

# Evaluating Software Fluency

*It can help increase ROI*

 By Angela Nino



**O**nboarding exposes new employees to the company environment, where they can grow, be creative, and feel empowered to contribute. New hires should develop roots during the first 3-4 months that help them want to stay and add value to the company for many years. As the cost and time investment of recruiting and developing employees increase, retaining new hires is critical.

## Evaluation

To retain new employees, make sure they have the talent and skills to use technology tools. Onboarding helps employees become productive faster and to move more quickly along the learning curve. The initial assessment of employee's software fluency is where most companies begin the technology assessment process.

All learning and development programs have to support the company's business strategy and goals. So, how should an organization evaluate the new talent's software skills? There are several ways that can be combined to provide a more comfortable environment during onboarding.

- **Have upper management talk (either in-person or on video) about the importance of technology skills.** Let the new hires know how and why upper-level decisions are made in regards to technology updates, improvements, learning and development. Help them understand this in relation to the past, present and future of the company.
- **Software testing (when it is related to a job requirement) is often used during the recruiting process to see if a candidate is to be interviewed or hired.** However, software testing can be done across the board for all levels of new hires to show the importance of technology tools to the company and to help all new hires be efficient and effective.
- **Assigning a mentor or coach is another way to help guide new employees through all types of issues during their first few months (or even the first year).** Several companies have successfully used mentors and reverse-mentoring at all levels to help employees (new hires through veterans). Coaches or mentors also help the new hires build connections and relationships within the organization.



- **Creating an environment and culture that encourages employees at all levels to try new things (and to fail and try again) can be one of the best ways to support learning new technology tools and update current skills.** This takes time and must be enforced across the board. Including stories about trials and failures during the upper management talk during new employee orientation can help to support this culture in an organization.

#### Training to Fill in the Knowledge Gaps

Once you have a better picture of the software skills of new hires, make sure they know the unwritten rules and resources to succeed at the company. Often, what may seem apparent to people who have been around for a while is not to someone just entering. This goes for software, as well.

During onboarding, it is important to include what software is available and how to access it. Training to fill in the knowledge gaps on available software for new hires can be difficult. If a company does not have network and login credentials already set up from day 1, new employees can feel lost and disoriented because they don't have access to the tools they need to get started. So, getting paperwork and IT functions completed before new hires is one of the best ways to make sure that technology training can be completed successfully. After getting them set up, there are several options to use individually or together to help fill in the knowledge gaps.

- Rotational assignments can be a great way to show new hires multiple aspects of the company, as well as see the use of available technology software and tools. These rotations can be short-term or long-term and can be done as part of the main duties during the first year or as a day-long shadowing type of activity.
- Assign employees to special projects that expose them to other parts of the company. This can help develop and fill in the knowledge gaps in a more hands-on approach versus traditional software training.
- Involve the manager. It is important to include supervisors and management in designing a learning development plan for employees. This will help build relationships and connections throughout the workplace community. Connections will help new hires integrate into the culture faster and more completely.
- Classroom and online modules are more traditional approaches to software training. Having the sessions include two new hires and two more tenured employees can be beneficial so that everyone feels like they can ask questions. Customizing the content to include the employees' actual files lends a more realistic feel to the training, which helps support transfer of skills to real work.

#### Training ROI

Designing a successful onboarding training program can be very lucrative for the company. However, many companies are seeing turnover increasing and tenure shrinking. Of course, it is better if resources spent on training new talent is spread over five years versus one year. However, how do organizations help new hires get connected to technology and software so that they can contribute and add value for many years?

- Before, during and after the training, make sure the new hires feel welcomed, valued and prepared. This includes treating them as more than just a newbie. Get to know them and help them get to know others in the company. When you enter a company and a training class, make sure to include introductions, team-building (yes, even in software classes), and fun activities.
- Provide information materials for every class, reference handouts,

and any other FAQ type of answers online, where it is easy to access. Set up an HR discussion board, if possible, that the HR or training staff can take turns monitoring. Set up an internal tracking system for all of the training that the new hires need to do. Once you have assessed them for software skills, include the needed classes for all of the technology tools, too.

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- Don't overlook the well-educated, tech-savvy new hires that may not need much skill development. Include some advanced software sessions to ensure that you don't lose their attention. Show them that they are valued and included, too.
- Include times for collaboration and discussion. Millennials especially will appreciate the chance to network and contribute to the class. In all situations, consider the adage to think about what it is like to walk in the new hires' shoes. Remember what it feels like to have a great deal of information pushed at you in just a few days or months. Think about how it is to be new and not know all the ins and outs and unwritten rules in the company culture. If you approach assessment and training from that perspective, the onboarding experience will help morale and retention in the short and long-term.

#### Corporate Training Solutions and ROI

Understand how evaluating an employee's software knowledge and training early can increase ROI. **TEL**



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