Feasibility Analysis

of Effectively Onboarding New Employees

Remotely at Speakbox

for

Benjamin George

Co-Founder and Chief Operating Officer

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Vancouver, British Columbia

by

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Speakbox

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Benjamin George

Co-Founder and Chief Operating Officer

Speakbox

Vancouver, BC

Dear Mr. George,

Here is my report, Feasibility Analysis of Effectively Onboarding New Employees at Speakbox.

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I’ve enjoyed my work on this project and would be happy to answer any questions you may have. Please feel free to reach out after 5pm at (xxx) xxx-xxxx or email me at jksdeluz@student.ubc.ca.

Kind regards,

Jen K. Deluz

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# Abstract

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# Introduction

Speakbox is a growing social enterprise providing mental health professionals with an effective practice management software. The platform has continued to grow by developing new tools and features based on feedback given from existing clinicians. Given current circumstances surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic, public health experts strongly recommend companies to encourage all employees to work from home. Remote work will aid in preventing and mitigating disease transmission around offices, public transit, and households. Acting in accordance with guidelines for health and safety, the onboarding process will also be done remotely to follow workplace guidelines and risk mitigation set out by the government.

Onboarding involves processes of integrating new employees into their role, their team, and the company. These processes are split into two parts:

* Cultural assimilation – conveying the company’s culture, values, and expectations to transition new employees into the company and their team.
* Work training – providing the necessary tools, resources, and guidance to transition new employees into their role.

Whereas, remote commonly describes employees working away from their physical environment (Colihan, et al., 1998, as cited in Ford, Houck, et al., 2020, p. 1). They may work at home, in a shared public space, or any location of their choice. The idea of remote work is that employees can work in any chosen location and effectively contribute to their team (Ford, Houck, et al., 2020, p. 1).

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, companies had limited time to develop new onboarding procedures as they began their transition into remote work (Ford, Houck, et al., 2020, p. 1). Numerous disadvantages accompany a team as they transition into an entirely virtual workforce. Unfortunately, several of these challenges negatively impact companies. Companies and employees may face certain struggles as they adjust to working remotely. As companies and employees adjust to working remotely, they may face certain obstacles

To better understand the remote onboarding process, including challenges encountered while onboarding in a pandemic, six areas of onboarding and remote work will be explored by posing the following Research Questions (RQs):

*RQ1* What obstacles are the current employees facing while working remotely?

*RQ2* Will it be beneficial to develop a unique onboarding plan for each new hire according to personalities?

*RQ3* How is workplace productivity impacted by remote work?

*RQ4* What actions can the company take to eliminate workplace isolation?

*RQ5* Which activities do employees believe promote team building and teamwork?

*RQ6* What are the approximate costs for implementing the provided suggestions, such as communication tools or team bonding activities?

Primary sources of research will be collected through surveys and interviews with new and existing employees at Speakbox. These methods will provide valuable insight on the opinions and perspectives of employees.

This report will serve to provide refinement recommendations for the current onboarding process to effectively integrate new employees remotely into Speakbox. These recommendations also consider the potential costs of the suggestions.

# Data Section

## Impact of Remote Work

Remote onboarding presents unique challenges in comparison to local onboarding because new employees begin work off-site (Ford, Houck, et al., 2020, p. 1). As companies and employees adjust to working remotely, they may face certain obstacles that have a negative impact on job satisfaction through productivity and social integration issues.

**Productivity.** An employee’s team connection and physical workspace is directly associated to job satisfaction and productivity (Boland and Fitzgerald, 2004, as cited in Ford, Houck, et al., 2020, p. 8). Challenges concerning trust, physical proximity, and self-awareness can arise while working in a team. Lack of trust creates ineffective teams with reduced transparency and communication; employees may conceal weaknesses and mistakes or even hesitate to provide constructive feedback in areas of expertise. Trust is essential within a team because it sets realistic goals and promotes accountability. However, poor communication is still possible because of the absence of a physical work environment. The lack of body language, facial expressions, or tone of voice can be misconstrued depending on certain communication methods. Whereas, productivity will benefit because of remote work, gaining advantages such as work autonomy, reduced interruptions, and flexible schedules (Ford, Milewicz, et al., 2019, as cited in Ford, Houck, et al., 2020, p. 2). Employees feeling a lack of visibility and support for their work within internal and external teams can quickly impact motivation, in turn affecting productivity. A good team connection is beneficial for all parties involved, while also bringing value to the company.

**Social Integration.** Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the shift to remote work, it is encouraged to build a culture of allyship for remote employees (Hernandez & Rodeghero, 2020, as cited in Ford, Houck, et al., 2020, p. 9). Remote work restricts opportunities for employees to bond, which may hinder the ability of establishing relationships with coworkers (Hill, 2020, p. 397). Employees may also find it more difficult to feel connected and a part of the company. The nature of remote work, scheduling difficulties, lack of running into colleagues in the office, etc. can increase the feeling of isolation between teammates (Ford, Houck, et al., 2020, p. 4). Teaching the origin or purpose behind certain rituals helps the existing team recalibrate and connect to why they were introduced in the first place (Hill, 2020, p. 397).

