

Overview

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Executive Summary

In 2021, Gallup conducted an Employee Engagement Survey. It indicated a shocking 30% of new employees are likely to leave within the first 45 days of a new job. While the survey cited many reasons for employees leaving, the survey revealed a common theme – managers must effectively engage new employees to promote high performance and productivity from new employees.

At Texas A&M University and in the newly centralized Division of Marketing & Communications (MarComm), there is currently no consistent onboarding process for marketing/communications professionals. The lack of process resulted in confusion, wasted time and resources, lack of information and integration within the greater MarComm team, and even frustration when staff attempted to navigate their position and responsibilities. New MarComm members deserve to feel empowered and equipped for success starting on their first day.

The Division of Marketing and Communications tasked the Onboarding Committee **to develop a comprehensive outline with proposed steps to design a division-wide onboarding process/program.** In doing so, we will also consider and work with the other MarComm Committees such as, Alternate Work Location, MarComm Manual, Brand Hub, etc.) and include them in this report, as appropriate.

In December of 2021, Texas A&M University (TAMU) President M. Katherine Banks shared her "Path Forward" for a collective vision for Texas A&M University designed to benefit students, faculty, and staff, along with statewide constituents and stakeholders. We must shift how we view and consider our fellow members and colleagues to implement President Banks' vision. Like students and parents, employees are customers. They are internal customers and should be viewed and treated as such. If appropriately implemented, the new onboarding process will help build a strong foundation for the intrinsic elements that will make our university a great place to work and help attract and retain top talent.

In the following sections, we will:

- Determine the key stakeholders who will benefit the most from a new MarComm onboarding process.
- Highlight elements of the process that will reinforce the TAMU brand for new and existing employees.
- Create a timeline for onboarding.
- Identify the people and operational agencies that will be key in implementing the new process.

There will be checklists of items for those people and agencies, and they will need to work together and communicate extensively to ensure they know who must do what and when. We will lay this out in a “Process Map” for members of the Division to have a visual flowchart of the process to reference.

While working on this important initiative, the Onboarding Committee learned that several areas of this process overlap with the tasks of other committees, such as the MarComm Manual Committee, the Brand Hub Committee, the Alternative Work Location (AWL) Committee, the Editorial Style Guide, etc. The Onboarding Committee also identified gaps that may inhibit collaboration with other units and their ability to implement the new process. Those gaps are due to either a lack of available resources (human, financial, logistical, etc.) or a lack of consistent processes within units that must play a significant role in the implementation of our vision. Throughout this report, we will list those gaps/issues and make recommendations to solve them. We will also include links to checklist items we drafted on separate documents.

Finally, we will propose an implementation plan for the new onboarding process. We will conclude our report by restating our vision for how a structured and consistent onboarding experience will help achieve these two goals:

- Get new MarComm professionals up to speed more efficiently.
- Get them to unequivocally say: "I love it here, and I will do my part."

Discussion/Recommendations

Finding #1

To start, we must ask ourselves the following question: Who will benefit from a new onboarding process? Everyone associated with the organization could benefit directly or indirectly from the MarComm Division having a structured and consistent onboarding process: staff, faculty, students, parents, alums, and statewide constituents. With so many stakeholders, we need to be more specific and narrow down our list to create a process that fits the needs of the people who will either directly benefit from it, play a role in its implementation, or both.

Recommendation #1: Design the onboarding process to benefit primary stakeholders.

The following groups represent our distinct key stakeholder groups for the new MarComm onboarding process we propose:

- New TAMU hires joining the MarComm Division
- TAMU employees in the MarComm Division (before September 1, 2022)
- TAMU employees centralized into the MarComm Division (after September 1, 2022)
- Current Texas A&M University branches that were not centralized into the MarComm Division (Agrilife, Engineering, etc.)

To efficiently use the time and resources allocated to create a new MarComm onboarding process, we narrowed the list into two main groups: **New MarComm Employees and Centralized MarComm Employees.**

By New MarComm Employees, we refer to new hires who will join the Division of Marketing & Communications at Texas A&M University from another organization. By Centralized MarComm Employees, however, we refer to members who were already performing marketing and communications functions for another department or division at Texas A&M University but have become members of the MarComm Division with a solid reporting to TAMU MarComm as of September 1, 2022.

Rationale #1

Though it is important to mention the difference between the groups associated with the Division of MarComm that will benefit from a new onboarding process, it is equally important to note that certain Texas A&M University units and agencies performing marketing and communications functions **will not** be a part of the centralization process because of their fundamental roles and structures as decentralized units. That is the case, for example, for Texas A&M AgriLife (and its subsequent agencies), the College of Engineering, and even TAMU Athletics. Because of that, the committee decided to focus its efforts on the New MarComm & Centralized MarComm employees, with the option for non-centralized units mentioned above to use elements of the new onboarding process as they see fit.

