



## **SINK OR SWIM**

*How to Stop Sabotaging New Hires*

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You've jumped through the hiring hoops and emerged with some transformational talent. Awesome. Before joining your company, Joe slashed costs and doubled revenue at his previous job, and Sue's known for building record-breaking teams and product launches. It should take them no time to produce similar results in your organization, right? Maybe so, maybe not.

In reality, Joe and Sue's performances will hinge heavily on how you manage their post-hire assimilation: a cycle all new hires experience, lasting a full year.

*In today's market, transitions are increasingly difficult, and the costs of a botched transition higher than ever, potentially derailing entire teams or colleagues along the way.*

With that in mind, astute leaders understand that facilitating that year-long assimilation can boost their chances of success exponentially, protecting the company, the new hire, and all employees the new hire impacts.

### **POST-HIRE TALENT CARE: THE CONVENTIONAL APPROACH**

Traditionally, newly-hired talent shows up for work and undergoes basic orientation for the first couple of weeks: computer logins, phone systems, benefits, routine processes, facility tours, meet-and-greets, and so on.

From there, expectations come fast. A few days in, their supervisor expects them to perform, displaying the genius of past successes that got them hired. By then, the recruiter who secured that talent pats himself on the back and considers the job completed, moving on to the next hiring cycle.

It's fine to expect new hires to deliver value early, as long as you're setting them up to do so. To better understand the assimilation process, let's consider what Joe and Sue go through when they walk into a new job. (On that note, the same might apply to an existing employee stepping into a new role.)

## REALITY CHECK: STRESSORS AFFECTING YOUR NEW HIRE'S FIRST YEAR

From the employer's side, the hiring process is fairly clinical and straightforward. The job candidate, however, goes through a whirlwind, personally and professionally, to make a job switch.

Accepting a job alone is stressful, as is resigning from their former job, changing their home routines and even family dynamics to accommodate the new role. If relocating, new employees still have to sell a house, buy a new one, pack up their lives and families — all stressors that hinder their focus.

Take it from someone who's relocated a family to a house and community they'd never seen before, and helped countless other professionals do the same. It's chaos for a long while: Your spouse is asking about new insurance, the kids are crying because they're changing schools, you're setting up utilities in the new place, rescheduling or delaying medical care, saying goodbye to friends, finding a new church... Weeks or months go by before you're back into a steady state of tolerable stress.

Ironically, transitions in today's world are much more difficult than in less connected times, with millennials more anxious about life-work balance and craving meaningful connections. That balance is exceedingly hard to achieve in a new job, role or city without adequate support.

On the professional side, things aren't much easier. Your days as the new guy or gal are filled with unfamiliarity and uncertainty as you work to understand the new work, your new team, the company culture and more. Put it all together, and we begin to understand why your new hire won't be their best in the first several weeks.

Each of these personal and professional stressors is an added barrier to growth, or to the results you were banking on when you hired Joe and Sue. Based on our experience following new hires at various levels and industries over the last decade, we can tell you this much: Your new hires won't get on solid footing for a full year. How quickly or smoothly they get there is largely up to you.

## YOUR 100% GUARANTEED PROCESS FOR SUCCESS

Your company might have a formal orientation process and that's great, but insufficient. Orientation, you see, is about sharing information: benefits, processes, building layout, phones, who's who in the company — all the basic information you typically dump on employees in their first few days.

Assimilation, on the other hand, is about gaining understanding of the company culture, its nuances, unspoken rules, internal jokes and politics in the organization. During this time, new hires are also learning how to best interact with their immediate team, supervisors and gate-keepers.

How do they gain trust and build credibility in the organization? Do they feel safe stumbling, making mistakes and asking for help so they can learn faster? When they score a win, how are first successes communicated?