## Investigation of Employees: Interviews and Surveys

The investigation of employee opinions and perspectives should be taken into consideration prior to modifying the current onboarding process of Speakbox. A survey and several interviews were conducted and further analyzed below.

### Survey All Employees. To understand the effectiveness of the current onboarding process at Speakbox, all employees were given the opportunity to anonymously provide feedback on their views on remote work and onboarding. The number of employees at Speakbox may impact and influence the interpretation of the findings, in the form of a limitation, because a small sample size is surveyed.

#### ONBOARDING EXPERIENCE

As an initial starting point, Figure 1 and Figure 2 visualize the overall outlook on the current onboarding experience and quality of the training process. This gives valuable insight on effectiveness of the current onboarding process and if it should be improved.

**Figure 1.** Overall Quality of Onboarding Experience for Survey Respondents

**Figure 2.** Overall Quality of Training Process for Survey Respondents

#### COMMUNICATION

To minimize poor communication within a team, it is important to first understand the communication methods that employees vastly prefer. Figure 3 reveals that employees have a collective preference for video communication. Whereas, e-mail communication is the least popular for the survey respondents. It is helpful for employees to remain mindful of potential miscommunication that can damage team connection.

**Figure 3.** Workplace Communication Method Preferences for Current Employees

#### TEAM BUILDING

Despite the overall importance of team connection and social integration, not all employees may find it personally important. Some employees may prefer having a “Time Clock” or “Nine to Five” mentality where work is considered as work, so long as they are productive, and work is done. To gain better understanding of Speakbox employees, Figure 4 and Figure 5 both reveal that sense of belonging and team building have varying importance from moderately to extremely important.

**Figure 4.** Sense of Belonging Importance for Survey Respondents

**Figure 5.** Team Building Importance for Survey Respondents

Taking into consideration the previous results concerning importance of sense of belonging and team building, it is important to understand that not all team building activities work. An employee can differ vastly between colleagues, including preferences in participation of certain team building activities. To determine and cater future team building activities for Speakbox employees, survey respondents were asked to specify their interests in specific team building activities with the opportunity to provide additional suggestions. Although no additional suggestions were provided, Figure 6 visualizes the participation interests.

**Figure 6.** Interests in Team Building Activities for Survey Respondents

### Interview Current Employees.

# 💬 *“Interview responses.”* (V, Prugnaud, Telephone Interview, 2020)

# 💬 *“Interview responses.”* (B, George, Telephone Interview, 2020)

# 💬 *“Interview responses.”* (A, Scott, Telephone Interview, 2020)

## Considerations for New Onboarding Process

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**Desired Outcomes.**

Employee onboarding has six short-term processes, all in which have intended and desirable outcomes of their very own (Bauer, 2011, as cited in Britto et al., 2020, p. 4). To provide recommendations to effectively improve the current onboarding process, it is necessary to perform an analysis of the research findings from the investigation, in addition to existing studies and publications.

#### ORIENTATION

Workplace orientation is the initial process of helping new employees to understand important aspects of their roles and organizations, including the company's culture and values (Klein & Weaver, 2000, as cited in Britto, et al., 2020, p. 4).

#### TRAINING

Workplace training is a mandatory process to give new employees the confidence, clarity, and skills required by their job (Britto, et al., 2020, p. 4). Training facilitates the adjustment of new employees to their jobs, specifically concerning self‐efficacy, role clarity, and knowledge of culture (Bauer, 2011, as cited in Britto, et al., 2020, p. 4).

#### COACHING AND SUPPORT

A mentorship program can ease new employees into the company, offer advice, and answer specific questions. Opportunities for informal interaction with colleagues are created for new employees to adapt more easily to the new work environment (Britto, et al., 2020, p. 4).

#### SUPPORT TOOLS AND PROCESSES

Several tools and support processes that lead to onboarding success are:

* Onboarding plan – a formal document containing a timeline, goals, responsibilities and available support
* Stakeholder meetings – involves all onboarding stakeholders to provide new employees with the opportunity to acquire the information they need
* Onboarding online – track onboarding progress against the new employee’s development and career plans (Britto, et al., 2020, p. 4).

#### FEEDBACK

Constant feedback and guidance are mandatory for new employees to understand and interpret reactions of their coworkers (Britto, et al., 2020, p. 4). New employees develop their skills, knowledge, and performance based on the constructive feedback given.

