, and approvals were presented by the consultant to the project team and approved by the Director of Human Resources.

2 Project Scope

2.1 Outline of Partnering Organization's Objectives

2.1.1 Objectives

Objective 1: Increase new employee (staff only) retention

- Strategies
 - Revising onboarding process
 - Develop programs to support new employees
 - Develop training for hiring managers
 - Develop onboarding guidebook for hiring managers

Objective 2: Increase the effectiveness of the recruitment process

- Strategies
 - Review current recruitment processes
 - Research best practices for recruitment on HR sites such as CUPA HR and HERC

Objective 3: Increase consistency and effectiveness of selection process

- Strategies
 - Develop a guidebook for hiring managers with tools and resources that focus on behavior-based interviewing and include candidate evaluations, interview questions, and behavioral scenarios
 - Develop training for hiring managers that teach skills outlined in the guidebook

2.1.2 Success Criteria

The success of this project will be measured by two key factors: the percentage of new staff turnover after project implementation in comparison with 2016-2017 data and the overall assessment feedback from hiring managers who complete the training course.

2.1.3 Risks

While there were no identifiable risks to the partnering organization based on the implementation of this project, the University's turnover rate of new employees posed a serious risk to the institution. This project focused on mitigating that risk by creating a structured recruitment process for all staff vacancies as well as training and resources for hiring managers to ensure fidelity of the process.

2.2 Outline of Student's Objectives

2.2.1 Objectives

Initial Objective: To utilize existing skillsets around recruitment, selection, and onboarding to inform the way the University implements these processes while gaining functional experience in Human Resources.

Adapted Objective: Establish a training course and assessment program using the ADDIE model to create structure and support for hiring managers with staff vacancies while utilizing existing human resources skill sets and developing a deeper understanding of the talent acquisition and development process.

2.2.2 Success Criteria

The success of this project was measured by the knowledge acquisition around recruitment, selection, and onboarding and the ability to articulate and implement best practices in these areas. Success was also measured by the ability to create the established deliverable at the desired quality of the partnering organization within the agreed-upon time frames.

2.2.3 Risks

The major risk to this project's success is the fidelity with which hiring managers utilize the resources and training modules provided. To mitigate this risk, the University's Human Resources team will implement a formal rollout of the program to hiring managers and communicate these changes to the campus community as a whole.

2.3 Definitive Scope Statement

This project was responsible for creating a training program for hiring managers that focused on best practices for recruitment, selection, interviewing, and onboarding processes for incoming staff members. The primary goal of this project was to create a training course within the university's learning management system that could be utilized by Human Resources as the primary training tool and document repository for hiring managers.

3 Deliverables

3.1 To Partnering Organization

The following are the deliverables to the partnering organization agreed upon by the project team:

Deliverable	Due Date
Onboarding research	February 2019
Onboarding interviews	March 2019
Review of new hire survey	March 2019
New hire survey analysis	April 2019
First draft of onboarding guide	April 2019
Initial research on recruitment practices	August 2019
Second draft of onboarding guide	November 2019
Final draft of onboarding guide	April 2020
Initial research on staff selection and interviewing	October 2020
Revised project proposal	November 2020
Creation of course shell for staff selection and onboarding course in Canvas with content outlines	January 2021
Completion of Section 1: Preparing to post an open position	February 16, 2021
Completion of Section 2: Employee recruitment	March 2, 2021
Completion of Section 3: Preparing for interviews	March 16, 2021
Completion of Section 4: Interviewing for success	March 30, 2021
Completion of Section 5: New staff onboarding	April 13, 2021
Completion of course assessment quizzes	April 27, 2021
Final edits to Canvas course	May 11, 2021

3.2 From Student

The following are the deliverables to the consultant agreed upon by the project team:

Deliverable	Due Date
University Comings and Goings report	November 2018
Results of the new hire survey	April 2019
Existing HR documents related to recruitment, selection, and onboarding	Continuously as needed

4 Project Approach

4.1 Project Lifecycle Processes

The project life cycle consisted of six phases as follows:

Phase 1: Initial project proposal and approval

- During this phase, I reviewed the initial organizational challenge of staff retention including University data supporting the issue and developed the project proposal. Based on University data, I concluded the issue likely stemmed from poor recruitment, selection, and onboarding practices, and I created a proposal to mitigate these issues. I submitted the proposal to the Director of Human Resources and the Vice President of Strategic Planning for approval and we created the initial project team. The initial project plan focused on three key areas: recruitment, selection/interviewing, and onboarding. The project focused on creating in-person workshops and leading training for hiring managers for each of these areas. Workshops would also include tangible resource guides and templates for hiring managers.

Phase 2: Onboarding research, new hire interviews, new hire survey collection

- During this phase of the project, the initial project team met bi-weekly to review the organizational issue of staff retention. Our initial focus was onboarding practices as data indicated that was the most critical issue. The project committee conducted interviews with recently hired employees as well as hiring managers to understand the lived experiences of the University's onboarding practices. We also conducted a quantitative research study to compare with our qualitative data.

