



FEDERAL RESERVE BANK *of* ST. LOUIS
CENTRAL TO AMERICA'S ECONOMY*

Hybrid Onboarding: Successes and Challenges

In what ways does hybrid onboarding excel?

- A “leveling” experience. The new organizational culture does not long predate my own time at the Bank. Everyone is thus “new.”
- All-remote new employee orientation preferable to many of my previous in-person orientation experiences. Easier to retain key concepts.
- Opportunities to add value from day one by teaching others about the new technologies that everyone at work now must use (e.g. Teams).

What are the challenges of the hybrid work environment?

- Learning about the whole person. Eating together, body language, families, hobbies, goals, interests.
- Enjoying serendipity. Exchanging information over cubicle walls. Learning institutional history, memory, and purpose experientially.
- Demonstrating approachability. Bonding with colleagues at social events, meeting new employees face-to-face, answering questions in everyday conversation.

How might a new employee meet supervisor expectations?

- Show interest in becoming independent. Wrestle with your own questions on low-stakes business. Ask questions early and often on high-stakes business. (“May I ...?”, “Should I...?”, “Would you...?”)
- Good teammates can pass and catch the ball. Be able to ask for help in a pinch, *and* be able to give help on short notice.

Onboarding in a Hybrid Work Environment

Questions from a Library Administrator, Answers from a New Hire



Courtesy of Microsoft PowerPoint stock image library

Getting to Know People

Building relationships with important secondary contacts?

- Build a mental map of the organization by thinking of each person you meet like a book filled with helpful information. Just as you consult the bibliography for more books to read, ask your colleagues to whom you should speak next after each conversation.
- Helpful rule for talking to academics: when in doubt, ask about their work!

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Physical Space and Unwritten Culture

Impact of lacking daily spatial proximity to colleagues?

- What was once implicit or informal must become explicit or deliberate. Ask for fifteen-minute coffee breaks with people two or three times a week for at least your first couple of months on the job.
- Schedule what otherwise might have been serendipitous. Lunch together, weekly check-ins, happy hours, et cetera.

Final Recommendations

For new hires?

- Be coachable. Write things down and study your notes on a regular basis as your body of knowledge continues to grow.
- Be intentional. Don't hesitate to ask for repetition and reinforcement as you continue to learn.
- Be direct, and even vulnerable. Don't let pride get in the way of being honest, as soon as you can, when something escapes your understanding.

For managers?

- Illustrate and emphasize ongoing transformation of organizational culture at a time of lingering uncertainty and rapid change.
- Be approachable. It's a big confidence booster when new employees know you have their back.
- Cultivate opportunities for serendipitous encounter and exchange. Introducing your new hire to lots of other people can lighten your workload in orienting them to the ways of their new workplace.

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