



## Skills-First Approach to Onboarding

MassSkills Coalition 2025 Learning Community – Session Four

**September 2025**



# Welcome and Congratulations



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# Your Grads of Life Facilitation Team



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# Coalition Goals



## Convene

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Lead by example to bring together Massachusetts employers of all sizes and industries, and learn from peers, experts, and best practices in skills-first talent management.



## Educate

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Inform Massachusetts employers of tools and resources available to utilize skills-first talent management strategies to meet their workforce needs.



## Diversify

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A holistic learning and development strategy should be inclusive and personalized to benefit as many workers as possible

# Skills-First Practices Span the Entire Talent Journey



**Change Management | Data and Measurement | Scaling Efforts**

# Skills-First Practices Span the Entire Talent Journey



**Our focus in this community**

# Arc of Topics



## Session One

**Introduction to Skills-First  
Hiring Practices**

Session 1: Feb 26<sup>th</sup>

## Session Two

**Recredentialing  
Jobs**

Session 2: April 23<sup>rd</sup>

## Session Three

**Skills-First  
Interviewing**

Session 3: June 25<sup>th</sup>

## Session Four

**Skills-First Approach  
to Onboarding**

Session 4: September 10<sup>th</sup>

# Our Learning Community Norms



**Be an active contributor to the session**



**Practice both/and thinking during the session**



**Safeguard stories, take the learnings with you**



**Name your needs throughout the session**

# Today's Learning Objectives



**Examine** the elements of onboarding that support Skills-First practices



**Embrace** the value of relationship building and feedback in effective onboarding.



**Leverage** Skills-First tools and templates to generate a skills-based onboarding plan

# Today's Agenda



- **Welcome**
- **Review Sessions 1-3**
- **Spotlight Speaker and Q&A**
- **The Case for Skills-First Onboarding**
- **Getting Started: Skills-First Onboarding Plan**
- **Closing and Next Steps**

# A Look Back to Our Previous Sessions

01

## Session One: Introduction to Skills-First Practices

- Presented the Skills-First Talent Journey
- Discussed sourcing strategies and training partnerships

### What is the Skills-First Talent Journey?

The skill-first talent journey is a modern approach to talent management that **prioritizes skills and competencies over traditional metrics like degrees, job histories, or job titles.**

This strategy focuses on recognizing and **leveraging an individual's actual abilities at every stage of the talent lifecycle, from hiring to development and redeployment.**

02

## Session Two: Recredentialing Job Roles

- Introduced recredentialing
- Shared benefits of leveraging Skills Profiles
- Reviewed Skills Mapping

### The Impact of Recredentialing



Enhances workforce by adapting to change and job requirements



Maintains compliance with industry regulations



Fosters organizational development and encourages continuous learning



Aligns organizational objectives with capabilities for optimal performance

03

## Session Three: Best Practices for Skills-First Interviewing

- Examined strategies for skill-based job postings.
- Aligned interviews with key skills.
- Assessed standardizing evaluation processes.

### When We Switch to a Skills-First Job Description

**93%** Job seekers were extremely clear or very clear on the stated qualifications.

**82%** Job seekers were extremely likely or very likely to apply.

**83%** Job seekers perceived likelihood to obtain job.



# Celebrating Progress

## Instructions:

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Please share any recent efforts to advance your organization to the next milestone.

**Milestone 1:** Just getting started (*Learning phase*)

**Milestone 2:** Implementing practices in recruiting talent

**Milestone 3:** Implementing practices in hiring of talent

**Milestone 4:** Leveraging skills-first practices for retention and mobility

**Milestone 5:** Actively scaling our efforts in all areas of skills-first





# Coalition Member Spotlight

# Spotlight Speaker



**Sarah Spruell**

Program Manager | Local & National Partnerships

**BANK OF AMERICA** 



# The Case for Skills-First Onboarding

# Current State of Onboarding

34%

Of employees report no formal onboarding at their organization.

88%

Of employees rate their onboarding as not strong.

81%

Of new hires feel overwhelmed by the volume of information.

66%

Of employees feel unprepared after onboarding.