Phase 3: Creation of onboarding guide for hiring managers

- Based on the data collected in Phase 2, I created a formal onboarding program, timeline, and resource guide for hiring managers. The project committee met regularly to provide feedback on the overall onboarding process and the guide for hiring managers.

Phase 4: Initial research for recruitment

- During this phase, the University went through several leadership changes, including a new President and Vice President of Strategic Planning. The project was paused to allow time for the new Vice President of Strategic Planning to review project work and regain approval for project plans. While the pre-approval process was underway, I conducted initial project research on best practices for employee recruitment.

Phase 5: Initial research for staff selection and interviewing

- During this phase, the University was addressing the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and did not feel it was appropriate to move forward with the project on the originally proposed timeline. The project team elected to continue gathering and reviewing necessary research, and I began researching best practices for staff selection and interviewing.

Phase 6: Course development and review

- During this phase, I submitted a new project proposal focused on adapting our initial project plans to the changing landscape of the pandemic. I suggested transitioning the plan from an in-person implementation to a virtual, self-directed course within the University learning management system, Canvas. After gaining project approval, I created the course and utilized all project research to develop course content.

4.2 Project Management Processes

Throughout the duration of the project, I was the lead for all project work including scheduling project meetings, assigning project timelines, and communicating consistently with stakeholders. All project documents, research, data, treatment plans, and proposals were housed in Microsoft OneDrive folders that were shared with the Director of Human Resources and the Vice President of Strategic Planning. I communicated project updates when key milestones were complete and sent quarterly updates via email. During the initial stages of the project in the spring of 2019, the project group met bi-weekly to conduct interviews, review research, and map out the project timeline. Once the main project work began, I scheduled monthly update meetings with the project team to review progress.

As the project changed course in the fall of 2020, I met with the Director of Human Resources on a bi-weekly basis to share updates, review course content, and gather feedback. I presented any changes to the project plans, timelines, or implementation to the Director of Human Resources for approval. When necessary, the Director of Human Resources would garnish approval from the Vice President of Strategic Planning.

4.3 Project Support Processes

Throughout the course of the project, I led all project timelines, proposed all project plans, and completed all content work. The Director of Human Resources reviewed work throughout the project, provided feedback, and sought approval from the Vice President of Strategic Planning as needed.

4.4 Organization

4.4.1 Project Team

The consultant, under the supervision of the Director of Human Resources, completed the primary work for this project. The Vice President of Strategic Planning served as high-level authorization for continued project work and ensured alignment with University objectives.

The following are stakeholders for this project:

- Consultancy student
- Consultancy supervisor
- Vice President for Strategic Planning
- Director of Human Resources
- Benefits Specialist for Human Resources
- Hiring managers

The project work team included

- Consultancy student
- Director of Human Resources
- Vice President for Strategic Planning (only for high-level project approvals)

5 Communications Plan

Who – Stakeholder	What info do they need	Why do they need it	When will they get it	How will they get it
The University	Detailed project proposal	To approve the project, objectives, timelines, and implementation methods	Fall 2018	Via email from the project consultant
	Best practices research for onboarding	To best inform the proposed treatment plans	February 2019	Research was presented during project team meetings and shared in the Microsoft OneDrive folder
	New hire survey analysis	To best inform the proposed treatment plans	April 2019	Data were shared, discussed, and analyzed during project meeting
	Onboarding guide for hiring managers	To review and edit content that will be shared with hiring managers	April 2019	Guide was shared during project meeting and shared in the Microsoft OneDrive folder
	Best practices research for recruitment	To best inform the proposed treatment plans	August 2019	Research was shared in the Microsoft OneDrive folder
	Best practices research for staff selection and interviewing	To best inform the proposed treatment plans	October 2020	Research was shared in the Microsoft OneDrive folder
	Outline for Staff Recruitment, Selection, and Onboarding course	To review content and provide feedback on course learning outcomes, modality, and research-informed content	January 2021	Outline was shared via Canvas LMS and discussed during project team meeting
	Final content for Staff Recruitment, Selection, and Onboarding course	To review content and provide feedback	May 11, 2021	Outline was share via Canvas LMS and discussed during project team meeting
	General project updates	To monitor progress towards original goals	As project milestones are complete with quarterly updates	Via email from the project consultant
The Consultant	University Comings and Goings Report, 2016/2017	To understand current staff retention data and turnover rates	Fall of 2018	Via email from the Vice President of Strategic Planning contingent upon confidentiality agreement
	Results of the New Hire Survey	To analyze data and understand the lived onboarding experience of new employees	March 2019	Via email from the Vice President of Strategic Planning

	Existing human resource and university documents related to recruitment, selection, and onboarding	To understand what systems exist to support staff retention and what areas need improvement	Spring 2019	Via email from the Director of Human Resources
Hiring Managers	Notification of changes to the recruitment process		Summer 2021	Director of Human Resources will communicate the change management plan for staff recruitment, selection, and onboarding
	Access to the staff selection and onboarding course		Summer 2021	Director of Human Resources will communicate instructions on how to self-enroll in the course

