

## **ONBOARDING: KEY TO PERCEPTION OF THE COMPANY AS A GREAT PLACE TO WORK**

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Recibido (19/04/2024)

Revisado (14/05/2024)

Aceptado (21/05/2024)

**RESUMEN:** El propósito de este artículo es analizar las prácticas de onboarding, con el fin de comprobar su papel en la generación de una percepción de la empresa como un gran lugar para trabajar (GPTW) e identificar cuáles contribuyen más a esta percepción. La experiencia de los recién llegados durante el proceso de onboarding se evalúa mediante un cuestionario basado en las 30 prácticas de onboarding de Klein, Polin y Soutton (2015) y los criterios usados por GPTW. La muestra estuvo compuesta por 194 estudiantes universitarios que cursaban su último año en programas de prácticas con empresas. Se aplicó análisis descriptivo, de cluster y de correlación. Gran parte de las prácticas de onboarding aplicadas son aquellas en las que se percibe el apoyo personal en diferentes niveles de jerarquía, conocimiento y roles. Las prácticas de orientación e información tienen mayor influencia en la percepción de la empresa como GPTW. Demostramos la existencia de una relación positiva entre la evaluación del onboarding y GPTW. Esta investigación amplía el conocimiento sobre el onboarding y lo analiza desde una perspectiva novedosa: su relación con la percepción de la empresa como GPTW.

*Palabras clave:* Onboarding, clúster, recién llegados, Gran Lugar para Trabajar, Experiencia del Empleado.

**ABSTRACT:** The purpose of this paper is to analyse onboarding practices, in order to test their role in generating a perception of the company as a Great Place to Work (GPTW) and to identify which ones contribute most to this perception. The experience of newcomers during the onboarding process is assessed using a questionnaire based on the 30 onboarding practices of Klein, Polin and Soutton (2015) and the criteria used by GPTW. The sample consisted of 194 university students in their final year in internship programs with companies. We applied descriptive, cluster and correlation analysis. A large part of applied and valued onboarding practices are those where personal support is perceived at different levels of hierarchy, knowledge and roles. Guidance and information practices have the greatest influence on the perception of the company as a GPTW. We demonstrate the existence of a positive relationship between the evaluation of onboarding and GPTW. This research expands the knowledge about onboarding and analyses it from a novel perspective: its relationship with the perception of the company as a GPTW.

*Keywords:* Onboarding, cluster, newcomers, Great Place to Work, Employee Experience.

## 1. Introducción

In adapting to a constantly changing business environment, organizations need to develop a culture of innovation. Human resource management (HRM) plays a key role in this process. HRM that focuses on employee experience, employee satisfaction, work-life balance and happiness in the workplace will ensure employee alignment and engagement around a common vision, and contribute to greater business agility and success in today's marketplace.

A deeper understanding of the formula for managing employees should be the cornerstone for engaging them within the company, from the earliest stages of this mutual relationship, improving its ability to attract and retain them, going through many interactions and attaching importance to the quality of each critical moment (Crebar, 2016). Understanding employees, meeting their expectations, and fostering their commitment is crucial for improving performance.

We understand employee experience (EMX) as the employee's perception of their workplace, through their own personal interaction (Yadav & Vihari, 2021). Optimising EMX, through work redesign, emphasises the centrality of the employee and the primary value of their life experience, rather than work experience, in overall outcomes. In addition, it constitutes an organisational effort, with direct repercussions on the internal and external valuation of the company itself, configuring an effective Employer Branding, by generating a strong, professional and attractive brand image. In this sense, Morgan (2017), cited that companies which followed EMX practices are 4.5 times more frequently listed on the global innovative companies' rankings, 6 times, on the best places to work, 40 times more on the list of exponential organisations and more than 4 times average profit and profitability.

Throughout an employment relationship, there are countless moments in which details are perceived that can make a difference. Start even before joining the company, according to the level of attraction of the employer (Coldwell & Williamson, 2019), to leaving the company and beyond. "Using the initial signals recruiters and a company's reputation provide, recruits are actively making sense of their new employment arrangements" (Lee et al., 2011, p. 218).

Everything counts. However, the first touchdowns make a deep and lasting impression on the employee's attitudes and emotions. The design and implementation of onboarding (OB) has a great impact for its success: the newcomer assumes that the new knowledge and skills expected are necessary and understands the value of promoting the achievement of targets as soon as possible.

Most organizations believe OB to be an important component of the newcomer experience and effective in helping to socialize new employees (Klein et al., 2015). The beginning of a new employment relationship or access to a new role are crucial situations that will mark the success of integration and the development of the employee's relationship with the company. At those times, a new employee is particularly receptive, and organizational values and culture are better appreciated, constituting the opportune moment to evaluate the fit between the objectives of the individual and those of the employer. Aligning both parties toward a mutually satisfying and fruitful relationship (Andersen, 2008) is an ongoing process of growth and improvement.

The actions carried out in the initial months of a transition or change directly impact the possibilities of final success (Bawany, 2014). Similarly, Woodrow and Guest's (2020) studies revealed that initial events had a profound effect on the success of socialization.

