ONBOARDING AT DISNEY

When the Magic Happens

© Murdocksimages

Jeff Noel, a facilitator at Disney Institute, spoke in a video about being "The CEO of You," in which he shared insight on how to inspire leadership at all levels. Noel's major point of focus was the differentiation between task and purpose. "To empower all employees to take on leadership roles, it is important that everyone understands the larger purpose behind a task. Employees should be immersed in the broader context of a project so they clearly can identify the importance of their role and how it impacts the organization." The only way to start an employee on the right path to next generation leadership, then, is extensive, comprehensive onboarding.

I wrote recently about Facebook's onboarding bootcamp where technical engineers are treated to a six-week, full immersion onboarding process. Full immersion during the onboarding process is the only way to guarantee that a new employee will know his or her role in an organization.

This is what Jeff James, Vice President & General Manager of Disney Institute, says about onboarding a new hire into Disney: "A new hire will make many judgments about an organization based on their first few days; therefore, onboarding training is crucial for both the employee and the company. This training should go beyond 'how-to' training into the 'why' of an organization. By sharing the organization's history and values, new hires will be more empowered to embody the spirit of the company and

feel more fulfilled. At Disney, our new-hire orientation is called 'Traditions' and introduces our cast members to not only important information they need to know about their new role but also the legacy and history that remains at the heart of the Walt Disney Company."

James goes on to say, "Training should not be seen as optional; rather, it should be operationalized and embedded into the fabric of your organization." He says that when developing an onboarding program, you should ask yourself these three questions:

1. What cultural values will be established during this training experience?
2. Based on this training experience, what room will be left for improvisation by employees?
3. How will this training reflect care for employees?

On the first day of work, new employees attend Disney Traditions. With a focus on the past, present, and future of Disney, Disney Traditions help new hires recognize and appreciate the connections they have to the Disney story, their daily impact on the quality of the Disney Show, and the role they can play in the company's growth and success. But that's just the orientation. The onboarding process continues much longer past the initial Traditions program, and the leaders at Disney set the example for its employees.

In his book, *The Wonderful World of Customer Service at Disney*, J. Jeff Kober says, "When it comes to creating priorities, it's about the individual leader. Leaders really do matter. They matter most when they take the reins, when they pick up trash, when they are involved. An operation is no better than its immediate leadership. Leadership for me is many things, but one of the most important is modeling what you want others to do. If you pick up trash, everyone will pick up trash. If you show courtesy to your employees, your employees will be friendlier to your customers. If you take the time to have a little fun, your employees will make it fun for others."

Every employee collects trash; whether manning the rides or playing the part of Disney princess. Walt Disney said, when the parks first opened, that he wanted to keep the park clean to the point that people would be embarrassed to throw anything on the ground. That standard has been reached because of the example leadership has set and the training each employee receives during onboarding. By setting the example, leaders continue to mentor and influence their employees throughout their career. **N**

Contributed by Profiles International. Please contact John Caspole at JohnCaspole@AssessmentSpecialists.com for more information.