Year 3: Revised project proposal and course content creation	START DATE	END DATE	September 2020	October 2020	November 2020	December 2020	January 2021	February 2021	March 2021	April 2021	May 2021	June 2021	July 2021
Updated project proposal and submitted to project team for approval	9/1	11/1											
Build course outline	11/1	12/31											
Built course shell in Canvas under 5 key modules	1/1	2/28											
Section 1: Preparing to Post an Open Position	1/11	2/16											
Section 2: Employee Recruitment	2/1	3/2											
Section 3: Preparing for Interviews	2/1	3/16											
Section 4: Interviewing for Success	2/1	3/30											
Section 5: New Staff Onboarding	3/1	4/13											
Create course assessments	4/15	5/11											
Pilot course with small group of hiring managers	3/15	6/1											
Projected project launch	7/1												

6.1 Work Breakdown Structure

Based on client needs and proposed implementation timelines, the consultant set all project deadlines and completed all major project work. The Director of Human Resources provided feedback on the content and worked with the Vice President of Strategic Planning for continued project support and approval.

The project timeline was as follows.

Fall 2018

- Review initial institutional data to validate the critical issue
- Work with HR and strategic planning to determine what steps have already been taken to address the issue
- Complete consultancy project proposal

Spring 2019

- Work with HR to review current recruitment and hiring practices
- Review initiatives that have already been put into place such as the REPS program
- Research best practices for selection and onboarding
- Begin brainstorming potential new programs and practices based on research
- Identify expected benefits of project and metrics of success
- Send initial new hire survey
- Develop the first draft of the onboarding guide

Summer 2019

- Review results of new hire survey

- Develop plans for new programs and/or updated practices for selection and onboarding
- Identify necessary resources needed to implement new programs and/or practices as well as key stakeholders who can ensure successful implementation across campus

Fall 2019

There were unexpected leadership changes at the University including a new President and VP of Strategic Planning. Because of these delays, some parts of the approval and implementation process were delayed as new staff transitioned to their roles and a new staff member was added to the HR team.

- Consultant met with the HR team and new VP for Strategic Planning to revitalize the project and gain endorsement of the VP
- HR team reviewed all consultancy work and provided feedback to the consultant

Spring and Summer 2020

Due to COVID-19, the University closed for the spring and summer, and the consultancy supervision team, including the VP of Strategic Planning, Director of Human Resources, and the consultant were unable to make progress on the project as the University addressed other concerns. It was also not feasible to implement training on staff recruitment, selection, or onboarding during an extended hiring freeze.

- The consultant continued making final edits to the onboarding resource guide and began researching best practices for recruitment and selection, taking into account how some practices may have changed in light of the pandemic.

Fall 2020

In response to the prolonged pandemic, the consultant presented a revised project proposal requesting to transition from the original plan of in-person workshops to an online course modality that could be implemented on an individual basis as hiring managers had vacancies and were approved for new hires. The course would be created within the University's new learning management system, Canvas, which was set to go live in January 2021.

- Finalized onboarding guide
- Updated project proposal and submitted to project team for approval
- Began building course outline

Spring 2021

- Built course in Canvas under five key modules expanding the project scope slightly to include the full staff recruitment cycle beginning with the approval process paperwork with Human Resources as well as updating job descriptions
- Create course assessment

- Pilot course with a small group of hiring managers

Summer 2021

- Implement course for all hiring managers with vacancies
- Communicate change management plan through University
- Review feedback and course assessments for any needed revisions

6.2 Resources

The following resources were used for this project:

- Microsoft Office Suite
- Microsoft OneDrive
- Canvas Learning Management System
- RingCentral Meetings
- Whiteboards, flip charts, and notepad during the interview stages
- SHRM online resources
- CUPA HR online resources

7 Milestones

Milestone Number	Title	Forecast date
1	Establish project committee	Fall 2018
2	Determine project scope, goals, and timelines	January 2019
3	Conduct initial onboarding research	February 2019
4	Create new hire survey to assess current onboarding practices	February 2019
5	Conduct onboarding interviews with new staff members	March 2019
6	Send new hire survey to all staff hired within the last 12 months	Early March 2019
7	Analysis of new hire survey results	April 2019
8	Initial draft of Onboarding guide for hiring managers complete	April 2019
9	Initial research on recruitment practices	August 2019
10	Conduct project risk analysis	October 2019
11	Second draft of onboarding guide complete	November 2019
12	Final draft of onboarding guide complete	April 2020
13	Review and revision of project goals	May 2020
14	Conduct initial research for recruitment and selection practices	Summer 2020
15	Conduct initial research of staff selection and interviewing practices	October 2020
16	Revised project proposal and re-approval process	November 2020
17	Creation of Quality Assurance Plans	November 2020
18	Set up course shell for Staff Selection and Onboarding Course in Canvas with content outlines	January 2021
19	Completion of Section 1: Preparing to Post an Open Position	February 16, 2021
20	Completion of Section 2: Employee Recruitment	March 2, 2021
21	Completion of Section 3: Preparing for Interviews	March 16, 2021
22	Completion of Section 4: Interviewing for Success	March 30, 2021
23	Completion of Section 5: New Staff Onboarding	April 13, 2021
24	Completion of course assessment quizzes	April 27, 2021
25	Completion of all final course edits	May 11, 2021

8 Metrics and Results

Methodology

For the purposes of this project proposal, the action research focus was on the revision and enhancement of the current onboarding practices of new staff members. Given that senior leadership and human resources were not aware of what consistent practices existed university-wide, a convergent phenomenological study was conducted to better understand the lived experience of new employees and supervisors related to onboarding practices. Qualitative and quantitative data were collected concurrently and analyzed together to best inform future recommendations.

