An Onboarding Program for the CT Department

By Brandi Baldwin, MSRS, RT(R)(CT)(MR)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Healthcare organizations compete for employees in the same way television networks compete for new talent. Organizations also compete over experience, knowledge, and skills new employees bring with them. Organizations that can acclimate a new employee into the social and performance aspects of a new job the quickest create a substantial competitive advantage.

- Onboarding is the term used for orientation or organizational socialization where new employees acquire the necessary knowledge, skills, and behaviors to fit in with a new company. Computed tomography (CT) department specific onboarding programs increase the comfort level of new employees by informing them of the supervisor's and the department's expectations. Although this article discusses CT, specifically, an onboarding program could apply to all of imaging.

- With the high costs that employee turnover incurs, all departments should have an orientation program that helps retain employees as well as prepare new employees for employment. Current personnel are valuable resources for offering appropriate information for successful employment in specific departments. A structured, department specific onboarding program with the full participation and support of current staff will enhance staff retention.

Several million healthcare workers begin jobs with new organizations every year. It is imperative for organizations to get their technologists adjusted to the social and performance aspects of their new jobs quickly and efficiently so they can contribute to the department's success. A system should be in place to help facilitate new employees' success. The system should be set up to help new hires adjust and include an organized process and effective information exchange. This method is called onboarding, but it has been studied academically for decades under the term organizational socialization. Onboarding is a relatively new term used by human resource (HR) directors and hiring managers to replace the process some organizations refer to as new employee orientation (NEO). Sixty percent of organizations have some features of formal onboarding programs and 53% invest in onboarding throughout a new employee's initial year.

Research suggests frontline personnel, such as technologists in a healthcare setting, are essential to any organization's success. These employees are the first impression of the hospital and interact with patients on a daily basis, striving to make and keep them happy. Yet in the past, most hospitals and especially computed tomography (CT) departments hired new employees without making sure they received the support and training they needed to be successful in their jobs. The result of poorly trained or misinformed staff costs the organization by affecting the brand, reputation, and customer satisfaction. The difference between long and short term retention of an employee often pivots on an effective orientation. Literature was reviewed to determine the most effective methods used in onboarding new staff to ensure the efficacy and high quality of the staff recruited and trained for the CT department. High quality onboarding programs can help ensure an organization's success.

Methods

Multiple databases were used to research this subject area including: Medline Complete, Academic Search Complete, Business Search Complete, Education Source, PsychInfo, MasterFile Premier, and CINAHL Complete. The articles were limited to peer reviewed articles published since 2010 with full text. The key words used in the searches were: new employee orientation, onboarding, employee engagement, enhancing orientation and retention, preceptor role, onboarding new employees, onboarding best practices, employee misunderstanding, employee onboarding, employee onboarding radiology, and employee
New employees who completed a structured onboarding program were 58% more likely to stay at the organization for more than 3 years when compared to those who did not.

orientation. The searches yielded an estimated 846 articles meeting these criteria, and 25 were selected for review because they were the most appropriate matches for the topic. A search of the US Department of Labor for job openings and labor turnover was performed for statistical data to support the research. A total of 11 sources were used because they fit the topic being presented.

A Professional Case for Onboarding

Almost monthly, new studies and researchers publish proof that onboarding has given an organization a significant competitive advantage over another. A recent Boston Consulting Group study of the most influential human resource management roles found recruiting was directly correlated to an organization’s ability to produce 3.5 times the profit growth and 2 times the profit margin. After recruitment, onboarding was directly correlated to 2.5 times the profit growth and 1.9 times the profit margin. Therefore, organizations that have excellent recruiting and onboarding programs have 6 times better growth in profits and 3.9 times the profit margins than those organizations continuing to use a hit-or-miss approach to onboarding. Furthermore, new employees who completed a structured onboarding program were 58% more likely to stay at the organization for more than 3 years when compared to those who did not.

Program Development

The world’s largest bottler of carbonated beverages, Coca-Cola, made a significant investment in training its front-line staff to ensure a reduction in turnover, improve productivity, and increase employee engagement. Coca-Cola Enterprises’ successful onboarding program was one of the many inspirational examples that show companies must invest in their most valuable assets in order to be successful: their employees. To encourage employee engagement, a departmental meeting with staff and the supervisor was held to develop an outline for the department’s onboarding program. By including the staff in the development of the onboarding program, they developed a sense of ownership in the program and an investment in its success.

The transition into a new environment is stressful enough; therefore, one study suggested creating a logical and emotional connection between the orientee, the organization, and the department. The purpose of this program is to familiarize the orientee with the department’s protocols and equipment while giving them an inherent sense of belonging. The 90 day onboarding program is broken up with specific tasks taught at specific times by assigned preceptors to avoid information overload for new employees. The program is informal to promote discussion and active participation.

