

# A GPS for New Hires: Onboarding Redefined

By Shameen Shah

In an increasingly competitive marketplace and environment of skill shortages, companies continue to face the key challenges of not only recruiting and retaining skilled employees in the global economy, but also leveraging employees so they are able to quickly contribute to the success of the organization. At EMC, these challenges are more prominent given the fast changing nature of the high-tech industry as well as the rate at which EMC makes acquisitions. In the past three years, EMC has acquired more than a dozen companies resulting in the addition of almost 4,000 employees.

Like all other groups in the company, the Global Marketing & Corporate Development group faced this challenge. The business need for a better integration process presented itself. Rather than through the typical rise in attrition rates and complaints from new hires, it was a survey conducted by the Diversity Council that shifted HR's attention to this integration process. The Diversity Council is a team of individuals within each function that works on ensuring an inclusive environment within that function. When the Global Marketing diversity team talked to employees in this group, the biggest challenge they expressed was keeping up with EMC and its rate of change. This was an issue for new hires and long-term employees alike. Not knowing enough about the company left employees feeling disconnected and often confused. Further complicating this is the fact that EMC is a matrix organization, making it difficult for newcomers to quickly identify roles and responsibilities as well as become productive within the first few days. Underscoring these facts was the following quote from a diversity team member surveyed: "People at EMC don't care if I'm white or black, they just want me to quickly understand what and who I need to know to get my job done well."

The HR team realized it was time to broaden the definition of onboarding.

**Proof in Numbers** – A good starting place was to review EMC's best practices. There were several groups within EMC that were conducting sessions/delivering programs for new hires. Aside from tapping into those groups, the Corporate Leadership Council's (CLC) research on employee engagement was an eye-opener (see Figure 1). Of the 300 or

so levers that the CLC team had put forth to gauge employee engagement, onboarding made it to the top 160. The numbers looked even more promising when the team took an in-depth look at the impact of an onboarding program. When CLC measured discretionary effort (e.g., how much harder new hires will try), onboarding showed some very high numbers. By clearly explaining job importance, discretionary effort increased by 23.4 percent.

Working with business partners from across the group, HR conducted an online survey of all new hires and transfers within the previous 18 months. The survey questions were based on the top CLC onboarding levers (e.g., clearly explains job importance, teaches about organizational vision and strategy, teaches about group or division, performance objectives, job importance, introduces new hires to other employees, provides work immediately, provides necessary tools and resources, etc.). The survey was conducted with 22 questions on a 5-point scale from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree. Since a number of EMC HR professionals are six sigma certified, a Pareto Chart was used to identify the areas of onboarding focus that needed more attention (see Figure 2). All responses were summarized from most negative answers to most positive within each category. The chart clearly illustrated employees did not feel like they had enough knowledge about the group/division they worked in while networking seemed to be less of an issue.