The data collection timeline was as follows:

- Fall 2018
 - Research employee retention
- Early 2019 (January-March)
 - Review of literature and best practices
 - Focus groups with campus partners
 - Document collection
 - New Hire Survey sent
- Spring 2019 (April-May)
 - Reviewed initial findings
 - Developed proposed treatments
- Fall 2019
 - Begin development of treatments

Qualitative Data Collection

There were two primary sets of data collected for qualitative analysis: focus groups and documents. Focus group interviews were conducted in a semi-structured format with guiding questions but not in a specific order or set structure. Conversations were exploratory in nature, and participants were asked to share their experiences. Researchers were able to engage in conversation and ask additional follow-up questions as appropriate. The first focus group consisted of employees who had gone through onboarding within the last 18 months. There were five new employees present as well as four researchers, one of whom was designated as a note-taker.

The following questions guided the conversation:

- Describe what onboarding looks like for new staff members in your area.
- Do you have a structured schedule for your onboarding?
- If so what is included? Why is that included?
- What do you think your department does well?
- What areas do you think are lacking?
- What do your new employees appear to struggle with the most in regard to adjusting to the new role?

- What information and communication have you assumed new employees received from HR?
- What information if any do you feel new employees are missing or do not understand?

The second focus group collected documents and organizational data regarding onboarding practices from hiring managers and used the same guiding questions as the first focus group. Researchers asked questions about what information hiring managers elected to include or not include in the onboarding process to gain a better understanding of their rationale for doing so. Researchers also asked about some of the underlying assumptions and beliefs hiring managers had about the process.

The following documents and artifacts were collected:

- Current onboarding documents from all departments that had them
- HR orientation documents and presentations
- Training documents
- List of historical documents given to new employees -- what was typically “passed down”

Quantitative Data Collection

Quantitative data were collected in the form of a new hire survey, which would allow for anonymous feedback from employees and would establish a baseline against which to compare future data. The new hire survey was sent out via email to all new employees, as defined by 18 months of employment or less, at the same time as focus group interviews were being conducted. A survey also allowed us to contact the full population of new employees and collect information to compare to our qualitative data. Last, the survey could also provide quantitative feedback that could help articulate the true nature of the retention issue to senior leadership and/or the board of trustees. Questions on the survey were broken up into three areas: human resources orientation, department orientation, and overall experience. Please see Appendix A for a full copy of the survey. Of the 68 new employees, 42 responded to the survey for a response rate of 62% with 61% of the male population and 63% of the female population responding. For the purpose of the data analysis, any neutral response counted as “disagree” to convert the 5-point scale of the survey to a 4-point scale for proper analysis.

Results and Initial Findings

Data analysis and review from focus groups and new hire surveys were conducted together. Responses were coded into central themes that appeared in both data sets. The initial review of survey data indicated that new employees were overall satisfied with onboarding but felt there was a lack of organization and institutional culture training. Only 35% of employees indicated they had a formal onboarding within their department, highlighting a huge gap in sufficient training. Additionally, both focus groups and the new hire survey indicated that many small components of the transition such as having a workstation set up or getting keys to an office were missed

during onboarding. Department training lacked basic office training such as how to use the printer system, where key offices were located, and an overview of institutional lingo. While not apparent in both data sets, qualitative data also showed that hiring managers and human resources both had assumptions about what parts of onboarding were provided by the other, leading to certain things being overlooked. Quantitative data showed that only 76% of new hires anticipated working for the institution in 2 years' time, and only 88% of new hires felt they made the right decision when coming to the University.

Discussion

In response to these data, a robust review and revision of the onboarding process began in the spring of 2019. Human resources revised their new hire program; condensing some information to make space for content new employees felt more critical. They also added a campus tour, a stop at campus police to get an employee ID and parking pass, and a brief introduction to campus culture. Supervisors were asked to communicate with new hires ahead of their first day as a way to welcome them and communicate critical information needed prior to starting. An onboarding guide was created as a resource for hiring managers, and training sessions are currently being planned to facilitate the rollout of the new onboarding program campus-wide. Due to a transition in university leadership at several levels, the initial timeline for program implementation was delayed. A formative program evaluation should be created in advance of program rollout to ensure fidelity of implementation. After the onboarding program is in place, it is recommended that the university prioritize its new hire selection methodology and create a standardized search committee format for staff vacancies. A focus on behavior-based interviewing and bias prevention training should be incorporated into these programs. Similar to the onboarding program, a formal resource guide and training program for hiring managers should be created as well as a method for ensuring the fidelity of implementation.

9 Risks, Constraints, Assumptions

9.1 Risks

Due to the nature of my project, there are no major risks to the institution related to providing training and resources for hiring managers to ensure effective recruitment, selection, and onboarding of staff; however, some minor risks could affect the success of the project itself. These risks are outlined and assessed below.