According to Cooper-Thomas et al. (2019), every year, almost 20% of the global workforce are newcomers. Obviously, there is a significant impact and, therefore, a vital need arises: to get these newcomers up to speed as quickly as the model can ensure adequate adaptation to the job and to the organization.

The employees progressively demand a more personal, digital, timely and rewarding onboarding experience (Jeske & Olson, 2022) that the company must satisfy. When a worker experiences the receipt of adequate support, especially in times of crisis or change, it creates ties that allow future changes to be overcome more quickly. Besides, his response, in the form of contribution and commitment to the organization, grow dramatically (Bawany, 2014; Cooper-Thomas et al., 2004, Cooper-Thomas et al., 2012; Korte & Li, 2013; Meacham et al., 2017; Nalband et al., 2017).

Transforming onboarding into a memorable experience poses a contemporary challenge for HRM (LLyc Ideas & DCH, 2023). The design and implementation of these programs and practices should promote the commitment of newcomers and become a strategic issue for a more effective recruitment (Gartner, 2023). In addition, generating satisfactory onboarding experiences greatly contributes to building internal and external awareness of the company as a great place to work, improving its attractiveness in the job market.

All of these issues are of critical importance to determine wellbeing, individual happiness today and to shape it for tomorrow. This is mainly due to the occurrence of significant events and qualitative learning experiences that are associated with a high level of personal and professional satisfaction and sensations. HR Directors must be aware of their own responsibilities in corporate reputation, image and attractiveness in the labour market and, specifically, seeking and promoting talent wherever it is. Public release of rankings for best employers are increasingly consulted.

The employee opinion could have far greater credibility than employer's, so supporting employee success and general well-being is a vital matter in attracting and retaining talent. At this point we ask: Which OB practices are most common and valuable? Are companies that implement successful OB practices considered a good place to work? How can a great OB experience improve the company's consideration as a Great Place To Work (GPTW)?

For all the above reasons, the purpose of the present study is to explore from the point of view of the new employees, the specific OB practices organizations use, as well as the role that OB plays in employee's perception of the company as a GPTW and identifies which of these practices contribute most to this perception. All this to ensure effective recruitment, the engagement of newcomers and the feeling of being in a great workplace.

In this paper we define the concept of OB, analyse its practices and content, as well as its relationship with GPTW. Then, after presenting our hypotheses about this relationship, we go on to empirically test them, discuss the results and, finally, present the main conclusions.

## **2. Theoretical Background**

### ***2.1. Onboarding's definition***

An onboarding program is a powerful tool to welcome new employees and support their productivity (Zink & Curran, 2018). Includes formal and informal practices, activities, and policies that are implemented by an organization for the integration of newcomers (Klein & Polin, 2012: 268). Their primary objective is to increase the confidence of new recruits, help them become productive more quickly and build a mutually positive association with the organisation (Chillakuri, 2020) that lays the foundation for successful engagement and performance. These programmes, show newcomers the organization and its corporate values; how to work in it; help them learn all about their work environment, its meaning and their role in it; provide them with the resources they need to perform their new job; reduce the inevitable uncertainty and anxiety they experience; and cultivate within them a sense of pride in their new affiliation (Saks & Ashforth, 1997; Klein & Weaver, 2000; Cooper-Thomas & Anderson, 2006; Fang et al., 2011; Klein et al., 2015).

In the associated literature, some confusion can be observed between the terms socialization and onboarding, which is not a strange situation given that the two constructs share numerous characteristics. Some researchers consider the two concepts equivalent (Bauer & Erdogan, 2011). However, Klein et al. (2015) pointed out essential differences in terms of the centrality and protocolisation of the process, its durability, and intensity. In relation to socialisation, OB is a conceptually separate process but integrated into a larger scale dimension: socialisation. It is an important process for the organization (protagonism and protocolisation), of shorter duration, developed gradually, whose intensity is reduced over time and socialising in itself.

The proliferation of OB programmes suggests that most organizations value them as an essential element of the newcomer experience, contributing to their socialization and productivity (Torres, 2016). Recently, Chenji & Raghavendra (2021), found that "robust OB, apart from creativity, influences other spheres of knowledge workers, including attitudes, job satisfaction, organisational usefulness, commitment, and organizational support".

In the face of the disruption generated by digital transformation, artificial intelligence, cultural and generational change, difficulties in engaging talent, or phenomena such as "the great resignation", among others, it is not surprising that (HR) professionals are increasingly concerned about how to build and retain talent, emphasising the importance of getting employees to understand, internalise and commit to the company's values from day one (Cable et al., 2013). In this regard, Chillakuri (2020) advocated the need for effective OB and its strategic nature for the company. Organizations treat OB as a strategic programme, as the impression created during the early days of new hires will have a lasting effect on people development. As a component of talent management, a personnel onboarding process adapted to the company and integrated effectively should be understood as a strategic necessity (Stulle, 2018). Structured onboarding is a critical success factor for companies and constitutes a competitive advantage (Nielson et al., 2023).

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## **2.2. Onboarding Content and Practices**

Research on OB has been developed under four different perspectives (Britto et al., 2020): the stages through which newcomers progress, the content learned, the actors involved, and the practices employed to incorporate them. However, several authors consider that the content and practices of OB have been neglected in recent years. Allen et al. (2017, p. 333) recommended that "future research should develop better measures of the content of socialisation".