It allows the committee to propose a clear implementation plan that is broad enough for professionals in decentralized units to adopt some of the elements of the proposed process but specific enough for new and centralized professionals to do the same.

Finding #2

The centralization of marketing and communications functions across the University comes with the opportunity to create and optimize the Division of MarComm. It's a division that has drastically increased in size. It aims at maximizing that potential while minimizing, if not eliminating, the gaps and issues that inevitably arise when bringing together members with different approaches and ways of working. Such a complex undertaking requires a careful and strategic redefinition of culture, illustrated through a culture statement that defines the Division's mission and values, designed for all members as a guide to refer to at any time, and that reinforces their place and role in the organization's long-term goals.

Recommendation #2: Adopt an all-encompassing value proposition highlighting the cultural philosophy applying to new members of the MarComm Division.

Proposed Culture Statement

The culture statement below clearly states a value proposition and signals to new and current members what the new MarComm Division believes in:

“Guided by Texas A&M’s core values, we provide a thorough orientation and integration experience to new Marketing and Communications employees and continuous support towards their success and growth to become proactive stewards of the university’s brand messages.”

Rationale #2

The committee believes the proposed culture statement is carefully crafted and designed to serve as an underlining MarComm team philosophical principle for three reasons:

1. It aligns with the university's purpose statement and core values of excellence, integrity, leadership, loyalty, respect, and selfless service.
2. It turns onboarding into an ongoing experience that continues past their first week on the job.
3. It projects our vision for each employee, new or current, to succeed in their role and become an ambassador and steward of the Texas A&M University brand.

If approved, this culture statement will also support any MarComm leadership initiatives that aim to remind members who we are as a division, what we do, what we can become and how we will get there.

Finding #3

The Project Management Body of Knowledge Guide (PMBOK® Guide) defines a process as “a set of interrelated actions and activities performed to create a pre-specified product, service or result.” It goes on to say that all good processes ensure their effective flow throughout their lifecycle – beginning to end. Our research confirmed that across most industries, managers often misperceive the onboarding process as a task that only starts on the new employee's first day. However, best practices suggest hiring managers must take action long before the new hire's first day.

In the Division of MarComm, when onboarding begins and ends has always been left at the hiring manager's discretion. It creates inconsistencies and gaps during the onboarding process. Hiring managers, human resources representatives, technology service providers, facilities specialists, and new hires play critical roles in the onboarding process.

Recommendation #3: Adopt a two-phase approach to the Onboarding Process (Preboarding and Orientation & Training) with a clear timeline for each.

Our committee found that for new team or organization members to have a positive and successful experience on the first day, week, or month, managers must take specific actions and prepare weeks, sometimes months ahead, depending on available resources. For this report, we will distinguish preboarding from orientation and training; the first refers to everything that must occur before the first day and orientation and training as the 12-month process that must happen from the beginning of the first day. Preboarding must start the minute an offer is extended to the new hire and ends on the first day when the new member is greeted in the parking lot. Then, orientation and training must begin on that first day, last for 12 months, and end with a 12-month review of the entire experience.

Rationale #3

In their book *In Search of Excellence*, Thomas Peters and Robert Waterman define a manager as a person who plans, organizes, leads, and controls the allocation of human, material, financial, and information resources in pursuit of the organization's goals and objectives. Planning is a vital skill and strategy that will be essential for the hiring manager to communicate and coordinate with all necessary parties (new hire, Human Resources, Technology Services, Facilities) to ensure they have completed their preboarding tasks and that the new hire is ready and has brought all required documentation with them on the first day.

Links to Relevant Documents:

[New Hire Orientation Checklist](#)

[New Employee Onboarding Guide](#)

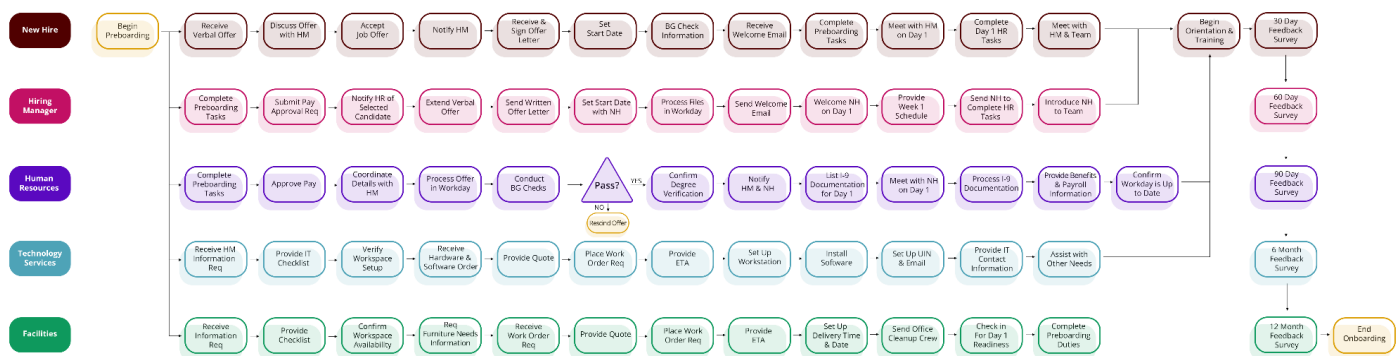
[How to Optimize Onboarding](#)