Risk Description	Mitigation Plan (what to do to avoid the risk occurring)	Contingency Plan (what to do if the risk occurs)	Impact (what the impact will be to the project if the risk occurs)	Likelihood of occurrence (e.g., %, or high/medium/low)
Learning anxiety for staff/hiring managers around new expectations for recruitment, selection, and onboarding	The training course was offered in an online modality utilizing the Universities existing Learning Management System.	Human Resources can also provide in-person trainings as needed in addition to coaching for hiring managers	High	Medium
Access to training resources when needed	All resources for recruitment, staff selection, and onboarding will be housed online, can be accessed at any time and can be made available in paper form in HR Office upon request	Copies of all resources will be kept outside of the University Learning Management System to prevent any loss should systems change or be impacted by external factors	High	Low
Inability to train all possible hiring managers; Change of hiring managers; Job transitions that would promote someone to hiring manager level	Training will be housing in the University Learning Management Systems and can be sent to hiring managers as soon as a vacancy occurs	Human Resources will keep records of all current hiring managers on file and update routinely as positions and staff change	Low	Medium
Funding for recruitment efforts	Given that many job posting sites charge per	Human Resources will	Medium	Medium

	posting, funding for such advertisements may not be viable. To mitigate the impact that may have on reaching diverse and qualified candidates, this project will be focused on finding options that do not require funding such as posting in professional social media groups and teaching staff how to use their networks to share job posting and identify potential candidates. Recommendations for the effective use of paid posting sites based on job level were also made.	work with individual departments to acquire funding as needed for recruitment efforts		
Individual bias in the staff selection process	Non-bias training was provided as a part of the training course for all hiring managers. These resources can also be shared with search committees.	Human Resources will address complaints about bias in the selection process if and when they arise.	Medium	High

9.2 Constraints

The only major constraint to this project was the lack of fiscal resources. As such, treatments predominately focused on providing resources and training. However, during the course of the project, the COVID-19 pandemic did limit the University's ability to implement the project on the initially planned timeline and format. Adjustments were made to the project timeline and modality to address these constraints.

9.3 Assumptions

The following assumptions were made regarding this project:

- The current challenge with employee retention will continue to be a challenge for the organization.
- The need to address employee retention will continue to be a priority for the University.
- The treatments put into place to address employee retention will be implemented with fidelity by hiring managers and supervisors.
- Based on literature review and research, the treatments we put into place will address the issue of employee retention.

- Other factors outside the scope of the project (such as employee motivation, compensation, and job market competition) will not impact the effectiveness of the treatments.
- Human Resources and the Vice President for Strategic planning will continue to support this project.

10 Financial Plan

Due to the nature of the project and the limited fiscal resources available, the project does not have an anticipated budget. The project will focus predominantly on building training programs for onboarding new employees and guidelines for interviewing and selecting new employees. The only “expense” is the cost of time for the consultant to develop materials and training in addition to the time to share resources with hiring managers across campus.

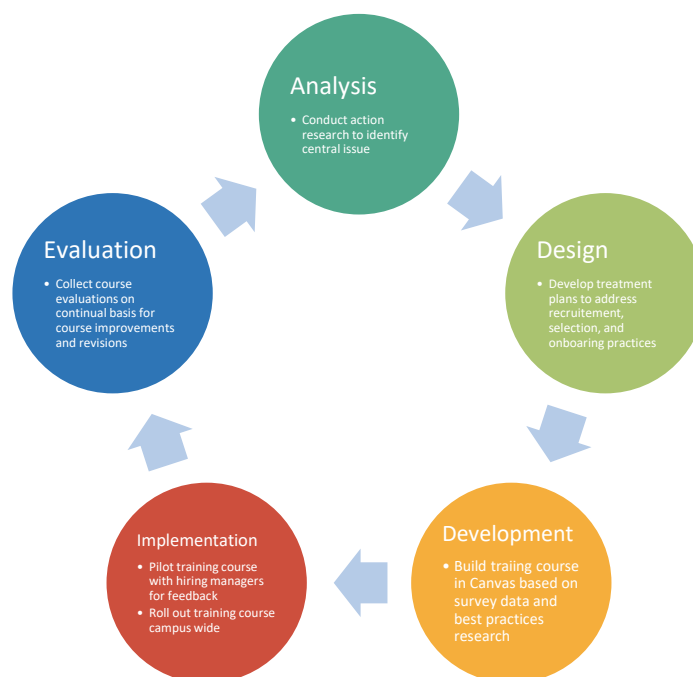
11 Quality Assurance Plan

In response to the current pandemic, this project saw several key changes in regard to implementation and assessment. Given that this project focused on new staff recruitment, interviewing, and onboarding practices, it hardly felt appropriate to begin implementing workshops on these topics while the University was on a hiring freeze. Additionally, the original plans were to host training sessions in person with hiring managers, which was no longer feasible given the health risks. To keep the current project momentum, I submitted a new project proposal suggesting an adjustment to the previous implementation and assessment plans based on unforeseen circumstances. The updated proposal focused on transitioning the training and evaluation of these workshops to a virtual format via the University Learning Management System, Canvas. Given the change to a virtual instructional design, utilization of the ADDIE Model was most appropriate when preparing a Quality Assurance Plan, as it is specific to instructional design.

