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## **Employee Onboarding and Continual Training Program**

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Author Note

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### Abstract

The process of training and integrating new employees is a key element to the long term success of any organization. In the past Parker Toyota has had a laissez faire approach to training and new employee onboarding. It was the goal of this project to address those areas of need and establish a new training program to increase employee retention, effectiveness and efficiency.

### **Section 1: Introduction to your Capstone Project**

With nearly nine years of experience with Parker Toyota, it had become apparent that we were in need of reworking our new employee training and development program to more adequately address the circumstances that the industry of car sales faces. While the situation isn't dier it is rapidly evolving with the influx of new resources for the consumer and the limitations of production. These factors have shifted the way people shop for and ultimately purchase vehicles and as such it is our responsibility to change the way we address these dynamic market conditions. It was with this knowledge that I was able to conclude that we needed to address our training and development program to better create customer service agents that could think outside the box, adapt quickly to new information and technologies and critically think and solve problems.

The beginning of this project started like many do with a problem that needed to be solved. How might I build a new onboarding program for new employees? After much self deliberation I was able to narrow down the key elements that would create the tools for success. We can create a new training curriculum designed for continual growth or we can build in

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production benchmarks designed to be met by satisfactory work. Through the course of the last several weeks we built, examined and rebuilt this curriculum in order to tailor it to a system that was adaptive in nature and taught independent thinking rather than a simple process driven approach that offered little flexibility. I met not only with my peer group to determine aspects of the curriculum, but also with other departments that allowed us to integrate the new employee with numerous perspectives. This collaboration helped to create a dynamic training program that should be in place for years to come. The implementation of this curriculum and testing was a little more difficult. We first had to hire a new employee that would be filling a vacated position in my department. After reviewing the new program with the new employee and my supervisor we started to implement it. With any new program of this nature there will be on the fly adjustments and adaptations. We had our fair share, mostly related to content and timeline constraints. We just recently concluded the initial role out of the program and have had some fantastic results. Why I recognize that there will be continual adjustments to the skills that the new employee came out of training with will allow us to use this as a springboard for future onboarding and continual training programs.

## **Section 2: Elements coming together**

### **Innovative Approach**

In order to effectively change our onboarding process for new employees in my department I have chosen to recreate an onboarding process through a structured training program with benchmarks for success. This is essential in giving new employees the opportunity and tools to succeed in a dynamic career path. This is also a program that will increase the positive interactions both internally and externally with our customer on a daily basis. This new program offers the opportunity to use a collaborative methodology to create well rounded and effective department staff.

One of the primary focuses of my project was to integrate multiple perspectives and departments into the new training program. In an industry where each customer interaction is unique it is essential to have the tools to look at each situation through multiple perspectives. You never know what approach will solve the problem the best until you try. So collaboration and multiple perspectives is a key element in our new onboarding program. According to Barry

Pozner, “ Leaders who play this role of knowledge builder set the example for how team members should behave toward each other. As a result, team members’ trust in one another and the leader increases, along with their performance,” (Kouzes & Posner, 2017). This methodology for group thinking really helped to give the project numerous perspectives that allowed for a creative and diverse approach.

Typically a training program for a customer service industry in my experience is relatively linear and process oriented. My approach focuses on blending multiple linear processes to form a more dynamic and flexible training model that adapts a new employee to better respond to a customer's wants and needs. This should prove to be a highly effective model that limits compartmentalization of ideas and processes within my organization.

### **Emotional Intelligence**

Being self aware is something that I know I have historically struggled with. My previous philosophy would have been, “I know what is best and can do it without any help.” I now have come to the conclusion that the value in knowing your limitations as a leader, as a professional

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and as a teacher is more valuable. By approaching my team to help with the final elements of my capstone I was leaning on a multiple perspective approach that will help facilitate a more comprehensive program. Specifically when taking the emotional intelligence examination I recognize that I haven't traditionally worked well with others as such I need to make more of an effort to engage in constructive feedback and collaboration. Showcasing these skills is a key element of the training as well where we want all employees to feel empowered to ask for help and to collaborate in a variety of ways.

The objective of having multiple perspective elements is designed to have a positive impact for individuals with a diverse range of needs, learning styles and experiences. I think this is an important element that will make my new curriculum, mentorship program and benchmarks highly effective and adaptable. Having a singular approach only works on a singular type of personal and that is rarely an effective circumstance that you are presented with.

When we look at any onboarding program for a company as extensive as Parker Toyota, there is real value in having quality, effectiveness and efficiency. In creating the foundation for this new program the research I did for this project was really collaborative by nature. I would look at a



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topic that needed to be addressed and through multiple conversations with colleagues we would determine as a team a best practices model in the application of the content. I think this added value and depth to my research and the information that we were able to put together in the new curriculum. I'm excited to see its application.

### **Creative Thinking**

Dynamic solutions are really essential to complex problems. In my creative framework I attempted to really frame what I was addressing to make sure I was able to offer viable solutions. The problem itself, creating a new onboarding program, was to be able to take a new hire from essentially a zero knowledge state to an effective customer service agent in 21 days. While I use the term effective loosely I know that 21 days of training is enough to build enough knowledge to initiate and maintain effective communication with clients. One of the key elements for the program was the continuation aspect of the training where it doesn't end after 21 days it just transforms into on the job training. The other aspect that was essential in the collaboration between departments. The position I will be training has to work closely with multiple departments so bringing them into the training process was really important in giving a full

picture of responsibilities and inter department communication.

