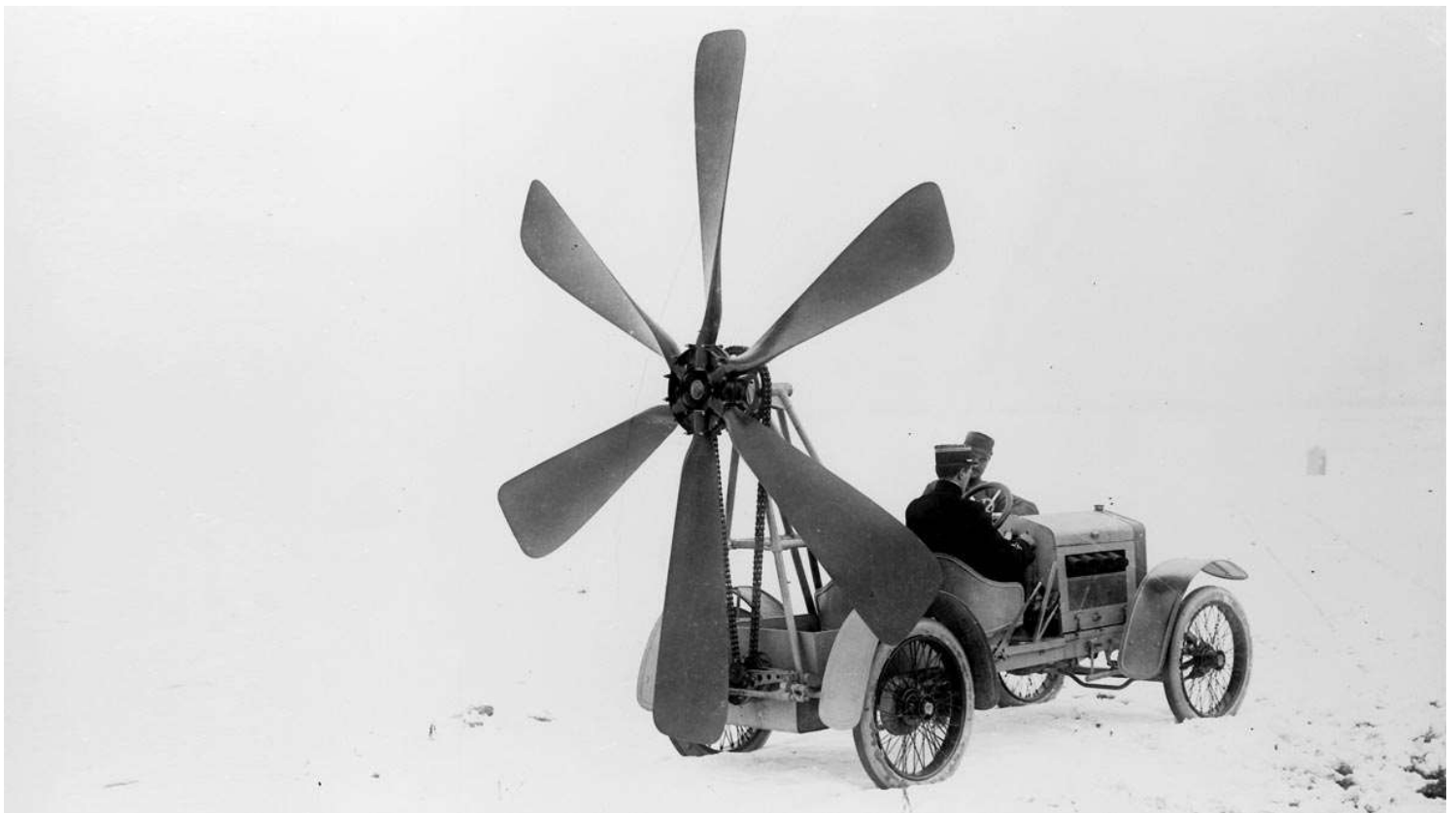


HIRING

Technology Can Save Onboarding from Itself

by [Keith Ferrazzi](#)

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Competition among the most innovative companies is growing ever more heated for one of the most highly-coveted resources on the market: talented employees. But sadly, too many new hires slip away because of a poor initial experience with their new companies. Consider the following statistics, which represent broad data in the United States:

- Nearly 33% of new hires look for a new job within their first six months on the job. (Among Millennials, that percentage is even higher ... and it happens earlier.)
- Twenty-three percent of new hires turn over before their first anniversary.
- The organizational costs of employee turnover are estimated to range between 100% and 300% of the replaced employee's salary.
- It typically takes eight months for a newly hired employee to reach full productivity.

