

# Onboarding: What Does the Employee Owe the Company? Part 1

*"The quality of a person's life is in direct proportion to their commitment to excellence, regardless of their chosen field of endeavor."* — Vince Lombardi

In this series, we discussed why onboarding is critical to overall performance. We also discussed what a company owes a new employee in order to enable them success in their sales role. Now let's tackle what the new employee owes the company.

In our last blog, *An Organized Approach to Navigating the Onboarding Process*, Jim Ninivaggi and I used the analogy of your smartphone navigation system (that tailors your route based on up-to-minute road conditions) to today's sales readiness technology (that allows you to tailor the onboarding experience for each individual). The destination may be the same (i.e., a fully productive rep) but how you get there will be dependent on the skills the rep comes with, learning styles, etc.

Most organizations look at the onboarding process as something they deliver **to** the team member, rather than **with** the rep. Too often, this results in a more passive, rather than proactive, approach to onboarding. Organizations should not only expect their new hires to take personal responsibility for the engagement in the onboarding process, they need to teach employees how to maximize engagement and measure it. A sales enablement team really can't enable a new hire – enablement must come from within. The job of the sales enablement team is to provide the new hire with the tools to do that.

Many companies just assume and expect that a new hire will be engaged (like the individual they observed in the interview process). They expect them to be motivated, show up with great attitudes and put in a full effort. But just like the rookie professional athlete, some may need to understand what being a "professional" is all about. The selling profession can be difficult, and it is not like they are accountants sitting in cubicles crunching numbers. Salespeople are putting themselves out there for rejection every day and getting their nose bloodied. If they are not trained to be mentally strong just like athletes, or don't understand the strategies to put them in the right frame of mind to sell, rejection can sap their energy and impact productivity.

There are three critical metrics that must be tracked in the early tenure of a new hire. The first is **ability**, measuring whether the new hire is ready to do the activities needed. For example, are they ready to start prospecting, are they ready to run a sales call, are they ready to conduct a senior-level presentation? This is the area that most onboarding programs focus on. The second metric is **activity**. Is the new hire doing enough prospecting activities, conducting the right number of first calls, the right number of second calls? If you aren't measuring activity, especially before a rep is producing revenue, you're missing an important productivity metric. The third metric is **attitude**. Is the new rep mentally ready to learn what they need to learn and do what they need to do? Without the right attitude, ability and activity won't happen. Our guess is that teaching your new hires the attitudes they need is completely missing from your onboarding process. This is a big miss.

Your onboarding process must show new hires how to proactively adjust their attitude as they are experiencing rejection and slowly begin to build pipeline and deliver revenue. Help them understand how critical it is to expand their comfort zone and take significant risks weekly. Address strategies to hold themselves accountable to achieving their activity numbers. Address upfront the barriers that will impact their attitude, motivation or accountability.

New salespeople to the selling profession not only need to understand the business/industry, products, selling process and demonstrate the skills but need to understand what they actually own regarding their approach to the business and their careers. That enablement truly comes from within. In today's business environment, it's easy for the company to be blamed when someone underachieves. But what does the employee owe the company, and how can the company help facilitate their engagement?

The Brainshark technology will allow new hires to try on the skills required for success but also allows you as an organization to provide development regarding employee engagement. This can be sequenced for when you understand the new hire will need it most through their frustrating journey of being competent and productive. Keep in mind most new hires are excited when they start, but frustration can grow as they learn and experience the challenges of meeting quota requirements. Reps can access attribute exercises and development videos from their seasoned team members on demand, served up when and where that new hire needs it most. They can also connect with their new hire teammates, to help motivate each other through facilitated communication and friendly competition.

As you onboard new team members, it is important to set proper expectations and help new hires with:

## Motivation

What are the behaviors of a motivated employee (what does motivation look like for your company)?

- Disciplined means:
  - They follow the sales process or methodology the company has standardized on. They are allowed to deviate only when they have consistently outperformed their peers.
  - They are well prepared for every situation. They have an updated Territory Plan, Account Plan, Opportunity Plan, Pre-Call plan for every meeting. They leverage the tools the company provides.
- Determined means:
  - They try different approaches until they get a meeting with a customer. They do not just take the path of least resistance but are aggressive on opportunities.
  - They maintain activity in spite of difficulties. They set weekly activity goals so they can see progress even if the results aren't where they need to be.
- Investment means:
  - If the company doesn't invest in training them, they educate themselves. Their success and income depend on it. They will go find books, audio programs or associations that will enhance their effectiveness.
  - They put in the time and they make sacrifices. They understand there is a price to pay to achieve their business goals? Working the minimum hours is **not** the answer to this! If there is only a certain amount of hours they can legally work, they study on their own time to enhance their effectiveness.
  - They pay their dues to learn solutions. They rehearse their presentation until it doesn't sound rehearsed. They study industry trends and how their solutions impact their customers. They understand how knowledge translates to professionalism and elevates the perception of value they provide their customers by being more consultative.
- Courage means:
  - The selling profession is all about Taking Risks. It takes courage to be successful in sales. You need to pick up the phone and face rejection, go around gatekeepers, elevate your contact level. Top performers take risks; they may not actually like to take the risk but they do it because they recognize that is the only way to accomplish their goal.
  - They Challenge themselves. They try to step outside their comfort zones on a weekly basis. By doing this, their comfort zones expand and they become more calloused to situations like cold calling and fear diminishes. Top performers have big comfort zones.

