

Marketing Munchies Podcast Transcript

Season 2 Episode #8

[music]

Announcer: Welcome to the Marketing Munchies Podcast series hosted by Dr. Bridget Behe. Each week Bridget and her guests will share information, insights, research-based findings, and her 30 years of experience to help your horticultural business connect better with current and future customers. Now, let's join our host, Dr. Bridget Behe.

Dr. Bridget Behe: Hi, I'm your host, Dr. Bridget Behe. Welcome back to the Marketing Munchies Podcast. This week I would like to talk about a topic that I think is really important to any business regardless of where they are in the channel of distribution. That really is in retaining new employees. I really think we should be spending a little bit more time with the new hires, even though spring is a very busy season; there is a lot going on.

There was a recent article in the *Harvard Business Review* by Ron Carucci that talked about retaining new hires by spending more time helping them get on-boarded. Now, by onboarding, what we really mean is getting them integrated—both technically and socially—into the business. I want to talk about those two dimensions about how we get new hires integrated technically and how we get them integrated socially.

One of the first things that we should do for all new hires is do some assimilation at the big picture. I think it is helpful to talk about the company's history. I think it is helpful to talk about the big picture. Who are the major customers that this business is serving? How long have they been in business? What does the management team look like, and what are their roles? How long have they been around, and what is their history? Then, what are the counterparts or the peers of this new hire? What do they do, and what is their role? You know, did somebody have the job that this person now has, because they could serve as a potential mentor. Just really understanding the big picture and the lay of the land, I think, is one of the most important introductory technical onboarding things that we can do to get new hires off on the right foot.

The second thing that we should do technically for new hires is to really help them understand what the business expects of them. Most businesses do not set short-term goals for their employees. This was something Carucci talked about in the article, that 60 percent of businesses did not set short-term goals for their new hire. We discuss this a lot in my management class, that with better-articulated expectations, we can hope to achieve greater success. Just starting off with the expectation of "what does the job description look like?" is a basic, fundamental piece of information that every new hire should have. When I have my student write job descriptions, I also have them write in measurable outcomes. For example, if someone is hired in propagation, they need to have losses of less than 2 or 3 percent—whatever the expectation is. Or, for a retail person, they need to have an accurate cash register within 5 cents every day.

We really need to help our new hires understand exactly what we expect of them, and I like to see that done in measurable terms. Now, this presents a big challenge for management, because a

lot of times managers do not have the time. They do not want to invest the time in developing a good job description. That is a real problem. It is a problem in two ways: people do not know what is expected of them, and they also do not know what success looks like. So, I would really encourage management to think long and deeply about job descriptions and including some measurable outcomes in those job descriptions. Sharing that job description with the newly hired person is a really important thing. I think the direct supervisor should be the one to go over the responsibilities and the outcomes, to make sure that those are clear.

This is another opportunity to on-board the new hire and help them understand some methods or procedures that, absolutely, follow the safety rules and regulations but also have produced some success. For example, if we are talking about propagation, here is how we clean the equipment. Here is how we load the cedar. Here is how we run the line. So, they can understand that process and then better fit into their role or their responsibility of that process.

I just believe it is so important for every employee to understand what they are responsible for, or what the expectations of their outcomes are, and what success looks like. Do not wait for a year to go passed or more to do that evaluation or review, but set some short-term goals, set some short-term outcomes, and then review that with the new hire within 30 days. Maybe set another one 60 days later. Maybe you hire using a 90-day probationary period—especially for key positions. But, my point here is, without understanding what the expectations of the job—without sharing those expectations with the new hire, and then following up with them in a relatively short period of time—we might have more people leaving for reasons that are highly preventable.

I think the other dimension of on-boarding has to do with social on-boarding. We know from the literature that when people believe that they are isolated, that increases employee turnover. There is a really great book “First, Break All the Rules” by Buckingham and Coffman. In there is a list of 12 questions that I think are wonderful to be used for employee evaluations. Managers—good managers—should put the burden on the employee for doing the prep work for that review or evaluation. What are the questions that Buckingham and Coffman put into “First, Break All the Rules” was “Do I have someone at work who cares?” “Do I have a best friend at work?” I think with the increase in being social, with the increase in the awareness of the human social nature, that integrating somebody socially into the company becomes increasingly important.

Now, how do we do that? Well, of course we introduce people on the first day, but depending on how we take our lunch breaks—depending on the little clicks that are formed in most businesses, how can we help the new person get introduced to some of those ways of doing business, how we take a break, and just really becoming a part of the social fabric of the business? Now, you could assign somebody a mentor, which I think, is a really good idea, particularly for the work dimension. You might also assign them somebody who is not a technical mentor, somebody who can get them assimilated socially, somebody that they should eat lunch with or that they could eat lunch with, and somebody who can help refresh the names of people. When we are the new person and we meet so many people, it can be hard to remember all of those names. I think it is also important to have that social mentor be somebody that the new employee can turn to when they have questions that are not of a technical nature. For example, “What are some things we do

to celebrate success around here?" They really do not have much if anything to do with the technical performance of the person, but it really helps them get socially integrated.

So, as you are hiring people this spring, I want you to think about the technical and social on-boarding that you are going to do for them. I am not thinking that every manager has to do this for every employee themselves, but they should assign people to help the new hires get integrated technically and socially.

Well, that is all for this week. Thanks for listening!

[music]

Announcer: Thank you for joining us on this week's Marketing Munchies Podcast. For more information or to download the transcript of this podcast, please visit, connect-2-consumer.org. That's C-O-N-N-E-C-T, dash, the number two, dash, C-O-N-S-U-M-E-R, dot, C-O-M.

MSU is an affirmative-action, equal-opportunity employer, committed to achieving excellence through a diverse workforce and inclusive culture that encourages all people to reach their full potential. Michigan State University Extension programs and materials are open to all without regard to race, color, national origin, gender, gender identity, religion, age, height, weight, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, marital status, family status or veteran status. Issued in furtherance of MSU Extension work, acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Jeffrey W. Dwyer, Director, MSU Extension, East Lansing, MI 48824. This information is for educational purposes only. Reference to commercial products or trade names does not imply endorsement by MSU Extension or bias against those not mentioned.