The variety and scope of OB practices can be very broad and ambitious, but it is worth working to determine the most appropriate content in terms of the information to be acquired and the relationships to be built. The content must cover everything that the new employee needs and know to achieve the own objectives and those of the company. According to the referenced topic, they are grouped into:

- Role and objectives. This section should outline the expected progress from the new employee, including the pace at which it is anticipated and the most effective methods for achieving it. It should clearly define the employee's role, work expectations and priorities.
- Plans and programs. Designing those practices that integrate the goals to be achieved or that ease their achievement.
- Business and culture. Educating on the mission, vision, and values of the company, as well as its history, main initiatives, and basic financial information, competition, and market shares.
- Equipment, products, and services. Familiarizing the new employee with colleagues, bosses, leaders, governance, and functional structure of the company, along with clients, what the company offers, and the brand.
- Employer branding. Showing why the employee is lucky to have become part of something so important—pride of belonging.
- Monitoring of experiences and achievements. Frequent feedback that starts immediately.

To cover content as extensive, the first step is to identify those techniques de OB most used currently. Although there are several classifications, the one proposed by Van Maanen & Schein (1979) is well developed. Initially, was collected as socializing practices, but it is posible to extrapolate to the consideration of OB actions. It has been the subject of continuous review (Saks & Ashforth, 1997, Ashforth et al., 1998; Meacham et al., 2017; Batistic, 2018; Montani et al., 2019) and is presented as a bipolar

differentiation: collective (vs. individual), fixed (vs. variable), formal (vs. informal), sequential (vs. random), serial approach (vs. disjunctive), investiture (vs. divestment).

Based on their main purpose, Klein et al. (2015) developed 30 OB practices grouped into the six categories of the IWG (inform-welcome-guide classification) model that were identified by Klein & Heuser in 2008: information, communication, resources, training, welcoming and guiding. We also found some additional generic classifications of OB practices, distinguishing between planned and unplanned (Saks & Ashforth, 1997; Ashforth et al., 1998; Meacham et al, 2017; Batistic, 2018); mandatory or recommended; and according to who can initiate them, the organization or employees proactively (Saks & Ashforth, 1997; Fang et al., 2011; Klein et al., 2015). In this sense, we could extend the possibilities to any of the broad stakeholder groups (supervisors, leaders, peers, HR, mentors, etc.). More recently, Wiseman et al. (2022) added a new typology: centralised and decentralised OB programmes. The former employs institutionalised socialization tactics, while the latter combines individualised and institutionalised socialisation tactics.

The diversity of practices is wide. However, most researchers have conceptualised them along a single continuum, as they are very positively interrelated (Ashforth et al., 1998; Bauer et al., 2007). In this sense, Bauer & Erdogan (2011), presented four levels of OB: compliance, clarification, culture and connection. As participants experience more levels, they tend to agree that they value greater usefulness of OB, impacting their organizational commitment and job satisfaction. More recently, in the realm of knowledge workers, Chenji & Raghavendra (2021) found that individuals experiencing the connectedness level reported higher perceived creativity, with psychological empowerment acting as a moderator.

The literature recognises that not all internships are equally efficient and depending on the circumstances of each case (Saks & Gruman, 2018). In addition to taking into account personal characteristics, authors such as Klein et al. (2015) and Batistic (2018) suggest differences in practices depending on the preparation of the new hire, the type of work (status) or simply differentiating whether they are managers or employees with less responsibility. Also, Peltokorpi et al. (2022), when analysing the impact of individual differences of newcomers on the success of socialisation tactics, found that newcomers with an "internal locus of control" were less influenced by the approach of these practices in terms of job adjustment, job integration and voluntary turnover. Employees with an "external locus of control" at work showed high social integration and job fit, and low turnover under institutionalised socialisation practices, whereas, under individualised socialisation tactics, these same employees showed lower social integration and job fit.

Britto et al. (2020), linked successful incorporation of newcomers to formal (institutionalised) incorporation programmes. In addition, exposure to different integration practices can be beneficial, making the process faster and more successful (Batistic, 2018). In this regard, Wiseman et al. (2022) found that decentralised socialization programmes, i.e. those combining individualised and institutionalised tactics, increased sales force performance and innovation.

### ***2.3. Onboarding and Great Place to Work***

The implementation of OB practices responds to the leading role companies give to solutions for the initially outlined problem: to count of valuable and productive employees, who are delighted to be so. In the ultimate sense, these OB practices demonstrate the real interest of companies to occupy a prominent place as a desirable employer.

Despite the widespread notion that receiving a good salary guarantees job satisfaction, reality often does not align with this assumption, although it does positively influence it (Bersin, 2015). Remuneration is a very important factor when hiring and retaining new employees, but it is not the only factor. It is common for most workers to seek job and personal satisfaction through positive work experiences (IBM & Globoforce, 2016). This is something similar to what is described in terms of negotiation as "making the cake bigger". The perception a new employee has at this moment of truth will condition all subsequent moments. Smith et al. (2022) considered OB as a determining factor in how newcomers view an organization, as well as the degree to which they were willing to contribute and commit to it.

