



Onboarding new employees is always a delicate process. From providing all the paperwork and ensuring they have the right technology, to making them feel welcomed and a part of the team—there are a lot of moving parts. However, what happens when this highly personal experience goes virtual? Charlene Bergman and Michelle Brachman offer up some tips on how both candidates and companies can co-create an exceptional virtual onboarding experience.

Since last March, companies have been compelled to completely change their operations, sales, and communication processes—just to name a few. Likewise, if you’ve been looking for a new role, you’ve come to realize that hiring processes have also changed—including onboarding. What was once a high-touch and in-person experience, has now also gone virtual.

Despite these changes, that doesn’t mean your onboarding experience needs to suffer. In fact, this is an excellent opportunity to strengthen the process. As new hires ourselves, we learned that it takes a well-rounded team effort between the candidate and hiring company to create a truly exceptional onboarding experience.

The Candidate’s Journey

A candidate’s career journey is typically one of identifying great opportunities, interviewing, and hopefully landing a role that will enhance their experiences and build knowledge. To realize these aspirations, candidates would typically meet prospective employers to evaluate cultural and professional fit. Although this concept remains largely the same, the logistics have changed dramatically.

Having started at GlassRatner at the same time, our shared experience of interviewing and being seamlessly onboarded virtually, sparked the thinking behind this article. We reflected on our journey and realized that our experience would benefit other candidates going through a career transition.

With virtual onboarding becoming more commonplace, candidates also will need to do things differently than they would have done before. Here are some tips to ensure you have a smooth transition:

- **research** – if you’re lucky enough to land the role, the research shouldn’t end once the interviews conclude. Become even more familiar with your new company and team members before you start. Websites, LinkedIn, and other platforms can offer detailed information on the people and the history of the organization.
- **in-office tour** – this was an essential part to helping us get a sense of the culture, albeit with no team members present.
- **technology** – set up and test all the technology you will need to do your job in advance. This may require a call with a member of the IT team.
- **organize your home workstation** – spend some time making sure your workspace is comfortable with suitable lighting, a good chair and supplies before you start. Keep in mind, creating a distinct workspace from the rest of your home will allow you to disconnect after your workday.
- **plan for training** – If there is virtual training that you can get started on before your first day, this will put you ahead of the game. Block off times in your calendar to allow for any training during your first few weeks at the organization.
- **prioritize mental health** – start your morning with a five-minute meditation, this will help with being mindful of how you want to tackle your day. Also, take advantage of any resources available at the organization. One thing that drove home for us was how committed GlassRatner is to mental health and wellbeing. From resourceful apps to high touch one-on-one conversations, we felt right at home from day one.
- **stay connected** – make the effort to reach out to people and set up virtual meetings, this can be both socially and for business. Schedule introduction calls with team members and other departments and consider sending LinkedIn invitations.
- **have regular check-ins** – regular team huddles have helped us keep accountable to each other and ourselves. We also have daily calls with our manager to make sure we are settling in well.

Virtual Onboarding—a true team effort

Farber, like most organizations, is going through virtual onboarding for the first time—this requires an adjustment and a real determination to create a positive experience. Although HR is at the forefront of the onboarding process, it’s truly takes a village to make it happen. IT, Marketing and the hiring manager all work together to ensure a smooth transition for new hires.

We spoke with Natasha Mills, Vice President of Human Resources at GlassRatner for her insights and onboarding ideas in

creating a new online experience. From our discussion with her, it was clear that a lot of thought went into onboarding candidates before they even started. She recalls, “At first it was going into the unknown, we had never onboarded anyone virtually before. As with everything these days, it was completely new, and we didn’t really know how people would respond to virtual onboarding.”

She goes on to share, “Technology was a big piece of what we did.” Natasha works with IT to initiate a series of scheduled onboarding emails that ensure new hires have everything they need before they start. Marketing also steps in to ensure new team members are familiar with how the firm is positioned in the marketplace as well as various content creation and marketing processes.

Culture still matters

Even though many office staff are still working from home, corporate culture shouldn’t take a back seat. That’s why the GlassRatner culture is proactively weaved into the interview process. Natasha ensures that hiring managers showcase culture from the get-go. Other initiatives like *Faces of Farber*, give candidates another unique glimpse of the culture at Farber. She proudly states, “We like to incorporate and share our culture before your start date and immediately once you’re on board.” For example, when a new hire starts, Alan Farber, the Founder and Joint Managing Partner, will often set-up a virtual conversation to welcome them onboard.

Change is uncomfortable for most, but it should also be viewed as an opportunity for improvement. Settling into a new normal, Natasha reflects, “We realize this is the way it’s going to be for the foreseeable future.” Our onboarding experience and discussions with various leaders really drove home the fact that a true team effort, coupled with strong cultural push, helps new employees feel welcomed, connected, and positioned for success—and we are living the proof that this can be done virtually.

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Our Contributors

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