



Three Strategies to Accelerate Remote On-Boarding

Creating Connections Is Even More Critical with Remote On-Boarding

Our research shows that during the first 90 days in a new role, the choices that new hires make about which relationships to prioritize sets the foundation for their future success. When new hires initiate relationships critical to success, they jump-start their productivity and inclusion into valued networks. However, they rarely know how to do this.

Early on, some people prioritize visibility or access to formal stakeholders with the goal of gaining political support. Others believe they must hit the ground running and choose to focus only on doing work with their immediate team. Still others may prioritize meeting a lot of people but neglect the specific network-building that could enable rapid integration into the organization and shorten their time from entry to productivity.

While these steps may have been conventional wisdom decades ago when working in smaller, co-located teams – the explosive increase in the collaborative intensity of work and the dramatic rise in remote and globally distributed teamwork now challenges this approach that doesn't consider the incredible effect that social networks now play in the success of these new hires.

Based on more than twenty years studying networks and individual performance in more than 300 organizations, we have uncovered the practices and patterns that **accelerate new hire on-boarding.**

SPECIAL & LIMITED USE:

To support our member organizations and their employees respond to the dramatic increase in remote on-boarding due to COVID-19 global health concerns, under a special and limited use agreement members are welcome to share these three practices with new joiners to improve their success. These materials are copywritten 2020 by The Network Roundtable LLC. All Rights Reserved.

Our research shows that initiating, engaging and refining specific kinds of relationships when joining an organization and continuing to prioritize network development throughout the transition is a critical differentiator.

New hires who understand how well they are positioned in their networks to leverage **what** they know, through **who** they know, more effectively innovate, execute and thrive at work.

As part of our research over the past two decades, we have mapped employee networks across more than 300 organizations uncovering network patterns and the practices. This quantitative work revealed people we call **Fast Movers**—

those who became much more strategically connected into the organization than their peers.

These new hires and newcomers were more productive more quickly, more likely to stay, and reported higher job satisfaction and engagement than their peers.

Below are three of twelve critical practices that the Fast Movers we studied applied to initiate, engage and refine connections that propelled their success. While these three practices are critical for any new joiner, they are especially critical for remote workers who have more limited access due to lack of proximity and serendipitous hallway meetings.

Three Initial Strategies to Accelerate Remote On-Boarding

1 Pursue a Broad Network

Principle

Integrate rapidly by pursuing a broad network in the first 60-90 days. Build relationships across functions, expertise, locations and perspectives to get a full view of the people, the work and the challenges in your new context. Connect with people in ways tailored to their role and needs.

Practices

- ✓ Identify people in 5 categories: 1) formal leaders; 2) stakeholders/customers; 3) colleagues in functional or support roles; 4) teams/direct reports; and 5) peers.
- ✓ Set a meeting with each to learn about their context, role and needs—not for an immediate request.
- ✓ Tailor interactions based on the person. Learn how they prefer to work; offer help; build rapport.

Perspective



Click here or use your smart phone and the QR code to watch a five-minute video where Professor Rob Cross explains and explores this practice.



Signs You are Not Building a Sufficiently Broad Network

Below are a few of the common traps that can derail effective transitions, especially when transitioning into a new organization remotely. Working with your manager or trusted peer, indicate whether you have these items well in hand or whether you should put it on your collective watch list.

OK BEWARE



You over-prioritize making a connection—and good impression—with formal leaders and under-invest in network influencers.



You are focused only on the obvious or most pressing connections. As soon as you've met your team, direct reports, manager or client, you put network development on hold.



You ask questions about what, not who. You prioritize the goal or task, without understanding who else might be a resource or affected by your work.

Additional Remote Connecting Consideration

As appropriate, consider making initial meet-and-greet introductions comfortable, casual and as personal as possible. When connecting remotely, make all reasonable efforts to use video conferencing so that you can see each other to make a personal connection.

2 Position Your Expertise to Help Others

Principle

Position your expertise to align with others' goals and objectives, rather than pushing your knowledge or experience out of context of colleagues' needs. Often, people do not care how smart you are but will engage if what you know can help them.