If you want the best process for success, new hires need both a strong orientation and assimilation. FlashPoint, our consulting partner in helping companies manage employee assimilations, further clarifies the distinction between the two disciplines like this:

ORIENTATION	ASSIMILATION
<p>Designed to provide:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Awareness of key management processes</li><li>• Training of core systems and processes</li><li>• Administrative paperwork and protocols</li></ul>	<p>Designed to provide:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Understanding of team culture and expectations</li><li>• Alignment with team expectations</li><li>• Accelerate rapport and positive connections</li></ul>
<p>Measured by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Completion of required systems and processes</li><li>• Reduction in learning curve</li><li>• New employee's productivity</li></ul>	<p>Measured by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Employee engagement</li><li>• Team retention</li><li>• Performance success</li></ul>

The tragedy is that few companies get this right. In a survey of 588 executives at the VP level and above, 80% reported it took them six to nine months to have full impact in their new roles, and less than a third said they received meaningful support during their transition, reported the [Harvard Business Review](#).

Their greatest stumbling blocks, according to the HBR:

- Poor grasp of how the organization works (69%)
- Culture misfit (65%)
- Difficulty forging alliances with peers (57%)
- Lack of understanding the business model (48%)
- Ineffective decision making (31%)
- Disagreement over strategy (28%)

That sink-or-swim approach comes at tremendous cost to your organization.

*On the flip side, getting the assimilation piece right could amount to a rare competitive advantage.*



## INGREDIENTS OF FAIL-PROOF ASSIMILATIONS

In our work managing new-hire assimilations for employers, we've found most career transitions tend to look like this:

NEW HIRE ASSIMILATION JOURNEY			
SIX WEEKS	90 DAYS	180 DAYS	365 DAYS
Understanding the work structure, priorities, timelines.	Understanding the leader and team dynamics.	Deeper understanding of risks and opportunities to build success.	Command of the company culture, understanding what it takes to be successful in the organization.

Unsurprisingly, we've also found newly-hired talent performs best when supported by a coordinated assimilation strategy including:

- Detailed plan to drive engagement and comfort with people and systems within the first three weeks.
- Expert individual and team coaching at the six-month mark, using DISC and The Five Behaviors of a Cohesive Team tools, focused on building trust, mastering conflict, achieving commitment, embracing accountability, and focusing on results.
- Ongoing performance and behavior monitoring in collaboration with the hiring manager, HR and peers.

This process can be managed in-house or by a trusted provider.

*In our experience, most organizations have a hard time shouldering this responsibility alone and opt to entrust it to a partner who already has a battle-tested process in place, like our 365Assimilation.*



## RELOCATION TRANSITIONS: FURTHER INSURING YOUR INVESTMENT

For new hires undergoing a relocation, company-sponsored transition assistance can also alleviate personal headaches that hinder work performance, ranging from buying a home to getting kids settled in new schools to finding a new dentist or helping a spouse find a job.

In that scenario, employers provide that level of support, but not directly. After all, no employee wants their employer involved in figuring out where they go to church, finding a mental health provider, or their spouse's difficulty with making friends. (Likewise, you don't want to assign employees to those tasks either.) It's why a third-party concierge arrangement makes sense.

In our work helping new hires navigate relocations — we call it 365Transitions — we alleviate or eliminate those stressors so they don't show up in the employee's performance at work. Ultimately, that translates into the employer getting the best the employee has to offer, sooner rather than later.

### YOUR TURN

How are you supporting new-hire transitions today? If you do nothing else, what is one tripping point you can alleviate now to accelerate their success?

Whether you choose to manage new-hire assimilations in-house or partner with a reputable provider to manage those cycles, do have a plan to mitigate new talent stress and remove obstacles to their ability to bring you their best.

You've spent considerable time and money to find the right talent. Don't risk derailing them by skimping on transition support.



SCHEDULE YOUR

### *Complimentary Strategy Session*

Give us your most challenging talent acquisition or assimilation problem. You'll walk away with clear, actionable guidance, whether or not we end up working together.

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