**Program Design with Business Partners** – Based on all the feedback received, the EMC Global Marketing team

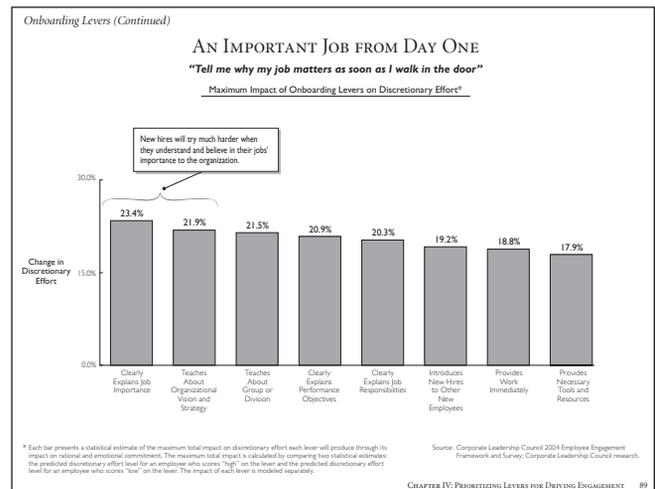


Figure 1

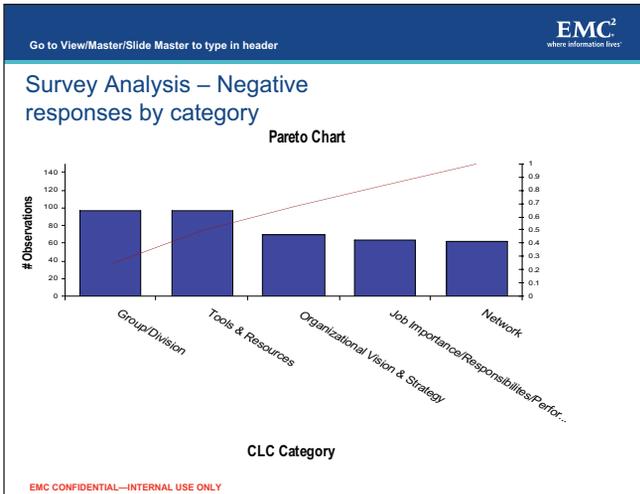


Figure 2

designed a new hire program combining all existing pieces and developing new ones with the help of cross-functional teams and business partners within the group. The first step was to obtain executive buy-in for the program and ensure that business leaders would own the process. Taking each of the CLC categories into consideration, a new hire experience chart was designed and presented to the team to gain buy-in and input (see Figure 3).

This chart, available on the Intranet, is part of a new hire pocket guide sent to each new hire on Day 1, and is discussed in orientation.

As is evident from Figure 3, the onboarding process starts even before the employee’s first day. When positions are open, HR consults with the business, assessing organizational structure and validation of roles for work content and required competencies. An individual will not come into EMC for a job that was described as “A” but ended up as “X.” HR is involved in candidate selection to assess organizational fit. This also helps when the candidate is selected since he or she has already met with the HR business partner before joining EMC. When a new hire’s offer is approved, an e-mail is sent from employment services to the manager. This process helps to ensure the necessary resources and tools (e.g., phone, computer, software,

etc.) are in place on the employee’s first day. HR also sends the hiring manager a welcome letter and an EMC pen to be sent to all new hires with a pocket guide outlining the information they need to know. Along with the letter are hard copies of the new hire checklist outlining the steps they have to take to familiarize themselves with the organization.

Most new hires start on Monday and those located in the corporate facility go through an orientation program that focuses on EMC business, benefits, diversity, etc. Within the first 30 days, each receives another in-depth orientation from executives in Global Marketing on the EMC business, culture and the company’s evolution as an Information Lifecycle Management leader. Executives have committed to updating and delivering these presentations at the beginning of the year on a rotation basis. At this session, new hires also learn about the different areas within marketing and are given an opportunity to ask questions about the groups. HR also participates in this session to provide an overview of its role and to highlight the development resources and career planning opportunities available to employees.

**Technology as an Onboarding Tool** – The Marketing HR team then took the learnings about employee needs to the next step. With their business partners, they developed a Web site designed to provide relevant content to employees to help ensure effectiveness on an ongoing basis. This Web site provides key business updates (highlights or trends in the IT industry, EMC’s value proposition, Global Marketing objectives), relevant links to best practices, business information from around the company, and tools created to align development and to ensure success. (One page of the Web site, “Getting Started” in Figure 4, is dedicated to new hires.) The Web site is now the one place new hires need to go to find everything they need. As with the onboarding program, business leaders are tasked with keeping all the updates live on a monthly basis to ensure that the Web site remains current and can be sustained in the long term.

The site has quickly become a key place to learn about the business as well as view a customized learning roadmap and key development offerings (Figure 5 shows the development resources). The site also provides employees an opportunity