Practices

- ✓ Set up many virtual exploratory meetings to ask questions, understand colleagues' work and gain insight into how you might contribute. These can even be virtual coffee-breaks.
- ✓ Slowly morph your expertise to others' goals and objectives, rather than expecting them to appreciate your experience or directly apply your skills.
- ✓ Respect established coworkers' expertise and perspective, generate energy and help others.

Perspective



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Signs of Pushing – Over-Selling – Rather than Creating Pull

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OK BEWARE



You put your expertise front-and-center in initial conversations as you meet new people, in an effort to establish your credibility and brand.



You want to make sure people know your credentials. Often without thinking, you reference what worked in the past, how you solved a similar problem or roles you played.



You don't ask sufficient exploratory questions or show enough curiosity about your new colleagues and their experience or situation.

Additional Remote Connecting Consideration

When connecting remotely, you may feel pressure to spend more time sharing your experience or past role early in the relationship—rather than listening. Avoid the common trap of assuming you need to market yourself and instead invest the time to understand their priorities; critical for understanding how to best contribute.

3 Connect with Influencers

Principle

The size of your network is not the critical driver of success—who you connect with is. Identify and engage people who are opinion leaders or network influencers to create legitimacy, reputation and organizational know-how. These relationships pull you in to opportunities and successful outcomes sooner.

Practices

- Identify potential influencers related to a priority project or goal. Don't over-rely on people that are structured into your work (e.g., people on your teams or regularly in your meetings) and be wary of first impressions.
- Enroll each influencer in a unique way. Know what they care about, look for common interests or perspectives, understand barriers and seek mutually beneficial goals.

Perspective



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Signs You Are Missing Out by Not Connecting with Opinion Leaders

Below are a few of the common traps that can derail effective transitions, especially when transitioning into a new organization remotely. Working with your manager or trusted peer, indicate whether you have these items well in hand or whether you should put it on your collective watch list.

OK BEWARE



Your projects and ideas don't seem to get traction, or they require too much time and effort to implement. You seem to be missing cultural or social norms for how to succeed.



You struggle to drive influence when you don't have authority. You are not sure who may help you persuade or motivate colleagues, and who may be steering colleagues in a different direction.



You try to ignore naysayers and resisters, even if they are influential. You hope they will come around eventually, or that they will not have a negative impact in the long run.

Additional Remote Connecting Consideration

When working remotely you can't rely on proximity or the same serendipitous hallway meetings typically experienced when working in an office. Proactively create these meetings by asking your manager and colleagues to identify and make virtual introductions to those outside of your team or group to accelerate your transition.

About the Research & Researcher



Rob Cross is Edward A. Madden Professor of Global Business at Babson College and the Research Director for the Connected Commons.

For over 20 years, his research, teaching and consulting have focused on applying social network analysis ideas to critical business issues for actionable insights and bottom-line results. He has worked with over 300 leading organizations (companies, government agencies and non-profit organizations) across industries on a variety of solutions including innovation, revenue growth, leadership effectiveness and talent management.

Ideas emerging from his research have resulted in three books, the most recent one titled *Driving Results through Social Networks*. Rob has written over 50 articles, many of which have won awards. In addition to top scholarly outlets, his work has been repeatedly published in *Harvard Business Review*, *Sloan Management Review*, *California Management Review*, *Academy of Management Executive* and *Organizational Dynamics*.

For more information visit www.robcross.org

About the Connected Commons



The Connected Commons is a community of business and academic thought leaders who believe that in an interdependent world, networks are increasingly the organizing principle of our social and organizational lives.

We are committed to improving the performance and well-being of individuals, organizations and society by pioneering research-based applications of organization networks.

We are a network ourselves, an organization purpose-built to reflect our knowledge and pursue capability development. The members of our community and research teams are comprised of business, analytics and human capital leaders from more than 100 of the world's most admired and innovative companies.

For more information visit www.connectedcommons.com