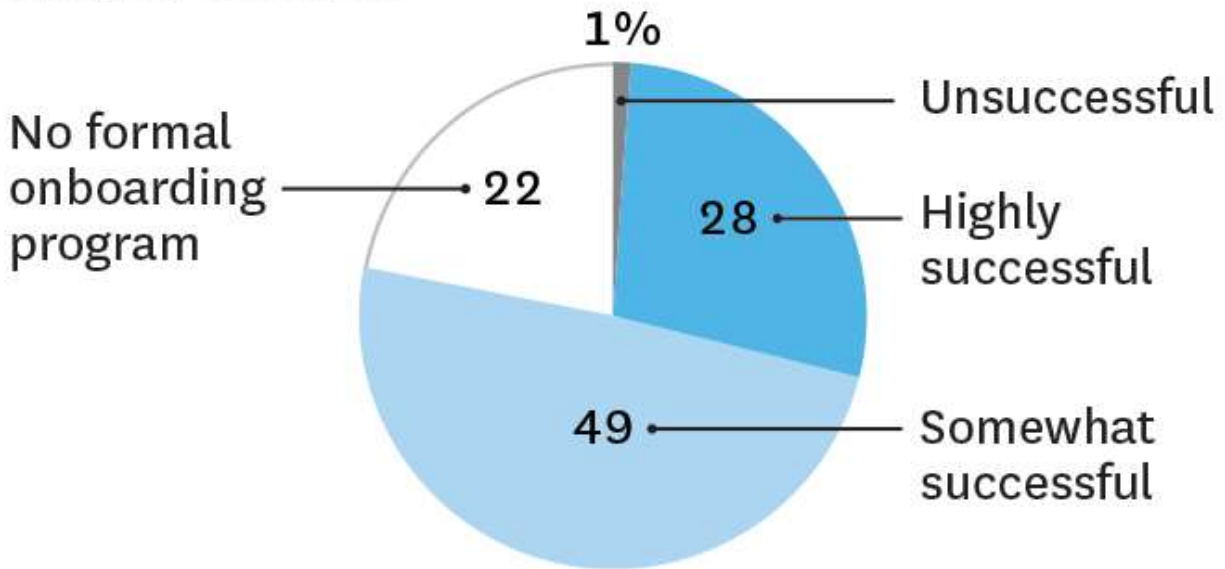
The problem is that managers' lives are busier than ever, so it's simply not that easy to make sure an employee's first few months at your company are as welcoming, stimulating, and productive as possible. Ineffective onboarding has been a systemic challenge for as long as I can remember. Kristin Yetto, SVP HR, eBay, heartily agreed in a recent conversation we had, pointing out "when employees get off on the wrong foot at a corporation, it can have major implications for [their] long-term integration." The unfortunate reality, as Kristin and many of her colleagues in HR know all too well, is that most companies — by their own admission — pay little to no attention to the onboarding process:

And yet, the latest research suggests that onboarding may be the most critical time in an employee's experience at a company — one that has a long-lasting impact on engagement, performance, and retention. That's one reason I recently founded a new company called Yoi (the Japanese word for "getting better"); I was determined to address my long-standing observation that people learn and develop best through "experiential learning" and in relationship with others, rather than through the more traditional instructional and/or e-learning solutions. Companies like Yoi, Workday, and Cornerstone OnDemand have all developed digital tools to allow employees the opportunity to grow in this more practical, actionable manner. These tools help streamline communications across the enterprise, and bolster employee engagement throughout an employee's tenure at the company. Yoi focuses particularly on the six-month journey of the onboarding process, offering managers a chance to identify challenging areas for their hires and then intervene before little problems become big

AN OVERVIEW OF ONBOARDING

Almost a quarter of companies say they don't even have a formal program.

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ones.

One of the greatest obstacles to effective onboarding is the time (or lack thereof) managers have to properly assess, coach, and engage their new talent. But digital behavioral assessments and interventions can help you focus on improving and measuring employee behaviors across 40 focus areas related to:

- Job specific knowledge and skills
- Core role competencies
- Relational integration with the team
- Work habit improvement

Just as a Fitbit collects leading indicators on physical health, digital onboarding tools can help managers collect leading indicators of success — such as faster ramp to productivity, greater retention rates, and higher employee engagement. Think of it as “telemetry for the workforce,” where a desktop interface makes it easy for managers to know what to do at every step of the onboarding process, as well as the right time to do it.

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Our own platform offers access to an ever-expanding catalog of aggregated high-return practices (the assignment of an Onboarding Buddy, for example, or taking a Deep Dive on the product with a new teammate) and assessments, which measure

how effectively the new talent is being onboarded. Managers also have the ability to customize the delivery of these assignments and assessments, as well as the language used, via templates for each and every new hire. As the catalog of assignments and assessments grows over time, it becomes increasingly validated by an expanding community of users.

In the past, a new employee in her second month on the job would have been directed to attend an e-learning course teaching the importance of having “crucial conversations,” such as asking for feedback. In contrast, a digital tool might direct the individual to “reach out to your Onboarding Buddy and ask for feedback on your recent job performance.” In other words, rather than hear about the importance of crucial conversations, new talent actually has one.

We’re very encouraged by the early results we’ve tracked so far with Yoi, which include a pilot program we’ve launched at eBay. Newly hired employees there (new “talent” as we refer to them) are ramping to productive contribution more effectively and more efficiently than ever before. Based on these results, we also expect to see a measurable increase in the engagement of participating employees, which we can track through

assessments. Feedback and support is delivered not only to the talent, but also to a network of trusted ‘assessors’, including their manager, Onboarding Buddy, and new teammates.

These platforms are also helping to assure managers and HR alike that new hires are hitting all the necessary benchmarks, while providing a much more consistent onboarding experience — especially for teams working in remote locations. It also helps to increase transparency, while streamlining communication between managers and new employees.

It’s important not to think of digital onboarding tools as a replacement for human interaction. In a stark departure from the movie *HER*, where an Operating System formed an unhealthy relationship with her user, these tools are meant to support and encourage users — both manager and employee alike — to form productive, long-lasting relationships with all of their new colleagues.

The result of our own pilot program is an onboarding experience that is proving to be beneficial both for the onboarding talent — who are enjoying a smoother, quicker transition into their new roles — and for their managers, who are having a much easier time overseeing this transition. Although it’s still early, we’re confident this smoother transition will ultimately result in happier, more productive teams.

Keith Ferrazzi is the CEO of Ferrazzi Greenlight, a research-based consulting and training company, and the author of *Who’s Got Your Back* (Broadway Books, 2009).

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