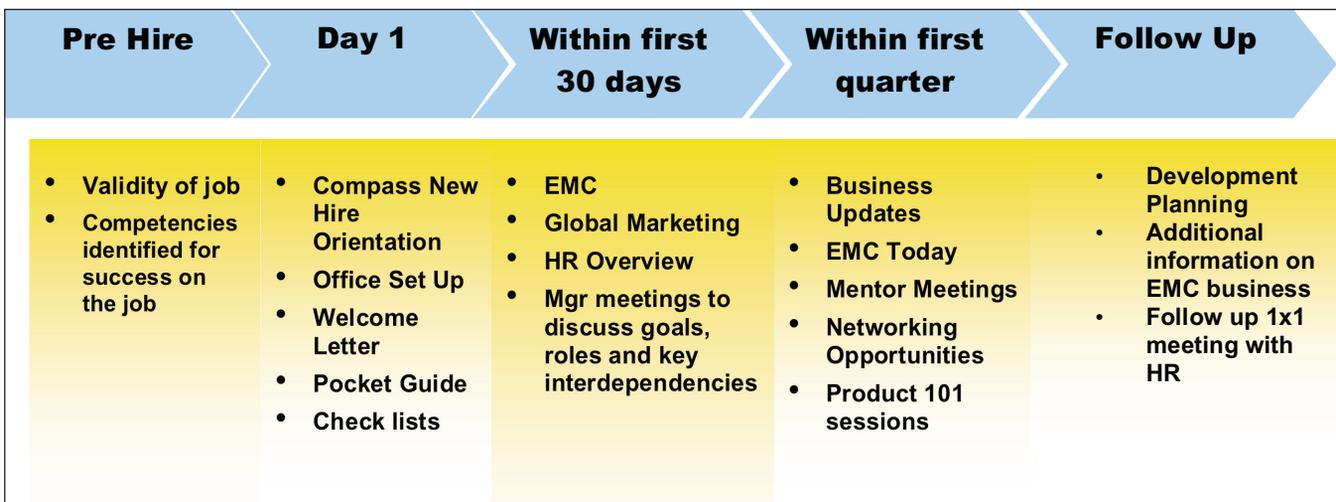
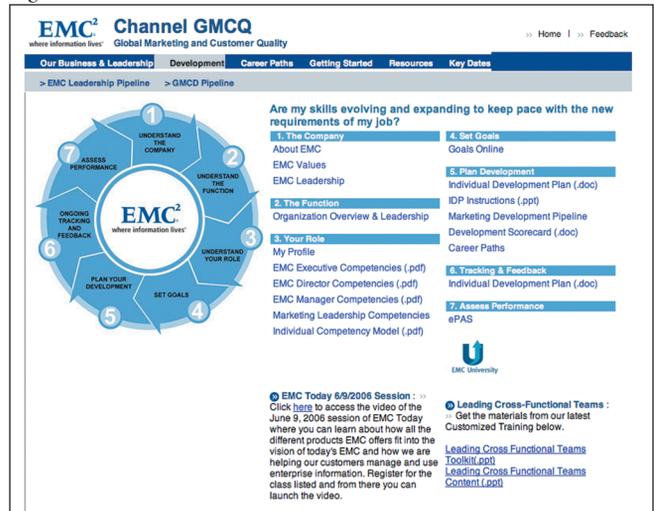


Figure 3

Figure 4



Figure 5



**INSIDERS' GUIDE** — EMC provides extensive information to its staff via its employees-only Web site. The site features industry updates and trends, relevant links, assorted tools designed to align development and ensure progress (see Figure 5), and other helpful information such as a page dedicated to new hires (see Figure 4).

to focus on ongoing development, set appropriate goals for themselves and keep a pulse on other helpful resources. This site is now being mirrored by other divisions throughout EMC.

In addition, new hires are provided with a checklist of questions they should plan to discuss with their managers,

which will provide clarity on their goals and performance objectives. At EMC, all new hires who have Management By Objectives (MBOs) are expected to enter their objectives in an online system which rolls up to the head of the organization. This provides visibility and alignment of goals to senior management from Day 1.

As part of the diversity strategy new hires are encouraged to join "EMC Connections," a new hire employee circle that provides networking opportunities and development programs centered on learning more about EMC. New hires are also introduced to other employee

circles like the Black Employees Affinity Group, the Latin Leadership Interest Team, Indian Subcontinent Employee Circle, Asian Circle, etc. This provides new hires with networking opportunities beyond their own work group and helps them participate in the Living Inclusion @ EMC strategy.

After being on board for 30 days, new hires have the option to attend a Product 101 training, which provides a big picture view of EMC products and how they fit into the ILM strategy. There is an online mentor center where new hires can identify and approach employees willing to be mentors. HR

provides a “roles and responsibility” document for both parties. Within the first quarter, new hires meet on a one-to-one basis with HR to review their onboarding experience, provide feedback and express any concerns.

**Ongoing Onboarding** – At this point, most companies would conclude their onboarding efforts—not EMC. All employees continue to receive quarterly updates via e-mails from senior managers within the group on the business, and from HR on the development pipeline. The CEO and all VPs that head a group hold a quarterly meeting to discuss business results and highlight changes for the new quarter. For those employees who cannot attend, materials are posted and available for viewing on the Intranet. A training class called “EMC Today” has been designed by the EMC Global Education for employees to keep abreast of all the changes within EMC and the strategy going forward. Employee Circles provide the chance to participate and lead programs within EMC so each individual can continue to

build a network and explore leadership roles across the company. HR plans to conduct an annual follow-up survey to measure success and make enhancements to the program.

Gone are the days when hiring managers sold applicants on salary and benefits. Successful employees demand more and employers that are on the cutting edge of human resources offerings can attain greater performance and retention of employees as well as lower costs in the long run. The onboarding program

and landing page for information (the “Channel GMCD” Web site) at EMC are two steps in this direction.

*References: Driving Performance and Retention through Employee Engagement and Engaging the Workforce – Corporate Leadership Council 2004 Study* ■

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