While trying to develop skills for the new agent I concluded that using dynamic integrative thinking was an essential skill in developing an effective agent. Integrative thinking isn't a one-size-fits-all proposition. Contexts differ greatly, and so do the answers appropriate to those contexts. The aim is to make sense of the opposing models in front of you and to apply the kind of integration best suited to those models, along with a dash of imagination. Our three pathways to integration represent a place to start; they are search mechanisms that can help you frame a discussion of possible creative resolutions to a given problem, (Martin, 2017)

Recognizing and applying these strategies to a sales and customer service environment are key to highly successful agents.

### **Your Innovative Solution**

This project is merely the first step in creating a dynamic training program to help build associates that have adaptive thinking skills that can be applied in a quickly changing environment. The innovation in this program comes from the application of academic philosophy and answering the question of why we do the things we do. This is illustrated through the use of

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the golden circle which is a tool to help address the why in what we do things as opposed to the what or how. This in depth conversation helps to empower the individual to make a rational choice by solving the why of any problem, (Sinek, 2009). A Traditional training focused on controlling the customer experience, the new model focuses on why customers make the choice they do and how to adapt our presentation accordingly. These innovations allow for exponential growth and we are faced with a customer who has access to unlimited information and resources moving into the future.

Three concepts that have been the most impactful to how I view the project and its impact on my department, company and community are enabling others to act, transformational leadership and encouraging the heart. These three concepts play a huge role in the leader that I am becoming, they help shape the way that I encourage others and recognize their achievements. “Leadership isn’t management, it is adaptive and innovative,” (Kotter). This innovative approach to fostering an environment where people are and feel empowered to achieve the most is a key element to my Leadership project. I’m really looking forward to seeing where this project takes

me on my leadership journey and whether or not I will recognize the leader that I have become at the end of it.

### **Section 3: Results**

Measuring the success of this project will come with time. While I surveyed the participants on how they felt at the conclusion of the program, their feedback was incredibly valuable. The individuals I was able to discuss the results of the project included my department team members, supervisor and the new trainee. Each of them provided insights to the perspective and scope of the project that I had not recognized. The main feedback was that the program should have been a little longer and not as compressed to allow for a more comprehensive understanding of the material and application. I think as an adjustment to the project I will lengthen its timeline to reflect the abbreviated courses I have taken over the last 18 months and follow a similar 7 weeks timeline. I think the introduction of material followed by the application of that material would help to better solidify it in the trainee. The true measure of success will be in the longevity, effectiveness and efficiency that they create in the continual progression of

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their training. Those results will take some, but based on the initial results I am excited to see the lasting impact of this project.

With this new program the new employee, fellow departments, sales staff and customers all receive an immense amount of benefit from dealing with a well trained customer service agent. By providing techniques, knowledge and the expertise to answer questions and direct customers and employees to solve problems this onboarding program is a huge benefit that we will continue to adjust and apply well into the future.

This project has had a positive impact on all the stakeholders that fall within the scope of this project. The feedback I received from those that took part in the project through collaboration and individual lessons showed that the innovating and comprehensive approach did an excellent job in preparing the new employee for the job at hand. I also received some feedback from outside sources that included our General Manager and other department heads that expressed their appreciation for the extent that we improved the on boarding program to better suit the changing dynamics of the position. Each interaction has allowed for an increase in positive communication experiences throughout the process. The new employee went through

the process and we could see the impact of the structured training system. The new agent was on board and you could tell that the structure of the new program allowed for a linear system of successes that would build upon one another. The employees we currently have felt empowered to help in sharing their skills and techniques allowing for a group dynamic to form and better build a team vision for the program which I will suspect carry on into the future. This system allows for continual growth and adaptivity which in turn has additional positive impacts on additional stakeholders.

#### **Section 4: Conclusion**

When I chose this project I was anticipating some challenges. When I chose to address a process that had been used for years the initial response was some substantial push back. The thought of reinventing the wheel didn't sit well with some of the management team. I know that the system in place needed to change and after multiple conversations I was able to get the support needed to move forward with a positive result in front of me.

Why the actual results and ultimate effectiveness of the training did surprise me. I had confidence in the process. In creating a system that was adaptable and fluid I was able to move

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the new employee through the program with relative ease and limited deviation. It really helped that the new employee brought with them a willingness to learn, grow and adapt.

I think this was a major oversight for me in this project, not anticipating the needs of the primary stakeholder in the aspect of knowing how best they learn and their level of engagement. In the future I would adjust my approach to start with an entrance interview to really customize the program to be best suited for that individual

### Section 5: References

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### Section 6: Appendix

Attach a link to your actual project (pictures, training documents, etc.)

[https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1uSdzpdfMzRgx45cSmSBXmXH2kfp3w\\_ax?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1uSdzpdfMzRgx45cSmSBXmXH2kfp3w_ax?usp=sharing)