All that said, the key to creating a GPTW cannot be self-limiting to a prescriptive set of benefits, policies, and practices given to employees but, rather, must seek to build high-quality relationships characterized by trust, pride, and camaraderie. This is in essence shaping relationships of what can be described as an excellent place to work (GPTW, 2023).

Over time, rankings on the quality of employers have emerged, family-friendly company certificates, work-life balance certificates, innovative company, presentations in university settings for recruitment purposes... The establishment of organizational reputation begins with the consolidation of employees through the OB process (Crebar, 2016; Fragua, 2016; Liley, Feliciano & Laurs, 2017), i.e. with their experiential journey during OB.

GPTW (2020) has identified best practices in OB. Regardless of size or sector, each company adapts it to its own reality, highlighting the continuous monitoring of the adaptation process, the joint involvement of the different areas and roles, materials and content, teambuildings or the best practices detected such as new technology games or collective participation and customer experience circuits. In these, special importance is given to the creation of special accompaniment and supervision figures to accompany and supervise the new employee, controlling the process and unforeseen events.

### **3. Conceptualization and hypotheses development**

Prior empirical research has documented many positive outcomes resulting from effective socialization for both organizations and new employees (Klein et al., 2015).

Studies show a positive relationship between OB practices and: employee performance and engagement (Graybill et al., 2013); profitability (Benzinger, 2016); socialization (Klein et al., 2015); social integration, satisfaction, commitment and personal-organizational fit (Cooper-Thomas et al., 2012); retention and turnover (Meacham et al., 2017, Kirchner & Stull, 2022); anxiety and stress and intention to leave (Chenji & Raghavendra, 2021); performance, job satisfaction and loyalty (Bauer et al., 2007); employee organizational fit and organization-based self-esteem (Gardner et al., 2022).

However, there are few studies that relate OB to newcomers' perceptions of the company. Research has addressed the relationship between socialization and employer image through engagement (Cooper-Thomas & Anderson, 2006; Meyer, 2016). Those with higher levels of loyalty are likely to give a positive view of their organization externally. Moreover, Louis (1980) suggested that newcomers become knowledgeable when they are encouraged to represent the organization. However, there have been no direct measures of the relationship between OB and consideration of the company as a GPTW.

H1. There is a relationship between onboarding and GPTW. This hypothesis is divided into two sub-hypotheses:

H1.1. Effective onboarding generates the perception of the company as a GPTW. New hires who rate onboarding positively perceive the company as a great place to work.

H1.2. Not all onboarding practices influence the perception of the company as a GPTW to the same extent.

Some onboarding practices exert a greater influence than others on the generation of the perception of the company as a GPTW.

## **4. Research Method**

### **4.1. Methodology**

The trainee practical experience during the OB process has been assessed through a questionnaire based on a Likert-type scale from 1 to 7. The starting point was a list of 30 OB practices of Klein et al. (2015) based on the typology presented in Klein & Heuser (2008). Furthermore, considering the criteria used by GPTW (2023), company that aims to certify and rank best Workplaces, five new items were added to the construct

to evaluate to what extent the company is perceived as that label (GPTW) suggests, and which correspond to these five dimensions: Credibility, Respect, Imparciality, Pride and Camaraderie.

#### 4.2. Participants and procedures

The sample counts on the participation of 200 individuals (final year students at the Málaga university, who spent 3 months doing work experience in companies in Málaga) and 194 valid surveys (Table 1).

Table 1. Technical specifications of the study.

Universe	Student internships in Málaga companies
Geographical area	Malaga Province (Andalusia, Spain)
Data collection	Structured questionnaire, via google
Sampling procedure	Non-probabilistic by convenience
Sampling size	200 individuals; 194 valid surveys

Source: Authors' elaboration.

They received 194 completed surveys from a sample of 200 participants. They were 71.1% female and were on average 23.2 years old. Most of them developed face-to-face work (77.8%) and 51.5% did not have previous job experience.

The participating organizations belong to a wide variety of sectors and industries, mainly SMEs (74.8% had less than 50 employees).

#### 4.3. Descriptive Statistics

Firstly, descriptive statistic were calculates to find out if the 30-onboarding practices by Klein et al. (2015) are being carried out in organizations and, if so, how the participants value these practices.

Secondly, the relationship between OB practices and GPTW has been analyzed through a cluster analysis. In addition, a correlation analysis was applied to check which OB practices have the strongest influence on the consideration of the company as a GPTW.

#### 4.4. Objectives

The aim of this research is to analyse and assess the OB practices used by companies, to demonstrate their relationship with GPTW and to identify which (of these) have the greatest influence on whether a company is considered a GPTW.

### 5. Findings

#### 5.1. Onboarding Practices

Since the scale of the variables is ordinal, we analyze the most adequate and representative statistical values for them. First, the medians (Figure 1) for the variables with the most notable results will be discussed, and then the graphical distributions of the ratings for each item will be analysed (Figure 2).

