



Onboarding Training Programs

By William Lycett

The demands of the business can often conflict with the need for formal training programs for training and development associates. This is made even more difficult by the fact that the majority of new personnel have no prior training experience before joining the department. Training and development leaders wanted to know how companies are handling this issue.

TGaS Advisors surveyed training leaders at 10 pharmaceutical companies to find out about formalized programs at headquarter (HQ), regional and district levels. In a separate survey, TGaS polled 27 relatively new training managers at six different companies about their onboarding experience.

Key Findings/Advisory Insights

Surveys found that most organizations emphasize headquarters training over regional and district for new training and development associates. Onboarding programs for regional trainers were not even available at four of 10 of the companies that responded. Participants indicated that most personnel have no prior training experience, making some sort of onboarding experience critical in those first 90 days.

When it comes to HQ training, companies use anywhere from six to 16 different kinds of training. The most popular are self-study competency assignments, facilitation training and discussion of goals and objectives. All companies expect their new personnel to take advantage of live classroom workshops, iPad applications and assessments.

The onboarding process for training managers consists primarily of becoming familiar with the Medical/Regulatory/Legal (M/R/L) process. Clarification of goals and objectives was also highly rated. In contrast, nearly half of respondents said their organization does not have a structured onboarding process in place.

Trainers: HQ, Regional, District

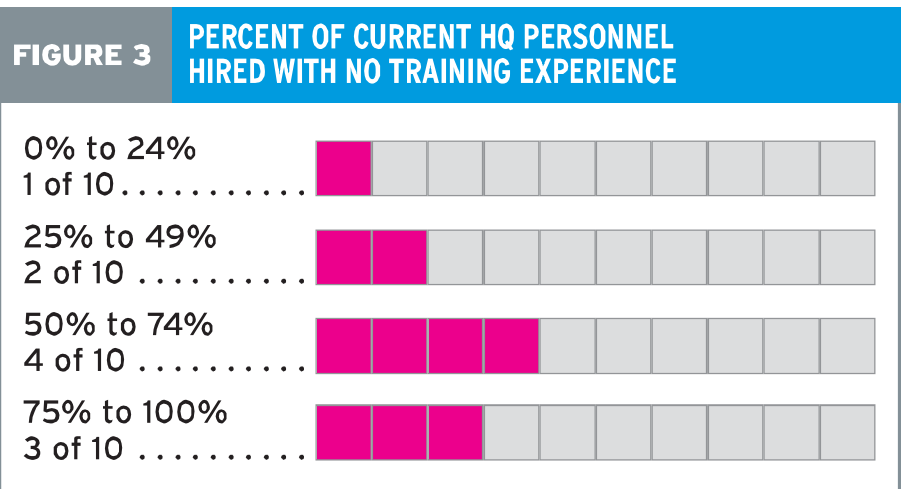
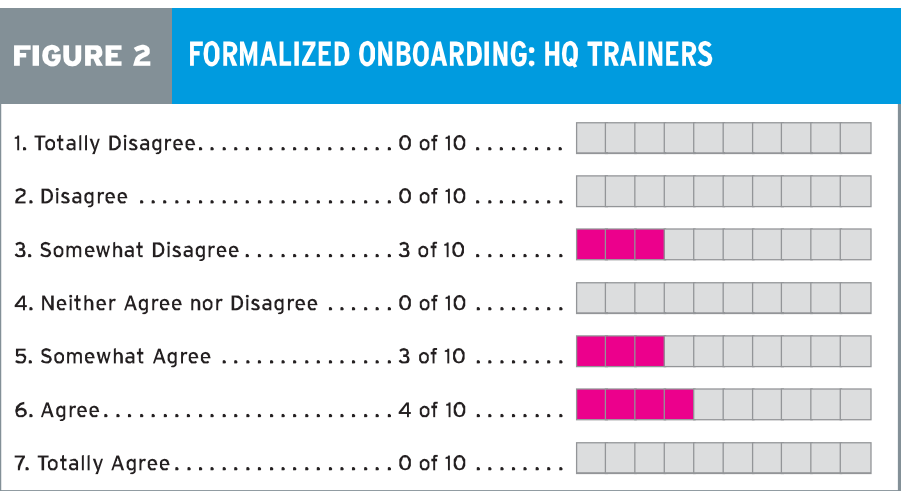
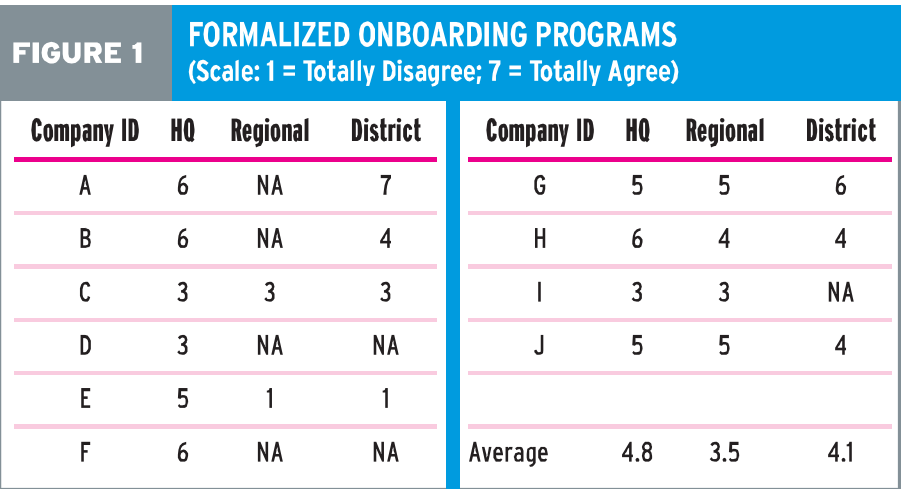
Organizations put the most emphasis on headquarters programs. (Figure 1)