Purpose of the Project

The purpose of this project was to provide resources and support for staff recruitment, selection, and onboarding to increase staff retention. As the consultant, I was ultimately responsible for the quality of the course design and content under the supervision of the Director of Human Resources. Once the project was implemented, Human Resources was responsible to ensure the course was properly distributed and accessible to hiring managers and to review course feedback and make adjustments as needed. Results will be reviewed on a term-by-term basis, contingent upon how many staff were actually hired.

ADDIE Model



Analysis

Three key issues came up when determining how to best provide training and support to hiring managers. First, the need for in-time learning that is close to the event itself was critical to ensure program fidelity. It would be detrimental to hiring managers to receive training several months before they might hire a new staff member and risk their ability to remember key details. Additionally, we needed a centralized space to house resources throughout the full hiring process that allowed hiring managers easy access to templates as well as training modules. Last, in light of the current pandemic, we needed a way to implement training that did not require in-person meetings or large online webinars that might exacerbate already fatigued employees. Based on prior New Hire Survey results and interviews with campus partners, we knew the onboarding process, in particular, needed a lot more support, as many hiring managers were not doing any form of onboarding with new staff. Additionally, we were aware that search processes were often unstructured, asking candidates different questions and making it hard to compare applicants equitably. Therefore, our key goals are to create a New Staff Recruitment and Onboarding course for hiring managers that will provide training and resources around recruitment, selection, and onboarding. Ideally, this will lead to a more positive experience for new hires and ensure that we are selecting the best candidate for the role in a fair and equitable way.

Design

The course was designed in Canvas LMS and utilized text, video, and graphics to share information. The course was designed in five sections: Preparing to Post an Open Position, Employee Recruitment, Preparing for Interview, Interviewing for Success, and New Staff Onboarding. There are short quizzes after each module to check for learning retention.

After completing this course, hiring managers should be able to

- Identify three ways to recruit applications
- Understand implicit bias and how to mitigate it in the staff selection process
- Utilize behavior-based interview questions and the STAR method
- Understand what information new employees need before their first day and how to share that information
- Understand the importance of proper onboarding and its role in employee retention
- Know how to structure training schedules for new staff
- Understand how to set sequential goals for new employees at 1-, 3-, 6-, 9-, and 12-month intervals

Development

The course was developed over the course of 6 months under the supervision of the Director of Human Resources, who provided continual feedback through course creation. The course was then piloted with hiring managers for additional feedback and revision.

Implementation

Once Human Resources is notified of a staff resignation, they will send instructions to the hiring manager on how to enroll in the Staff Recruitment and Onboarding Course. Hiring managers can review modules at their own pace but will have short quizzes throughout to check for learning retention. The course will also house all of the resources and templates hiring managers need such as interview questions, sample interview and onboarding schedules, and all necessary new hire paperwork they need to complete. The program should go live university-wide during the summer of 2021.

Evaluation

Key indicators of success will be the New Hire Survey that goes to new employees after their first week. Ideally, all new employees will agree or strongly agree with each of the following questions on the survey:

- My computer was set up and ready for me.
- My workstation/office was set up and ready for me.
- I was shown how to operate the phone, voicemail, and email systems.
- I received instructions on how to request technical support from the IT staff.
- I was introduced to my coworkers.
- Someone ate lunch with me on my first day.
- I was given a copy of my job description.
- I have a formal training plan for my position.
- My supervisor was available to respond to my questions.
- I felt welcomed.
- What's the best thing about your first week at the University?
- What's something that would have improved your first week at the University?
- What three words come to mind when you think of your first week at the University?
- I am proud to work for the University.
- I recommend the University as a great place to work.
- I made the right decision in coming to the University.
- I see myself still working at the University in 2 years' time.

Positive responses to these questions will serve as the fidelity check that hiring managers have successfully implemented the onboarding steps outlined in the course. Human Resources can follow up directly with the hiring manager should they receive negative responses, providing individualized coaching.

In addition to the new hire survey results, the responses to the learning objective questions (listed in the Design section) will also be used as measures of course quality. Ideally, all hiring managers will agree or strongly agree with each skill assessment question. This assessment will be built into the course and can be monitored as hiring managers take the course, allowing for immediate course feedback and correction.

Appendix A

New Hire Survey

I am (*select one*)

- Faculty
- Staff

My hire date was in the last (*select one*)

- 12 weeks
- 6 months
- 12 months

Our goal is to provide a positive experience for you during your first days with UNIVERSITY, and we would appreciate your feedback regarding your orientation and onboarding experience. We will use this information to improve procedures for future new hires.