The group of Welcome indicators shows best median values for receiving a Tailored welcome with the Manager or, simply, for being welcomed by others, peers, colleagues or managers (5). Both items are, aswel, the most frequently used by companies. For the rest of the activities, when they have been carried out, their median values are equal to 1 if a welcome object with the company name/logo is given, there was a meeting or lunch or a special welcome event, also if families are invited, 2 when a New staff communication is issued or practicing with colleagues ia arranged; or 3 for welcome kits.

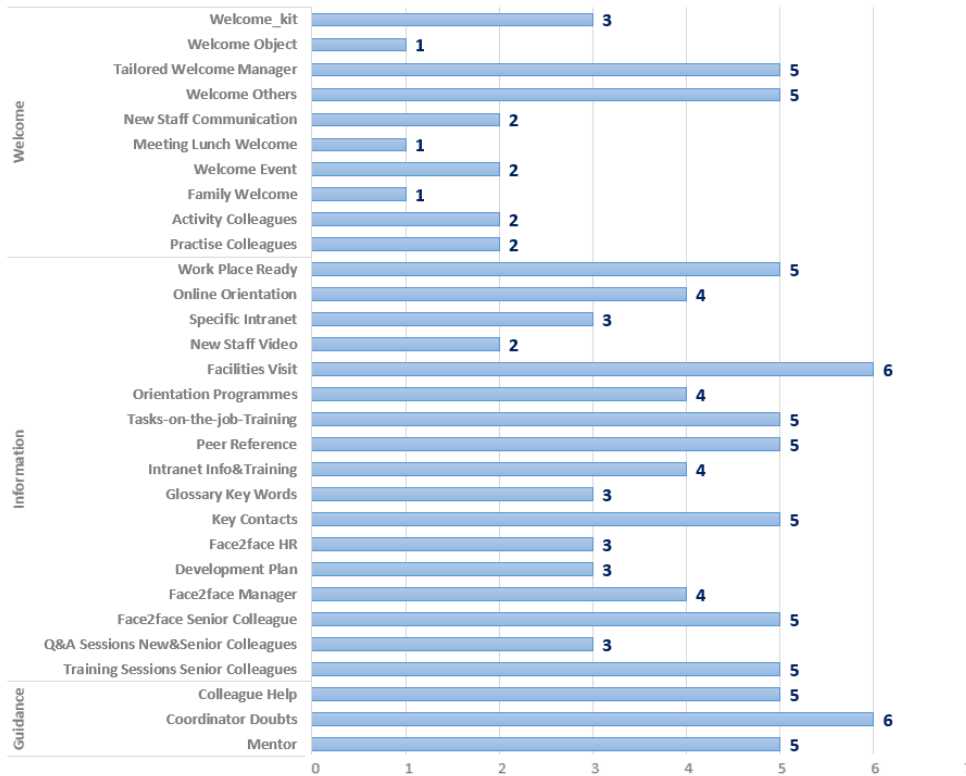


Figure 1. Median values for Welcome, Information and Guidance items

Source: Authors' elaboration.

In the same way, lower values are for any kind of informal celebration or event, especially those where family members might be involved.

Concerning the Information and Guide activities, the medians obtained are generally higher than those obtained by the Welcome group.

The more appreciated Information activities are related to visit to the facilities (6). They are followed, with 5 median points, by the following items: to check that the place of work is completely ready for the new employee to start the job, counting with a Peer reference and training contents or, keeping on this same matter, attending a Tasks-on-the-job training. Lowest average value is assigned to receiving a Video for the new staff (2).

Guia's activities have received the best ratings: a coordinator who can clarify any doubts that may arise (6), Mentor (5) and the assignment of a colleague to mentor the new employee (5).

Figure 2 shows the frequency distribution of values obtained for the three groups of variables: Welcome, Information and Guidance activities.

It is noteworthy that the option of not having carried out the activity is often repeated as the one most frequently chosen by the participants. Thus, 10 out of 17 Information indicators; 1 out of 3 Guidance ones; and 8 out of 10 Welcome indicators are in this situation: where, for example, around 40% of the answers in items related to meetings or any kind of welcome events are marked as not having carried out the activity, which contrasts with only 6% for the item labelled as Tailored welcome by the manager.