Formalized Onboarding Programs

The average rating was 4.8 on a scale of 1 to 7 for formalized onboarding programs at the HQ level. (Figure 2)

Prior Experience

The majority of HQ training personnel have no prior training experience prior to joining the department. Only one responding company hires experienced trainers. (Figure 3)



Onboarding Programs

Companies use anywhere from six to 16 different training methods for new HQ personnel, but the data may be somewhat deceptive. Less experienced personnel require more training methods, thus creating the perception of a formalized onboarding program. For example, when Company E hires 75%-100% of personnel with no training experience, 16 different training methods are employed, with a subsequent high rating assigned for formalized onboarding. (Figure 4)

The most popular HQ training programs were self-study competency assignments, facilitation training and discussion of goals and objectives. Less common were coaching and feedback training, performance documentation training and discussion of budget, cost and vendor management.

As expected, regional and district training programs show different emphases, with less on discussion-format programs. Regional trainers listed observation of the M/R/L process, facilitation training and self-study competency assignments as their top three, while district trainers chose facilitation training, field ride guidelines and coaching and feedback training. (Figure 5)

HQ Training Media

Live classroom workshops, iPad applications and assessments were most common, while podcasts were used infrequently. (Figure 6)

Outsourced Training Functions

Only a few areas of onboarding are outsourced. Those most commonly cited were facilitation training and discussion of the basics of instructional design. (Figure 7)

Greatest Challenges

When asked about their greatest challenges during the first 90 days in their role as new trainers, many respondents described their frustration with trying to balance the demands of the business with being inexperienced and not having adequate time to train.

Training Managers

Training managers were surveyed separately. We heard from 27 people from six different companies with most in position six months to a year. Nearly half (48%) were training or senior training managers. Others were trainers (30%), brand trainers (11%), associate directors and patient outreach trainers. The primary area of focus is on product training (48%), followed by skills training (30%). Other areas included managed markets training, management training, field trainer and administration.

The onboarding process for training managers consists mainly of becoming familiar with the M/R/L process (70% rank this 5 or higher on a scale of 1 to 7). Clarification of goals and objectives was also

FIGURE 4 CORRELATION OF TENURE, PERCEPTION OF AVAILABILITY OF FORMALIZED ONBOARDING AND # OF DIFFERENT TRAINING METHODS (Scale: 1 = Totally Disagree; 7 = Totally Agree)

Company	% of dept. with no prior training	Formalized onboarding for all new HQ trainers*	# of different training methods
I	0% to 24%	3	6
C	25% to 49%	3	9
D		3	16
A		6	13
F	50% to 74%	6	10
G		5	9
J		5	9
B	75% to 100%	6	12
E		5	16
H		6	14

