

Fast Track Assimilation –

“We do that already, so we don’t need any help!”



Claire Dunne Eugene Ivory

On-boarding of newly appointed senior managers into a company is generally accepted as best practice. However, companies can remain reluctant to put it into action, by bringing in the necessary support from outside...

The value of on-boarding is generally acknowledged by HR professionals across businesses, regardless of their size or industry sector. Some companies place great emphasis or importance on a well structured on-boarding program with set outcomes. They seek feedback to improve their program and generally treat it as a continuous work in progress. So even with a general acceptance of its value, how well it is implemented (if at all) is certainly open for debate.

The value of a comprehensive assimilation program for executives and senior managers certainly receives verbal support from board members, CEO’s and senior HR professionals. However, in execution, there is often a different view expressed. Such programs are seen as for other companies, as being more relevant in other industry sectors.

“These programs are great, but they’re not relevant to us, we manage our assimilation of senior executives very well, internally”

Companies HR departments are reluctant to bring in external support with expertise in certain areas. Common explanations include:

- *“Our company believes they don’t need outside support”* and so it never truly gets serious thought – *“that’s the way it’s always been done, so why change it?”*
- Looking for external expertise somehow reflects on the company’s expertise (or lack of) and this somehow could reflect on the board / executives ability to hire the right people for the business in the first place!
- It’d reflect on the CEO and C level executives ability to run the business, and on our ability to make decisions
- It could somehow reflect on the company’s ability to promote and develop its own talent pool
- It could somehow reflect on the company’s culture as being weak

However, on closer examination, businesses can be perfectly happy and indeed insist on, engaging external expertise to support other parts of the business, or certain projects: - e.g. IT projects, where some expertise is not required on an on-going or long term basis in the organisation. It makes complete sense to bring in external expertise to manage / lead / implement such projects. So, it’s not a blanket ‘NO!’ to external consultants. It would seem that it’s depends on the issue, as to whether it is considered essential, necessary, or even desirable, to look for external support.

Research shows that comprehensive on-boarding can lead to positive outcomes not just for new employees, but also newly internal appointments (an area often overlooked)—such as higher job satisfaction, connections with the organisation resulting in a more engaged and committed employee. It can often help build confidence and self-belief at a critical point.

Companies that appreciate the importance and value of 'on-boarding' senior management, have no difficulty in confirming the absolute belief in the value of such a program.

Unfortunately, many businesses have come to realise the value of 'on-boarding' the hard way – when a new senior hire did not 'work out', when they took a lot longer to contribute to the business goals than originally planned, or left the company because they felt unsupported, alienated or under enormous pressure without clarity of goals. This can only result in cost for the business - the financial cost can be very high including settlement costs with the executive and legal costs on both sides. The less tangible cost is the cost to the business' reputation as a good place to work and develop a career (an internal and external issues) – can be much more evident if it is reflected in share price – as well as cost internally in how other employees see such a situation being handled and the negative impact this can have on employees view of management decision making and general morale.

As one group CEO commented,

"If only we'd done this sooner, we could have saved a lot of grief and difficulty internally and in the market".

Eugene Ivory has over 25 years' experience managing and supporting multinational to early stage business. He has successfully served clients across a broad spectrum of global companies from financial services and consumer packaged goods to Medical and Technology.

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