Finding #4

Based on feedback provided after the November 9, 2022, MarComm Town Hall, where the Onboarding Committee shared some of its original findings, it became clear that hiring managers across the Division need to know what they should do to support the process and when. With a well-defined timeline, we must clarify the responsibilities of every involved party. For a successful and consistent process, the steps must be defined with clarity while leaving enough room for flexibility in its adoption and application.

Recommendation #4: Create a step-by-step process map that visually represents the Onboarding Process for members across the MarComm Division.

We now know the hiring manager is the lynchpin of the hiring and onboarding process. They coordinate strategically with other groups before and after the new hire's first day, including HR representatives, Technology Services and Facilities. Below is an example of the process map we propose as the visual representation of our new process:



[Click here to view the process map.](#)

Rationale #4

The Hiring Manager and HR

1. The manager works with HR to receive pay approval and agree upon the new hire's salary.
2. The manager notifies HR of the selected candidate and provides their contact information.
3. The manager works with HR to ensure the completion of background checks, degree verification, and all information to process through WorkDay.

Proposed Implementation Plan

Because many of the recommendations will require careful consideration and deliberation from the division's leadership team, we suggest September 1, 2023, as the targeted date to roll out the new programs. If these measures are approved, the Mentoring and Respect & Inclusion programs, the TrainTraq Course, and the new teams (MarComm Event Committee, Photography Team in Visual Media) can be activated at the beginning of the fall 2023 term on September 1. However, the process map can be shared as soon as it is reviewed and approved.

Below are the dates we suggest for a re-evaluation of the findings:

March 1, 2023 - Re-evaluate Findings for the Proposed Process Map and New Employee Welcome Reception

April 5, 2023 - Re-evaluate Findings for Mentoring Program, Respect & Inclusion Program & Visual Media Support

Conclusion

The role of any brand is to assign valuable attributes to messages which instill customer confidence and interest in their services. Texas A&M University views its students and parents as customers. However, expanding their view to include staff and faculty as customers will increase employee retention. Staff and faculty are equally as crucial to the University because of their direct impact and role in fulfilling its obligations to the students and parents; that group is the employees themselves.

There is an urgent need to implement a consistent onboarding process in the MarComm Division. We must treat staff with the same respect owed to our external customers like students and parents. The centralization of marketing and communications gives the MarComm Division the unique opportunity to gain new perspectives and assess how it can develop and improve the process of integrating new and centralized employees. The proposed culture statement could be a foundational pillar of the new culture we are trying to create for the Division. It redefines who we are and what we do as a division. With a solid foundation in place, we can build the other pieces of the onboarding process, starting with the hiring manager.

Hiring managers are the most critical people in the onboarding process because they are at the center of every phase, from preboarding to closing the process with the 12-month review feedback. When the hiring managers are not the initiator, they are the facilitator. They must ensure all the preboarding tasks are completed and the induction process, through orientation and training, is properly executed. The hiring managers also bring all the other stakeholders together to support the new hires directly or indirectly through multiple touchpoints during the recommended 12-month process while ensuring constructive feedback is provided. All these steps are necessary to get new members to the point where they can have the confidence and knowledge needed to become high performers.

New employee engagement means a choice to interact with information, adoption, and advocacy, and the measures and programs we recommended to be created (New Employee Welcome Event, Mentoring Program, Equity, Respect and Inclusion Program, etc.) aim to develop and sustain that engagement. Ultimately, we want to increase employee retention by giving them the tools they need to succeed because when they do, we all do.

Investing in this report's recommendations and communicating the actions prescribed in the proposed onboarding process is necessary to enhance their experience and integration in the division. If MarComm leadership partners in all matters and interactions with those new employees, the new employees are more likely to trust the division and stay in their roles longer. That is what it will take to keep the culture statement promise of providing "continuous support towards their success and growth to become proactive stewards of the University's brand messages."

That's our Path Forward.