### Cost Approximation for Implementation.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Category | Name | Pricing |
| Business Communication Platform | Slack | Free  Standard - $8 USD/mo.**\***  Plus - $5 USD/mo.**\*** |
| Video Communication Service | Google Meet | Free  Essentials - $8 USD/mo.**\*** |
| Video Communication Service | Zoom | Free  Pro - $200 CAD/yr.  Business - $270 CAD/yr. |
| Collection of Business Applications | Google Workspace (includes Google applications) | Business Starter - $7.80 CAD/mo.**\***  Business Standard - $15.60 CAD/mo.**\***  Business Plus - $23.40 CAD/mo.**\*** |
| Video Game Digital Distribution Service | Steam | Free |
| Video Game Digital Distribution Service | Origin | Free |
| Party Game | Jackbox Games | $9.99 - $99.99  (standalone titles, individual games, bundles, and party packs) |
| Digital Music Service | Spotify | Free |

**\***price per active user

**Table 1.** Current Pricing of Suggestions

# Conclusion

To understand the remote onboarding process and the challenges that new hires face during the process, several research questions were asked at the beginning of this report. Previous studies and publications revealed the challenges new employees face concerning orientation, training, coaching and support, support tools and processes, and feedback. In addition, a survey and several interviews with Speakbox employees were conducted to collect further data for analysis. With the initial purpose of providing refinement recommendations for the current onboarding process to effectively integrate new employees remotely into Speakbox, the recommendations are found below.

## Recommendations

Speakbox can create a clear and easily modifiable onboarding process for each new employee with the following recommendations:

* promoting open communication and asking for help
* encouraging teams to turn on cameras
* scheduling one-on-one meetings
* providing information about the company
* emphasizing team building and team connection
* assigning an onboarding buddy
* assigning an onboarding technical mentor
* supporting multiple onboarding speeds
* providing up-to-date documentation (Ford, Houck, et al., 2020, p. 7)

Additionally, it would be highly beneficial to follow up after the probation period and gain constructive feedback for onboarding improvements.

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# Appendix A: Interview Questions

## Interview Questions

1. What are your thoughts on working remotely?
2. How important is social interaction in a workplace?
3. Can you describe your communication style?
4. What is your biggest concern about working remotely?
5. How important is team bonding?
6. Would you participate in team building activities?
7. If yes, what are some activities or ideas you would enjoy?
8. Would you work in person if you had the opportunity to? Please explain.
9. If yes, what do you miss the most about working in an office?
10. What are some suggestions that can be done to improve our current onboarding process? (i.e. Professionally, emotionally, physically, or mentally)

# Appendix B: Survey Questions

## Survey Introduction

I am an undergraduate student at UBC working on a technical writing project. The purpose of this survey is to collect data for an analysis and investigation that aims to provide recommendations for effectively onboarding new employees to Speakbox. The final formal report will be addressed to Speakbox employees and management. In combination with information provided by publications and studies, this survey will assist in the recommendations to effectively refine the current onboarding process. The survey contains 8 questions, and it should take about 5 to 10 minutes of your time. Your participation in this survey is voluntary and your responses will be anonymous. You may refuse to take part in the research or exit the survey at any time. You are also free to decline to answer any question you do not wish to answer. I am appreciative and grateful for your generous participation. Thank you.

## Interview Questions

1. Have you started a new job remotely before your current company?
   1. Yes
   2. No
2. How would you rate your overall onboarding experience with your current company?
   1. Very satisfied
   2. Satisfied
   3. Neither agree nor disagree
   4. Dissatisfied
   5. Very dissatisfied
   6. Other \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
3. How would you rate the quality of the training process during your onboarding?
   1. Very satisfied
   2. Satisfied
   3. Neither agree nor disagree
   4. Dissatisfied
   5. Very dissatisfied
   6. Other \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
4. Do you have any suggestions to improve the training process?  
   \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  
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5. Which communication methods do you consider effective within a workplace?
   1. E-mail
   2. Text
   3. Video
   4. Phone
   5. Face-to-face
   6. Other \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
6. How important is a sense of belonging in a workplace?
   1. Extremely important
   2. Very important
   3. Moderately important
   4. Slightly important
   5. Not at all important
7. How important is team building in a workplace?
   1. Extremely important
   2. Very important
   3. Moderately important
   4. Slightly important
   5. Not at all important
8. Please indicate your interest in participating for the following activities:

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Very interested** | **Somewhat interested** | **Neutral** | **Somewhat uninterested** | **Not at all interested** |
| **Game night** |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Trivia night** |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Team lunches** |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Karaoke** |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Weekly jukebox (share music)** |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Baking/cooking competition** |  |  |  |  |  |
| **One-on-one (coffee break)** |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Virtual office (replicate office)** |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Craft night** |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Beer o’clock (drinks)** |  |  |  |  |  |

1. If you have any other activities or ideas that you would enjoy as a team building activity, please list them here.  
   \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  
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