# Defining Skills-First Onboarding

*Skills-First onboarding is a **structured approach to integrating new hires** into your organization with an emphasis on the development and mastery of targeted skills.*



***By focusing on key competencies from the outset, skills-first onboarding ensures that new hires are:***

- Meeting role expectations
- Growing in confidence and productivity
- Building positive relationships with peers and managers
- More likely to be retained by the company

# Impacts of Skills-First Onboarding



## Onboarding

**89%** Of talent who had an effective onboarding experience are **more engaged**.

**50%** Increase in new hire **productivity** with strong onboarding process.

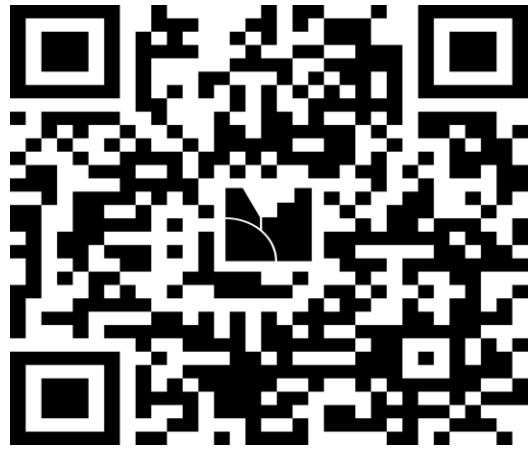


## Relationship Building

**77%** Of talent report that manager support is **very important**.

**48%** Increase in **profitability** with great managers in place.

# Interactive Discussion



**Please share about your own onboarding experience:**

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- What was most helpful?
- What was most stressful?
- How did it shape your early impressions of the organization?



# Getting Started with Skills-First Onboarding

# Getting Started: Building a Strong Onboarding Experience



●  
**Build a Skills-First  
Onboarding Plan**



●●  
**Leverage Cohort-Based  
Onboarding**



●●●  
**Embed Relationship Building  
and Continuous Feedback**



# I. Build a Skills-First Onboarding Plan

# Best Practices to Build a Skills-First Onboarding Plan

**01**

**Focus on role-specific skills**

**02**

**Assign skills proficiency levels**

**03**

**Prepare tailored learning**

**04**

**Develop learning timelines**

**05**

**Hold regular check-ins**

# Use a Skills-First Onboarding Template for Development

SKILL	PROFICIENCY LEVEL	ONBOARDING ACTIVITY
EXAMPLE: COMMUNICATION	Demonstrating	Identify a supervisor or senior team member to serve as a coach to provide feedback on communication style and effectiveness.
PRIORITY BEHAVIORAL SKILLS		
[ENTER FOUNDATIONAL SKILL]	Select Proficiency level	[Enter Activity]
[ENTER FOUNDATIONAL SKILL]	Select Proficiency level	[Enter Activity]
[ENTER FOUNDATIONAL SKILL]	Select Proficiency level	[Enter Activity]
[ENTER FOUNDATIONAL SKILL]	Select Proficiency level	[Enter Activity]
PRIORITY OCCUPATIONAL SKILLS		
[ENTER OCCUPATIONAL SKILL]	Select Proficiency level	[Enter Activity]
[ENTER OCCUPATIONAL SKILL]	Select Proficiency level	[Enter Activity]

*Outlines skills critical to the success of a role.*

*Values the skills of a new hire and identifies other skills to be developed.*

# Skill: Communication

## Designate a Proficiency Level

- ✓ Developing
- ✓ Demonstrating
- ✓ Excelling

## Assign an Onboarding Activity

- ❖ Designate an experienced colleague to offer insights and constructive feedback on communication strategies and effectiveness.



# Align Schedule with Onboarding Priorities

## Onboarding Schedule

### Manager Plan for New Hires

Use this worksheet to map out a timeline for focusing on each of the identified foundational, occupational, and technical skills and to complete the aligned onboarding activity.

	Week 1	Week 2	1 Month	3 Months	6 Months	12 Months
[Enter Priority skill]	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
[Enter Priority skill]	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
[Enter Priority skill]	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
[Enter Priority skill]	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
[Enter Priority skill]	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
[Enter Priority skill]	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

*Ensure a through timeline and cadence*

*Track each observable skills required for the role*

# Embed Development of Preferred Skills Into Onboarding

## Required Skills:

These are the essential, **day-one skills required to perform core job duties**, with no opportunity for training on the job.

## Preferred Skills:

**Skills that are expected to be developed during onboarding** and have specific to on the job learning opportunities and resources.