Providing a preceptor for a new employee is very important for the success of the onboarding program. This will ensure the orientee fits in well with the other employees. A good preceptor will heighten confidence, self-esteem, and job satisfaction. Not just any staff technologist can fill the role as a preceptor. An effective preceptor will show an interest in teaching, relate to the orientee as an individual, encourage discussion, be accessible, provide feedback, serve as a role model, be organized, and spend time with the orientee.

Research suggested onboarding was the key to success when hiring a new technologist. The supervisor must make sure the new technologist follows the onboarding schedule and is paired with a mentor who will show an interest in teaching, relate to the orientee as an individual, and meets the new employee’s needs on every level.

Onboarding Program Structure

The following is an outline for a CT department onboarding program utilizing current research data.

Week 1

The first day will include the formal HR orientation where the new hire is introduced to the company, core values, mission statement, behavioral standards, code of conduct, dress code, and other important items. On day two, the new hire will attend Epic (the software used for medical records) training to ensure a thorough understanding of the hospital’s electronic medical record (EMR) before the first day of departmental training. Since the Epic training is only half a day, the new hire will spend the last half of the day working on the mandatory online e-learning. On day three, the new hire will meet with the department supervisor to begin the departmental training. The supervisor will start by introducing the new employee to everyone in the daily safety huddle or meeting. The supervisor will then take the orientee around the hospital to familiarize him or her with the facility and to get to know the new employee personally. According to research, an employee develops a sense of loyalty to an organization because the employee feels cared about as an individual. The personal tour will highlight how to get to high traffic areas in the hospital such as the waiting room, cafeteria, emergency room, registration area, and parking deck. The employee will then be shown where all of the radiology departments are such as MRI, radiology, ultrasound, nuclear medicine, mammography, file room, and reading room. The supervisor should make sure to point out where the time clocks are that are convenient to the radiology staff.
will also be shown where the emergency fire pulls and fire extinguishers are located within the department. The tour should end with the orientee meeting the preceptor, who will present the orientee with the New Employee Onboarding binder and go over its contents in detail.

The new employee must know exactly what is expected of him or her in order to function properly.2-4 The New Employee Onboarding binder holds a plethora of information about the department such as policies and procedures, examples of forms used in the department, important phone numbers, 90-day competencies, and an acknowledgement form for the new employee to sign. The acknowledgement form places responsibility on the employee for learning all of the departmental policies and procedures, completing the 90-day competencies, and returning them to the supervisor on or before the date on the form (or 90 days from the hire date). The rest of the first week will consist of computer applications training with the preceptor since the majority of all healthcare facilities now operate with some sort of EMR charting system. Employees are more productive and confident when they receive job specific training, which has been shown to reduce costly mistakes.4,7 Employee engagement can be higher when supervisor support is perceived as high and it is also important to have regular meetings throughout the onboarding process.2,8 Managing the early experience of new hires can decrease role ambiguity.9 One study recommended the supervisor work closely with the new hire to ensure the new hire was properly integrated into the work group; therefore, at the end of each week the supervisor, orientee, and preceptor should briefly meet to discuss progress or concerns.4

Week 2
The second week will consist of training on departmental specific patient care and exam preparations. This training can be done on any of the shifts but will be done with the supervisor or lead technologist. This will introduce the orientee to departmental forms, patient interviewing, IV access training, responding to and reporting codes, rapid responses, IV infiltrations, and allergic reactions. The lead technologist or preceptor will pay close attention to the orientee’s ability to communicate with patients with empathy and compassion. Patients benefit from an employee’s skills, positive attitude, and efficiency. The orientee will also learn the departmental protocols for oral and IV contrast dosing along with the types of exams completed by the department. The supervisor will also make sure the orientee understands the chain of command when given certain situations that will need to be reported or documented for patient, family, or staff safety.4

Weeks 3 and 4
The new employee will shadow the preceptor for the next couple of weeks to attain an introductory lesson on proper usage of the CT scanner(s) in the department. The orientee will be shown all of the hardware components of the scanner first, then shown how to navigate the program software. The orientee will learn how to find and refresh the worklists, pull up a patient, choose an exam, set up an exam, send exams to PACS or other workstations, and troubleshoot problems. The orientee will also be taught when and how to run calibrations and QA/QC tests. A thorough explanation of how to properly shut down and reboot the system and when this is necessary will also be explained.

Weeks 5-7
Over the next three weeks, the orientee will shadow the lead technologist or preceptor, observing the department’s workflow. The expectation is for the orientee to become more comfortable with the process from start to end for any routine exam for inpatients, emergency room patients, and outpatients.