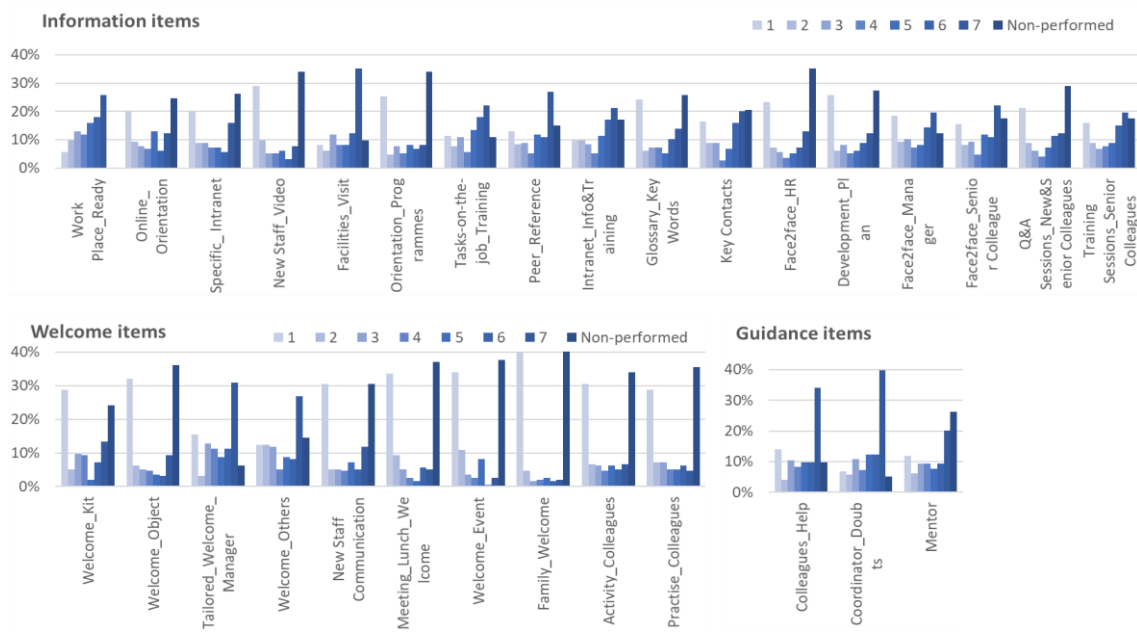


Figure 2. Frequency of valuation. Distribution by clusters and items.

Source: Authors' elaboration.

In addition, it can be seen that for all cases in which the item described above was found to be realised, the most repeated rating, the mode, is the highest: 7 points.

On the other hand, this global view also allows us to find another pattern that is repeated in figure 2: mainly, again, those items for which non-performed items are predominant the chart draws a "U" curve. This implies that the predominant response options for all these indicators are both non-existent and very low, 1 point.

To conclude this section, we would like to highlight those indicators that have not been included in the parameters explained above. This last group is characterised by the fact that the assessments show a more progressive result. Thus, they could probably be considered as elements of greater need or as minimum requirements, which are expected at the start of the employment relationship, as it can be seen that they are usually present and are fairly well valued. In this sense, there are items of an informative nature, relating to the post already being prepared with everything necessary to start work, to include training on the tasks to be carried out in the post itself, to determine a colleague who can serve as a reference or simply to start with a simple visit to the facilities; or also others more oriented towards serving as a guide, such as assigning colleagues who can offer their help and experience in the integration process or designating a coordinator to resolve any doubts.

### 5.2. Onboarding and GPTW

The relationship between OB practices and GPTW is checked through a cluster analysis. Thus, if we consider all the participants (Unrealized is categorized with a value equal to 0), the results show that there is a clear relationship between the assessment given to OB practices and the GPTW.

The cluster analysis returns two relatively balanced groups in terms of size: the Group 1 contains 112 participants and Group 2 contains 79 participants (there are 3 missing observations). Figure 3 shows the centroids of each of the two groups. It can be seen that the centroids of Group 1 have a lower value than those of Group 2 in all OB items. It means that the valuations of the participants who are assigned to Group

1 are statistically lower than those who are assigned to Group 2. Moreover, the same occurs for the assessments of the 5 GPTW items.

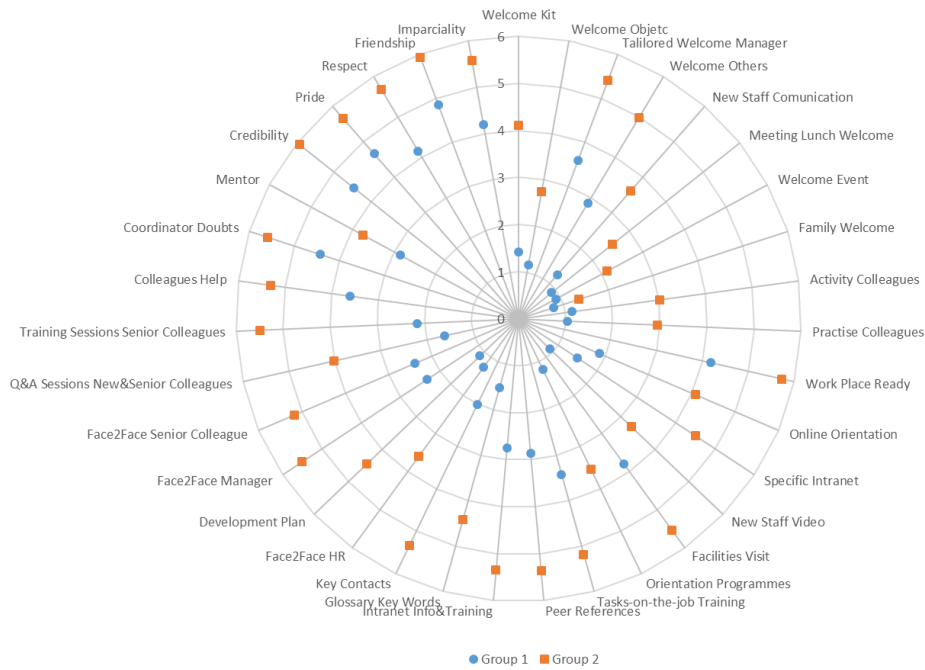


Figure 3. Cluster analysis centroids

Source: Authors' elaboration.

