

Meeting the Demands of a Growing Team: How Making a Multifaceted Onboarding Program Helped Protocol Activation Move Forward in a Remote Environment

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1. Background

Since the unit opened for business in 2018, onboarding study start-up managers (SSUMs) into the Protocol Activation Core was achieved through a combination of on-the-job training, peer mentoring, and training by the supervising manager. When the team expanded in early 2020, onboarding was forced to shift to a fully remote environment due to the global pandemic. This made the previous onboarding approach more challenging, leading to knowledge gaps and inconsistencies within the group.

2. Goals

Our 2022 goal was to develop a comprehensive onboarding package covering all core activation topics and tasks, as well as facilitate a motivational environment. This was critical as the team size was expanding by 47 percent due to new positions while also backfilling open positions. The keys goals included:

- A multifaceted onboarding and training program for new staff that is comprehensive, consistent, caters to different learning styles, and facilitates integration into the team.
- Training tools and resources for all staff to refer to after training
- A welcoming and team-centric atmosphere

3. Solutions and Methods

- The multifaceted training program consisted of:
 - Leveraging 16 self-paced institutional e-learnings
 - Creating 15 remote facilitator-led trainings
 - Developing 23 real work experience activities
 - Organizing 20 meet and greets with team members and collaborating groups
 - Coordinating observations of the IRB and scientific review committee
- Developing team building exercises and continued education

4. Outcomes

Ten new team members hired over seven months completed the program. The onboarding program provided a framework of trainings, tasks, and meetings to be completed within four weeks. This provided a definitive timeline for when new staff would be ready for assigned work while allowing for training activities that mimic work to be done at the pace of the individual. The program developed resources which ensured staff received consistent information and were trained on all the topics relevant to the SSUM role.

Through an anonymous questionnaire of the 10 individuals who participated in the program and seven individuals who had staff who participated, the program was deemed successful.

- Sense of confidence in employees
 - 100 percent reported
 - A positive experience
 - Pace was just right

Category: Training, Career Development, and Staff Retention - Work in Progress

- Balance of e-learnings, e-meetings, meet and greets and activities
- 80 percent felt
 - Onboarding program catered to different learning styles
 - SSUM's felt prepared to take on their first protocol
- Sense of confidence from managers
 - The onboarding program prepared their new SSUMs to receive their first protocol
 - SSUMs regularly reference the training materials

The team building exercises, inclusive of at home scavenger hunt and a coffee break reality TV check-in have been very successful and staff have requested these more frequently.

5. Lessons Learned and Future Directions

The large amount of complex content is best absorbed when learned in a variety of ways and reinforced throughout the onboarding process. Continuing education modules are being developed in a two-pronged approach. First to reinforce onboarding program materials in an individual setting. Second to explore complex topics in a group setting that fosters discussion, allowing team members to express their ideas and questions while learning from their peers to better understand the Memorial Sloan Kettering network.