Week 8
During week 8 the orientee will work on second shift with the lead technologist or preceptor to become familiar with the departmental workflow on that shift. It is believed in the radiology work community that knowing what is done on other shifts will make a technologist more resourceful, especially when working on a shift when there are fewer supervisors, managers, and doctors on duty. This helps to force the orientee to think outside of the box when handling any situation.

Week 9
During week 9 the orientee will work on third shift with the overnight technologist to become familiar with the departmental workflow at night. The orientee will observe how the technologist efficiently gets work done when alone and without a transporter. The night technologist will show the orientee how to send exams to Nighthawk for an outside radiologist to give preliminary findings for the emergency room physicians and how to use effective communication with nurses and physicians to get patients performed in a timely manner. Since the weekend shift workflow is similar to that of the night shift, the orientee will not be expected to rotate through a weekend shift; however, if the orientee is not able to work overnight he or she will rotate through a weekend shift instead.

Week 10
Week 10 will consist of interventional procedures training during the week day with the lead technologist or preceptor. The orientee will be trained on all of the equipment and instruments used for interventional procedure cases. An overview of room set up and sterile field practice will also be demonstrated. The preceptor will perform thorough training on specimen collection, packaging, Employees are more productive and confident when they receive job specific training, which has been shown to reduce costly mistakes.
and documentation in addition to communication expectations with the pathology staff. The orientee will also learn how to chart supplies used in the EMR and the scanning protocols set up on each scanner. By the end of the week, the employee will be expected to perform a routine biopsy or drainage independently or with minimal assistance from the preceptor.

**Weeks 11 and 12**
The remaining two weeks will be used as a wrap-up using a hands on approach. The orientee will be expected to independently perform all routine exams for inpatients, emergency room patients, and outpatients with little or no errors. The supervisor will observe the orientee and document any areas that need improvement or extra training. By the end of the twelfth week, the supervisor will determine whether or not to extend the training period, if the orientee passed the training period and is ready for independent working, or if termination is necessary.

**Conclusion**
CT department specific onboarding programs will increase the comfort level of new employees by informing them of the supervisor’s and department’s expectations. With the high costs that employee turnover incurs, all departments should have an orientation program that helps retain employees as well as prepare new employees for employment. Current personnel are valuable resources for offering appropriate information for successful employment in specific departments. A structured, department specific onboarding program with the full participation and support of current staff will enhance staff retention.

**References**

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Home-Study Test

1.0 Category A credit • Expiration date 2-28-18

Carefully read the following multiple choice questions and take the post-test at AHRA’s Online Institute (www.ahraonline.org/onlineinstitute)

QUESTIONS

Instructions: Choose the answer that is most correct. Note: Per a recent ARRT policy change, the number of post-test questions has been reduced from 20 to 8.

1. The term used for orientation or organizational socialization where new employees acquire the necessary knowledge, skills, and behaviors to fit in with a new company is known as:
   a. Meet and greet sessions
   b. New Kid on the Block training
   c. Acclimatization
   d. Onboarding

2. Coca-Cola Enterprises’ successful onboarding program was one of the many inspirational examples that show companies must invest in their most valuable assets in order to be successful. This asset was:
   a. Better cafeteria food
   b. Better parking for employees
   c. Their employees
   d. More vacation days

3. Computed tomography (CT) department specific onboarding programs decrease the comfort level of new employees by informing them of the supervisor’s and the department’s expectations.
   a. True
   b. False

4. The transition into a new environment is stressful enough; therefore, one study suggested creating a logical and emotional connection between:
   a. The orientee, the HR representative, and the manager
   b. The orientee, the organization, and the department
   c. The manager, the orientee, and the patients
   d. The orientee, the patient, and the doctor

5. For a successful onboarding program, what is very important to provide a new employee?
   a. Preceptor
   b. Hospital map
   c. Lunch voucher
   d. Gift certificate to the local shopping mall

6. What holds a plethora of information about the department, such as policies and procedures, examples of forms used in the department, important phone numbers, 90-day competencies, and an acknowledgement form for the new employee to sign?
   a. The New Employee Onboarding binder
   b. The Department Policy and Procedural Manual
   c. The Big Binder of Important Stuff
   d. The Department Bible

7. The new employee will learn department specific patient care and exam specific exam preparations in addition to IV access training in which week of training?
   a. Week 1
   b. Week 7
   c. Week 3
   d. Week 2

8. The new employee will spend time learning the techniques used for interventional procedures such as an overview of room setup and sterile field technique during which week of training?
   a. Week 9
   b. Week 8
   c. Week 6
   d. Week 10