Therefore, we can conclude that Group 1 is made up of participants who give low values to both OB practices and the GPTW, while Group 2 is made up of participants who give high values to both OB practices and the GPTW. This leads us to affirm that the participants who have felt well received by the company are the ones who feel largely that this is a great place to work. Otherwise, those who have felt less welcome have a lower assessment of the workplace.

This confirms hypothesis 1.1.

In order to reconfirm this hypothesis, as a control measure, two questions were introduced in the questionnaire, asking whether the attractiveness of the company had improved after this experience with the company or whether they would recommend it.

In the first case, "improvement of attractiveness", two groups were formed. Those who answered "yes" had medium ratings for all the OB items, above those who thought that their attractiveness had not improved after the experience.

In the second case, "would recommend to friends or family", the same is true. Those who would recommend the company have higher median ratings for all OB items than those who would not recommend it. Therefore, we confirm, once again, hypothesis 1.1.

In order to find out which of the OB practices had the most influence on feeling like a GPTW, we conducted a correlation analysis (Table 2). For this purpose, a new variable GPTW has been created with the values of Group 2, participants who give high values to the GPTW.

Table 2 shows the items that exhibit statistically significant correlations. The OB practices of the information and guidance group have the greatest influence on the feeling of being in a GPTW. Specifically, meeting personally with their direct boss, having information from all colleagues, having a colleague to deal with any doubts that may arise, having the workstation prepared, receiving training for initial

adaptation to the job, having a reference colleague, having sessions with expert colleagues to explain the procedures and having a welcome coordinator. This confirms hypothesis 1.2.

This confirms the existence of a relationship between onboarding and GPTW (hypothesis 1).

Table 2. Correlation Onboarding practices-GPTWgroup2

			Work Place Ready	Facilities Visits	Tasks-on-the-job Training	Peer_ Reference	Key Contacts	Face2face Manager	Face2face_Senior	Training Sessions_Senior Colleagues	Colleagues-Help	Coordinator-Doubts
Rho Spearman	GPTW	Correlation Coefficient	,481**	,393**	,469**	,460**	,562**	,615**	,390**	,455**	,447**	,494**
		Significat. (bilateral)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Source: Authors' elaboration.

## 6. Discussion

Our purpose is threefold: to explore what OB practices organizations put in place for the adaptation of newcomers, how they are valued by newcomers, and to demonstrate the influence of OB on the perception of their company as a GPTW. In relation to these objectives, the findings can be structured in two subsections:

### 6.1. Onboarding practices: use and assessment

After analysing the OB practices carried out, based on the list of 30 OB practices of Klein et al. (2015), those with the highest scores include: Welcome activities, as those carried out by managers or by other colleagues; Information practices, as Visiting to facilities, Workspace ready, Tasks on-the-job training, Peer reference, Intranet Info&Training, Key contacts information, Face to face with a Senior Colleague; and Guidance activities, as an Assigned colleague to help, Mentoring or designating a Coordinator for solving doubts.

The relevance of the participation of the human factor in the OB is highlighted, from a double perspective: coordination and participation. On the one hand, the opportunity to create a special OB figure to supervise the welcome, report on key aspects and guide the new employee during his or her integration experience in the company is concluded. The aim is to maximise the usefulness of these welcome processes, designating a person responsible for facilitating and coordinating the correct functioning of the programmed activities and the fulfilment of the planned objectives. On the other hand, the most valued practices are those where personal accompaniment or the active participation of other colleagues is perceived, at different levels of hierarchy, knowledge and roles. According to Zou et al. (2021) 'Social connections play a vital role in helping newcomers fit into a new work environment'.

The reverse reading of the results of Figures 1 and 2 in the previous section allowed us to confirm the existence of a significant number of OB activities that were not carried out (8 Welcome, 8 Information and 1 Guidance items). Moreover, some of them have a high rating, such as Mentoring, getting the Workplace ready to use or giving a list of Key contact details. It shows that, in OB management, there are still many activities to be added and much room for improvement.

In addition, the interest in exploring these new lines of work increase as, on the other hand, for the 100% of the performed OB items it is observed that the mode is 7 points, making it clearly outstanding to the rest of values and, therefore, highlighting that new employees appreciate these welcome and integration programmes very much, in such an essential momentum for the workers and companies relationship.

Connecting with the "U" drawn curves repeatedly, stated within many of the items charts, it highlights la concentración de respuestas de los participantes en la opción de Non-performanced activity or with a rating of 1 point. This can be analysed from two perspectives: from the perspective of the new employee, who may not adequately appreciate the benefits of certain practices or may not really value them; or from

the perspective of the organization, which may agree that such activities do not add sufficient value or may know that their new employees do not value them as much and therefore do not include them in their OB programmes.

Finally, it has been verified that our questionnaire has collected all the OB practices available from the companies in the sample, since the option of adding any other activity, in addition to those already included in this research, has not been answered by any of the respondents.