## Attitude

What are the behaviors of great attitude (what does a great attitude look like for your company)?

- Resilient means:
  - They are able bounce back quickly from rejection because they are able to compartmentalize/separate business from personal rejection. They understand their solutions add value, and they want to help the customer.
  - They do not overreact to minor setbacks. They are able to see or understand the big picture and don't let challenges impact their attitude. In the big picture, one lost deal won't result in a lost year of quota attainment, but they put things in perspective.
- Confident means:
  - They understand that Knowledge and Preparation are the keys to confidence. They understand the only way to get better at something is understand what the best practice is and then practice until they achieve it. They live the motto: *"The harder I work, the luckier I get."* Gary Player.
  - They engage in positive self-talk and visualization. They view themselves as a corporate athlete and use many of the mental strategies top athletes use to prepare themselves to win. There is no other profession with exception that of an attorney's that compete to win on a daily basis.
  - They model those they respect and who are the best on their team. They understand they do not need to reinvent the wheel and why not get help from the top performers on their team. They are consistently asking for feedback from their Sales Manager and teammates on what is working and what is not regarding aspects of their sales approach.
  - They understand the Mental side of attitude and what they need to do to get themselves in "Right Mindset" to sell.
    - Mental
      - They Self-Assess. They understand what puts them in the right frame of mind to sell—like positive audio programs or books to help them prepare.
      - They view their mistakes as learning experiences. They don't beat themselves up for their mistakes as they understand even the best performer's make mistakes. They have their own mantra when something bad happens: "NEXT!" Or "I will get them next time."
      - They avoid negative people (and negative inputs, such as talk radio) during selling time. They realize these negative people are energy vampires and they have no place in their lives from 8-5.
    - Physical
      - They get enough sleep nightly. They understand the profession of selling is hard and they need to make sure physically they can handle the job. This requires a commitment to sleep and being at their best day in and day out.
      - They manage their energy and work in sprints vs. marathon hours. They take breaks during the day to recover their energy which could be as simple as a walk around the building, a workout, or a short 15-minute power nap.
      - They do not overindulge in alcohol during the week. They understand there is a time for fun, but alcohol is a depressant and usually does not enhance one's performance. They are cognizant of energy levels and what they need to do for maximum output.
    - Comfort Zone
      - They challenge themselves daily to get outside their comfort zone. They understand the bigger their comfort zone, the bigger the risks they can take to win more deals

Attributes such as motivation and attitude play a critical role in the overall success of a new hire.

QUESTION: What are you doing to help your reps help themselves? How do you measure and hold them accountable for their own development both skills and attributes?

**The authors:**

**Scott A. Anderson**

CEO & Chief Revenue Officer, RevenueForce, LLC

*Scott Anderson is a founding principal at Diamond Performance Solutions LLC and RevenueForce LLC. He is co-author of the book [Reignite: How to Rekindle Your Passion for Selling](#). Scott has spent his entire career - more than twenty-five years - selling, managing salespeople, and providing sales consulting, training, and coaching to some of the biggest and best sales organizations in the world. He has worked with leading organizations including 3M, IBM, Cargill, UnitedHealth Group, Carlson Companies, Andersen Windows, Wells Fargo, and The Hartford. He has authored numerous articles on sales effectiveness. Scott and his family reside in Dallas, Texas. He can be reached at 612-961-1778. email: [sanderson@diamondpg.com](mailto:sanderson@diamondpg.com)*

**Jim Ninivaggi**

Chief Readiness Officer at Brainspark, Inc.

*Jim is an established thought leader and business analyst from his former role as the head of SiriusDecisions' sales enablement practice. He has researched and presented to business leaders around the world on advanced concepts in optimizing sales talent, maximizing rep productivity, world-class sales leadership and sales enablement technology. Jim has published more than 200 research briefs and engaged audiences at hundreds of conferences, forums and executive presentations.*