# Example Onboarding Schedule

Skill	Level	Onboarding Activity	WK 1	WK 2	WK 3	WK 4
Communication with external clients	Developing	<i>Role-play client scenarios with a senior team member and get feedback on communication style and effectiveness.</i>			✓	✓
Communication with internal stakeholders	Developing	<i>Set up intro meetings with key stakeholders; have the new hire share their role and planned contributions.</i>	✓			
Communication for professional environments	Demonstrating	<i>Complete a self-paced about best practices in professional communication (i.e. writing, email, or public speaking, etc.)</i>		✓		



## II. Leverage Cohort Based Onboarding

# What is Cohort Onboarding?

A process for **integrating and orienting a group of new employees** who have been hired into an organization at the same time.

## Elements of cohort onboarding



Shared  
Start  
Date



Shared  
Onboarding  
Activities



Accelerated  
Community  
Building



# Benefits of Cohort Onboarding



89%

**Increase in overall  
engagement**

62%

**Greater productivity  
within the same cohort**

69%

**More likely to stay  
with the organization**



## **III. Embed Relationship Building and Continuous Feedback**

# Did You Know?



An employee's relationship with their manager is the **number one** factor in job satisfaction and dissatisfaction.



# Elements for Building a Strong Relationship



## Trust

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- Act with care and good intent
- Demonstrate competence
- Communicate transparently



## Responsibility

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- Recognize positional power
- Take a curious stance
- Use your power for good



## Authenticity

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- Cultivate self-awareness
- Align your values
- Own any missteps



## Common Purpose

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- Facilitate an inclusive team culture
- Clarify contributions
- Build collective responsibility

# Assess Relationships with the Relationship Inventory

## ESTABLISHING INFLUENCE

Reflect on opportunities to establish influence and inspire team members to pursue growth and advancement.

During the last three (3) months, I have done the following to develop trust and establish influence:

Practiced genuine curiosity and sought insights, feedback, and peer kudos

Your score



Modeled as well as created space for authenticity

Your score



Acknowledged and addressed any manager missteps/mistakes

Your score



Made known my efforts to advocate for them or address power or inequity

Your score



Publicly celebrated accomplishments or contributions to joint efforts

Your score



## CHAMPIONING CAREER DEVELOPMENT

Reflect on opportunities to increase awareness and visibility of career development tools and resources.

During the last three (3) months, I have done the following champion career and skill development:

Promoted career development tools and resources available to team members

Your score



Promoted peer-to-peer learning and mentoring arrangements

Your score



Encouraged staff to develop and pursue individual foals aligned with team goals

Your score



Invited staff to share insights or suggestions about process that impact their work

Your score



Committed to a regular cadence of communication about career growth and advancement

Your score



*Provides a holistic view of your relationships across your entire team.*

*Spots disparities and highlights opportunities to build equity in those relationships.*

# Leverage Touchpoints to Strengthen Relationships

**01**

**Lean into your relationship inventory strengths**

**02**

**Create a plan to avoid pitfalls where possible**

**03**

**Participate in frequent check-ins**

**04**

**Learn from you team by asking questions**

# Ask Questions that Generate Insights and Rapport

**What is your superpower?**

**What gets you excited at work?**

**When are you at your best?**

**How do you deal with challenges?**

**What are your long-term goals?**

**How can I best support you at work?**



# Acknowledge How Feedback Supports Onboarding

## **Speeds Learning and Development**

Regular feedback helps new hires quickly identify strengths and areas for improvement, speeding up their learning and productivity.

## **Builds Confidence and Engagement**

Positive feedback boosts new hires' confidence and engagement, making them feel valued and motivated.

## **Aligns with Organizational Goals**

Continuous feedback aligns new hires with company values and expectations, reducing potential misunderstandings.



# Three Ways to Incorporate Continuous Feedback

## **Regular 1:1 Meetings**

Schedule regular 1:1 meetings to provide feedback, discuss progress, and address new hire concerns.

## **Peer Feedback Sessions**

Arrange for new hires to receive peer feedback to offer diverse perspectives and foster collaboration.

## **Feedback Survey**

Use periodic feedback surveys to gather new hire insights and improve onboarding.



# Approach Feedback with a Growth Mindset

## Fixed Mindset:

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A belief that abilities, intelligence, and talents are static traits that cannot be changed.

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*“This skill can’t be taught – either you have it, or you don’t”.*



## Growth Mindset:

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Views abilities, intelligence, and talent as teachable and capable of improvement through effort.