HR ORIENTATION	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	N/A or Don't remember
1. I was provided clear directions regarding my first-day orientation meeting (<i>location, time, what to bring, etc.</i>).						
2. The person presenting information was able to answer my questions during orientation.						
3. Orientation was presented in an easy-to-understand format.						
4. Sufficient time was allotted for the HR orientation meeting.						
5. Information provided about UNIVERSITY was useful and relevant.						
6. Information provided about UNIVERSITY benefits was useful and relevant.						
7. What's one thing you remember about your HR orientation? Why?						
8. What information, if any, did you wish was included in your HR orientation that wasn't?						
9. What was most helpful about your HR orientation?						

10. What could we improve about the HR orientation?
11. COMMENTS:

DEPARTMENT ORIENTATION	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	N/A or Don't remember
12. My computer was set up and ready for me.						
13. My workstation/office was set up and ready for me.						
14. I was shown how to operate the phone, voicemail, and email systems.						
15. I received instructions on how to request technical support from the IT staff.						
16. I was introduced to my co-workers.						
17. Someone ate lunch with me on my first day.						
18. I was given a copy of my job description.						
19. I have a formal training plan for my position.						
20. My supervisor was available to respond to my questions.						
21. I felt welcomed.						
22. What's the best thing about your first week at UNIVERSITY?						
23. What's something that would have improved your first week at UNIVERSITY?						
24. What three words come to mind when you think of your first week at UNIVERSITY?						
25. Comments:						

OVERALL	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	N/A or Don't remember
26. I am proud to work for UNIVERSITY.						
27. I recommend UNIVERSITY as a great place to work.						
28. I made the right decision in coming to UNIVERSITY.						
29. I see myself still working at UNIVERSITY in two years' time.						
30. Comments:						

Appendix B

Staff Recruitment, Selection, and Onboarding Course Content

Due to the nature of this project, all course content created for the University is accessible in the folder linked below.

[Staff Recruitment, Selection, and Onboarding Course Content](#)

Appendix C

Professional Literature Review

According to the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM, 2019), half of all senior-level managers who were outside hires fail within 18 months, half of all hourly workers leave new jobs within the first 120 days, and turnover can cost as much as three times the employee's salary (Maurer, 2019). Forty-seven percent of human resource managers have cited retention as their top challenge (SHRM, 2019), as turnover also means loss of organizational knowledge, decreased productivity, and higher dissatisfaction among retained employees who must pick up extra work. The need for leaders to mitigate turnover is paramount to the success of any organization, as it impacts financial stability as well as productivity. Leaders must ensure they are managing organizational factors, such a salary and culture, which can impact employee satisfaction, in addition to making sure employees have role clarity and clear goals to guide their work. However, they must also examine how they bring new members to their teams, starting with the selection process and ending with their onboarding practices to ensure they are in control of all factors influencing employee retention.

In reviewing the literature on employee retention and turnover, three key themes arose as factors that most directly influence an employee's decision to leave a company. The first key factor is motivation and the role that specific environmental factors, such as the quality of work relationships, clearly defined roles, and compensation, may play in retention. Second, the process of evaluating new employees and determining who to hire can significantly affect whether or not they elect to stay in their roles. Last, assuming the employee is motivated and is the correct person for the role, how they are onboarded can

influence their overall competency and satisfaction in a position, thus affecting overall retention efforts.

Motivation

According to SHRM (2019), employee dissatisfaction is one of the leading causes of turnover. In reviewing several motivational theories, Ramlall (2004) concluded that motivation is directly linked to employee retention. Specific theories define factors contributing to employee dissatisfaction and outline how employers can work to mitigate those factors. Specifically, Hackman and Oldham's (1974) job characteristics model and Herzberg's Two-Factor theory (Bess & Dee, 2008) help explain the controllable environmental influences that directly affect employee retention. Hackman and Oldham's job characteristics model outlines the need for clear expectations and responsibilities, meaningful work, and tangible results to ensure motivation and satisfaction of employees, all of which contribute to overall retention. When employers ensure team members have clear job descriptions and supervisors outline expectations, performance metrics, and goals, employees will have a better understanding of their specific responsibilities as well as how their work fits into the overall function of the organization. This allows employees to create meaning in their work and feel like they are a part of a larger, more important whole. By outlining clear goals and performance metrics, leaders give employees as well as teams a common purpose and a clear vision of success. When employees have clear expectations and know what success looks like, they are more likely to reach those goals, thus feeling satisfied with their work, leading to higher retention (Hackman & Oldham, 1974).

Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory (Bess & Dee, 2008) explains that we can be both satisfied and dissatisfied at the same time based on our motivators (things that build satisfaction) and hygienes (things that build dissatisfaction). Therefore, employers need to understand and recognize that employees can have dual feelings regarding their positions. Herzberg explained that satisfaction and dissatisfaction are not opposites of the other but rather separate continuums. Motivators influence satisfaction but not dissatisfaction, and hygienes influence dissatisfaction but not satisfaction. Workplace factors such as achievement, recognition, and responsibility serve as motivators, while factors such as interpersonal relationships, working conditions, and salary serve as hygienes. Therefore, an employee can be satisfied with motivators such as their level of responsibility and how they are recognized for achievements, but those factors will not account for the dissatisfaction of things like salary and workplace relationships. If any employee is underpaid and unhappy with their current team, no amount of responsibility or recognition can make up for that. Similarly, an employee can be well compensated but feel underappreciated or like their work goes unnoticed. No amount of financial incentive will impact their satisfaction with achievement, recognition, or responsibility. Employers must ensure they account for both motivators and hygienes as they think about employee retention efforts and ensure they balance factors in each area.