## **6.2. Role of onboarding in GPTW**

The relationship between OB and GPTW is demonstrated. The cluster analysis showed a clear correlation between the rating given to OB and GPTW practices. This leads us to affirm that the participants who have felt well received by the company are those who consider themselves to be in a GPTW. On the other hand, those who felt less welcome have a lower evaluation of the workplace.

Within the three categories of OB practices, we highlight those in the Information and Guidance group as having the greatest influence on the feeling of being in a GPTW. We reiterate the interesting opportunity of having a specific OB function, as well as the importance of their adequate training, in order to provide a good accompaniment and supervision of the new employee's experience in the company.

## **7. Conclusions**

The early days after starting a new position represents a moment of truth with an extraordinary impact in the employee's perception and emotions. The new ones bring excitement, curiosity, and a particularly positive attitude, paying maximum attention to manage the best possible adaptation; however, emotions are especially vulnerable.

The organization must be aware of the significance of these situations and the potential of the mechanisms and processes that facilitate this path. The impression this OB experience makes on employees will shape their aptitude and predetermine the attitude and emotional employee-company relationship. This is fully related to the Sustainable Development Objectives (SDO) that require companies around the world to improve working relations and working conditions as a tool for economic development. Specifically, SDG 8 is connected to Principles 1 to 6 in the United Nations Global Compact (Global Compact Spanish Network, 7/10/19): "Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all".

This study explores the perceptions of new employees through their experience with OB practices. This will provide practical guidance for HR professionals by offering insights into the conditions and methods through which the effectiveness of organizational behavior activities can be optimized for both employee and organizational outcomes.

This study explores, from the point of view of the new employees, the specific OB practices that the organizations use and the role that OB plays in employees' perception of the company as a great place to work. The starting point was a list of 30 onboarding practices of Klein et al. (2015) based on the typology presented in Klein & Heuser (2008).

Our findings reveal that most of the most applied and valued OB practices are those where personal accompaniment is perceived. We also detected ample room for improvement through the incorporation of highly valued and unimplemented OB activities, especially among the welcome and some information activities. By finding that those interns who felt well received considered the company as GPTW, and the existence of certain OB activities that have a greater influence on the perception of the company as GPTW, we statistically demonstrate the relationship between OB and GPTW. This confirms the two hypotheses proposed in the study.

Our study involved a wide variety of firms, from different sectors and of different sizes. The inclusion of different sources in the sample allows for a more comprehensive and deeper understanding and minimises biases to a large extent. Thus overcoming the limitation of the work of Klein et al. (2015). They applied the study to workers in the same company.

This research contributes to the enhancement of awareness of OB benefits. Related literature is very scarce for assessing the direct relationship between OB and newcomers' perceptions about the company. There have been no direct measures of how newcomers represent their organization externally. Only researches has addressed the relationship between socialization and the image of the employer through engagement (Cooper-Thomas, & Anderson, 2006). Therefore, OB practices, in addition to contributing to the necessary recruitment efficiency, according to Garther (2023) and to the engagement of new recruits, could be a valid employer branding tool.

Moreover, one of the most common shortcomings is the failure to consider the perspective of new employees, often attributed to the knowledge and expertise of process designers or to a prejudiced lack of confidence in the potential contributions of newcomers from the outset. This partiality is overcome basing the evaluation of the process on its users, completing and improving the system, adding further qualitative feedback.

On the other hand, this study has a number of limitations. The first limitation is that this study was conducted with students on work experience (new employees) in companies for a period of 3 months. However, both the academic and practitioner literatures view OB as a process that should be designed to occur over several months (Klein et al., 2015). Some studies speak of up to one year.

The second limitation relates to the size of the sample. It is not large or diverse enough to be fully generalisable in terms of providing a census of OB practices in organizations. We are aware of the composition of our sample, which consists only of trainees, and the desirability of a future extension to the group of newcomers.

Finally, our results have simultaneously identified the possibility of enhancing OB through potential lines of work such as those below:

- Having demonstrated a relationship between OB and the consideration of the company as a GPTW, it would be interesting to know if OB acts as a useful tool for the configuration of an effective Employer Branding, by generating a strong, professional and captivating brand image.
- Partiality in the evaluation of the process and in the measurement of the effectiveness of the practices. In the personal perception of the worker, there is information about how useful an activity can be. Accepting this subjective dialogue with the newcomer will allow organizations to be aware of the leading role they are granted and of the real interest in making this new relationship sustainable and successful. The analysis of this potential profit is completed by contrasting the employee's experience with the company's expectations.
- Measurement of commitment at different points in time throughout the OB process. It would be interesting to describe the path and achievable milestones in integration, defining "initial maximums" for a new job once employees settle down and carry out more routine work activities (Saks & Gruman, 2018).
- Delving into the implementation of a proposal that ensures a complete model that can be classified as optimized.
- Studying the impact of information technologies on OB. The technology revolution has decisive implications for socialization (Allen et al., 2017). It is worth knowing how companies deploy IT solutions and artificial intelligence in terms of integration and socialization. In addition, and as they add Williamson Yarbrough & Ramos Salazar (2023), for future research, know new hires' Virtual onboarding experiences a través de face-to-face interviews.

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