FIGURE 5 ONBOARDING PROGRAMS IN FIRST 90 DAYS

Programs/# of Companies	HQ	Regional	District
Self-study competency assignments	9	5	5
Facilitation training	9	5	6
Goals and objectives discussion	9	4	4
Self-study compliance assignments	8	4	5
Observation of class	7	4	2
Basics of instructional design discussion	7	1	2
Needs analysis discussion	7	2	1
SOW, RPF process discussion	7	2	0
Use of virtual classroom	6	1	2
Observation of M/R/L process	6	6	3
Metrics & evaluation discussion	6	3	1
Archiving files discussion	6	2	NA
Project tracking process	5	NA	0
Nomenclature of files discussion	5	2	NA
Assigned mentor	5	4	2
Coaching and feedback training	4	4	6
Performance documentation training	4	2	NA
Budget, cost, vendor management discussion	4	2	1
Field ride guidelines discussion	NA	4	6

highly rated, with 74% of respondents rating this statement 5 or above. (Figure 8)

In contrast, nearly half the respondents (44%) indicated their organization does not have a structured onboarding process and rated the statement a 1 or 2.

Lessons Learned: The First Three Months are Critical

Several managers expressed the need for a review of their role and responsibilities during onboarding, a more in-depth review of processes and procedures, especially with M/R/L approval, and learning who's who.

According to the training managers we surveyed, the most important tasks and skills in the first three months include:

- Observation and asking questions
- Learning who to ask while building a network
- Navigating through ambiguity
- Adult learning principles
- Facilitation of training
- Writing skills
- Project/time management
- Organizational skills
- Collaborating with brand and sales teams
- Content development

As one training manager commented, *"What would be nice for people new to the department would be to have a 1:1 with a mentor in the first week where they can do a high-level overview of everything prior to going through the mandatory onboarding curriculum over the next few months."* ■

LTEN Conference Feedback

At the LTEN Annual Conference, Colleen Davis, Informa Training Partners, and Todd Amrhein, Gilead, who facilitated the "Practical Skills for the New Trainer" workshop, conducted an informal poll of attendees about onboarding issues. Findings showed that, on a scale of 1-7, participants gave their companies high scores for:

- Availability of resources for self-study (5.0)
- Viewing vendors as "partners at work who contribute greatly to my success" (5.0)
- Assignment of a mentor during the onboarding process (4.7)

FIGURE 6 HQ TRAINING MEDIA: FIRST 90 DAYS

Media	# of Companies	Media	# of Companies
Live classroom workshop	10	Print modules	7
iPad applications	10	Web portals	7
Assessments	10	Videos	6
Webinars	8	Podcasts	2
eLearning	8		

FIGURE 7 ONBOARDING FOR TRAINING MANAGERS

Areas	# of Companies	Areas	# of Companies
Facilitation training	7	Metrics and evaluation	2
Basics of instructional design	6	Coaching and feedback training	1
Use of virtual classroom	4	Needs analysis	1
Project tracking process	2		
Other*	2	* Module development; "depends on needs"	

FIGURE 8 ONBOARDING FOR TRAINING MANAGERS (Scale: 1 = Completely Disagree; 7 = Completely Agree)

I was clear on my goals and objectives	5.1	Developmental timelines for training media was discussed (eLearning, print modules)	3.9
The medical, regulatory, legal approval process was explained.	5.0	I was trained on how to conduct a needs analysis.	3.9
I had resources available to me for self-study during onboarding.	4.6	I was trained on evaluating and giving feedback to new hires.	3.9
I was assigned a mentor during the onboarding process.	4.4	A structured onboarding process was in place.	3.7
I was trained on techniques of facilitation.	4.3	Discussion on requesting statements of work from vendors was explained.	3.6
How to measure the effectiveness of training was explained.	4.0		
Discussion occurred on how to write learning objectives.	4.0		

About this Benchmark Study:

Working in partnership with LTEN, TGaS Advisors, a benchmarking and advisory services firm, conducted benchmark studies of training & development leaders in life sciences companies, evenly distributed among broad portfolio, focused portfolio and medical device & diagnostic organizations. For more information on onboarding training programs trends and best practices or other questions, please contact William Lycett, TGaS Advisors, William.Lycett@tgas.com.