It is important that leaders understand what factors contribute to employee motivation and ultimately satisfaction so the organization can work as efficiently and effectively as possible. Although motivation alone only accounts for a 9% maximum increase in performance, even a small margin of increase across an organization can have

a significant impact on the performance outcomes an organization can achieve (Bess & Dee, 2008).

Employee Selection Methodology

SHRM (2019) also identified recruitment as a key practice linked to employee retention, stating “recruitment practices can strongly influence turnover, and considerable research shows that presenting applicants with a realistic job preview during the recruitment process has a positive effect on retention of those new hires” (“Key Retention Strategies” section). In addition to making sure the listed job description is clear and aligns with actual responsibilities, it is important to ensure that hiring managers mitigate for bias in the process, do not focus on “organizational fit,” and remove unnecessary qualifications that may prevent skilled candidates from applying.

Merchant (2019) reported that managers who classify a candidate as “not a good fit” could potentially be eliminating high-quality candidates who simply made the manager feel threatened. To combat this, Merchant suggested focusing questions around three key factors when interviewing potential team members: capabilities over experience, can the candidate co-create in a team, and what does the candidate have a passion for working on. Merchant also suggested considering whether or not the listed qualifications, such as years of experience or degree requirements, are truly necessary to fulfill the role successfully. Many companies often assign arbitrary numbers for years of experience because they want someone who has done similar work; but if they are not intentional about how many years they request in a job listing, they may miss qualified candidates who simply have not been in the field as long. Employers also tend to put specific degree requirements that may not be necessary for the role, such as requiring a

bachelor's degree for an entry-level administrative role. Instead, Merchant suggested focusing on the needed skills and evaluating those during the interview process to prevent job listings from creating unintentional barriers to the right candidates applying. Taylor (2019) added that even some degree qualifications are unnecessary barriers and often come at the expense of hiring diverse candidates. When companies create a job listing with unnecessary barriers like years of experience, degree requirements, or certifications, the search process can often lead them to hire the "right resume" but not the right skill set for the role. Such requirements can also prevent the candidates with the right skill sets from apply simply because they do not have the years of experience requested.

Another misstep in the selection of new team members is often the interview process itself. Poorly thought-out selection processes often make choosing the best candidate challenging, as they do not ask specific enough questions during interviews to gauge a candidate's skill sets and acumen for the field. This leads hiring managers to make choices based on "gut feelings" and "hunches," which are often rooted in implicit bias and lead to hiring the wrong candidate for the role or team.

Researchers suggest focusing on behavior-based interview questions, which gives future employers a better idea of how a candidate has handled specific situations in the past and allows for more applicable and job-specific discussions, helping to eliminate bias (Schwantes, 2017). Behavior-based interviews allow employers to determine if candidates have the necessary skillsets for the role and can serve as a valid replacement to asking for years of experience. Just because a candidate has been in the field for 5 years does not guarantee they have the needed skills for the role, nor does having less experience mean the candidate does not have the skills needed to succeed. By focusing

on skill sets and proper interview questions, employers can ensure that all qualified candidates are eligible to apply for openings and that only truly qualified candidates make it onto the team. When employers hire for developed skill sets over experience, they also ensure that new team members have the tools to succeed in their roles and on their teams, which generally leads to lower staff turnover.

Employee Onboarding

Last, proper onboarding programs and socialization arose as key factors in relation to employee retention. Assuming all environmental factors, such as work environment, quality of work relationship, and compensation, are accounted for and all new employees possess the skills and attributes necessary to excel in their roles, how employers prepare new team members and support them in transitioning can influence whether that employee is retained. Given that turnover is often highest among new employees (SHRM, 2019), the development of intentional onboarding programs is a critical step in increasing employee retention. According to Maurer (2018), 77% of onboarding programs are 3 months or less, and 38% are a week or less. This indicates the need for employers to review current practices and better support new employees through job transitions. The ideal onboarding program should last for 12 to 15 months, giving the employee and manager time to experience all major events within a fiscal year and to acclimate to the business cycle. Programs should include organizational mission training, role explanation and expectations, and continued connection and socialization within the organization (CUPA-HR, 2017). Considering that most employee turnover happens within the first 18 months, having a robust and intentional onboarding program is a key

way in which organizations can ensure new employees transition to their roles well and are ultimately retained.

Summary

High turnover can contribute to the loss of organizational knowledge, decreased productivity, and increased dissatisfaction among retained employees. This research highlighted the need for hiring managers to ensure that they mitigate for environmental factors that may contribute to dissatisfaction while ensuring employees have role clarity, a meaningful connection to their work, and a clear ability to see results. Additionally, the importance of unbiased and effective recruitment strategies cannot be overlooked, and hiring managers should ensure that search committees are cognizant of unnecessary barriers for candidates. Last, it is paramount that once a new employee is hired, leaders intentionally focus on helping them transition and socialize within the organization to ensure both satisfaction and retention.

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