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*“Failure is an opportunity to learn and grow. What would you do differently next time?”.*



# Putting It All Together: Exploring Google's Onboarding Success

# Onboarding at Google LLC



## OBJECTIVE:

Accelerate new hire integration, foster belonging, and align with Google's mission from day one.

## KEY PHASES:

- **Pre-boarding:** Digital welcome materials, tech setup, and team introductions before the first day.
- **Orientation Week:** Culture immersion, role-specific training, and networking with peers and mentors.
- **First 90 Days:** Structured learning, goal setting, and regular check-ins with managers and "buddies."

## DISTINCTIVE FEATURES:

- Cohort-based onboarding for shared learning and community building
- Emphasis on psychological safety, inclusion, and innovation
- Access to curated learning content via internal platforms

# Key Components of Google's Onboarding Process



## **Preboarding:**

Emails and portal tasks.

## **1:1 Meetings:**

Regular manager check-ins.

## **Onboarding Buddy:**

Paired with a peer.

## **Starter Project:**

Low-risk tasks.

## **Orientation:**

1–2-week process.

## **Connections:**

Team bonding activities.

## **Office Tour:**

Gamified tours.

## **Nudges:**

Reminders for questions and feedback.

## **Role Training:**

In-person and self-paced.

# Google Operationalizes Onboarding Best Practices

- **Conduct Preboarding:** Set up a preboarding workflow with detailed tasks.
- **Assign an Onboarding Buddy:** Pair new hires with a peer buddy.
- **Plan Onboarding Activities:** Use Slack to manage onboarding activities.
- **Schedule 1-on-1 Calls:** Set up regular check-ins with managers.
- **Launch a Learning Portal:** Use a centralized platform for training & devo.
- **Share Feedback:** Implement a feedback system for continuous growth.



# How Google Uses Onboarding to Motivate New Talent



- **Simplified and Timely Nudges:** Simple, actionable reminders sent just in time.
- **Gamification:** Fun elements like games and ceremonies to engage new hires.
- **Relationship-Building:** Activities to foster connections and a family-like atmosphere.
- **Encouraging Feedback:** Regular feedback to ensure new hires are on the right path.

# Staff Sentiment About the Google Onboarding Process



**Elaine Petricia Karkada - 3rd+**

[+ Follow](#)

*Product Manager | Software Engineer | Google | Microsoft*

My Noogler experience! **Onboarding can be a daunting experience for any new employee**, whether you're on campus or onboarding virtually. The unfamiliar tools, processes, and people can be overwhelming.

**At Google, they understand the importance of providing a smooth onboarding experience for our Nooglers.** They offer a variety of resources and support to help you navigate through this exciting new chapter of your career.



**Everything is very well documented.** From Day 0 where you don't know what to do on your first day till Day 1 where you are setting up your hardware, a detailed documentation is provided for ease of onboarding.

**Excellent onboarding programs based on your role.** Whether you are a software engineer, technical solutions specialist or a product manager, you have role-based onboarding training.

An opportunity to form a network outside your organization. **You are clubbed with folks who have joined the company at the same time.** This helps you navigate better because most of you would run into the same queries or issues.

**Region-specific onboarding experience - time zone inclusive.** You'll be grouped according to time zones and no early morning or late-night schedules planned.

Ample time and opportunity to explore - no work-related stuff to be done during onboarding. This ensures that **every Noogler is focused purely on learning about Google, the culture, the best practices** and is absorbing the best it has to offer to employees.



# Closing and Next Steps



# Session Summary and Additional Resources

## **Building a strong onboarding plan**

- Align schedule with onboarding priorities
- Embed development of preferred skills onto onboarding

## **Leveraging cohort-based onboarding**

- Implement shared start date and onboarding activities
- Integrate community building with group of new employees

## **Embed relationship building and continuous feedback**

- Assess relationships with the relationship inventory
- Provide continuous feedback with a growth mindset

# Exit Ticket



**Please fill out this [this post-program survey!](#)**

# Completed Session Series



## Session One

**Introduction to Skills-First  
Hiring Practices**

Complete

## Session Two

**Recredentialing  
Jobs**

Complete

## Session Three

**Skills-First  
Interviewing**

Complete

## Session Four

**Skills-First Approach  
to Onboarding**

Complete

A woman with short grey hair, wearing a pink sweater, is smiling and looking towards a man whose back is to the camera. They are sitting at a table with a laptop and a glass of water. The background is a blurred office setting with a window.

# Thank You!!!

## Contact Us

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