



CASE STUDY

Pacific Northwest National Lab

New Hire Orientation Training Nurtures
Culture of Innovation

A little background information

Pacific Northwest National Lab (PNNL)

Operated by Battelle for the US Department of Energy, the mission is to transform the world through courageous discovery and innovation. To do so, the Pacific Northwest National Lab (PNNL) must recruit, train, and retain the best and the brightest.

On-boarding of new hires is a critical, multifaceted component of human resource management that PNNL uses to assimilate and educate new recruits about the organization. It is a fundamental initiative that affects productivity, on-the-job satisfaction, and employee retention. Training and on-boarding go hand in hand, but the experience must be more than just the run-of-the-mill first day or week of regulatory-driven training where the learner completes several hours of uninspiring and extensive work.

The Story

The Challenge

PNNL new hires are a diverse group that includes various levels of education, experience, and technical capability. They include researchers and scientists from all over the world as well as student interns, project specialists, and facilities personnel.

For more than ten years, PNNL new hires were provided with a Laboratory Orientation course that lasted three to four hours and consisted of training on topics ranging from ethics and employee time reporting to electrical safety and cyber security. The content was provided on a generic content page. Laboratory Orientation provided little or no information on PNNL's vision, mission, and values and how new hires add value at the Lab. It was a “drink from the fire hose” approach to training.

The Solution

In 2011, PNNL implemented an initiative to revisit the new-hire experience with the objective of identifying opportunities to improve the first-day experience dramatically, specifically in regard to new hire training. As part of the New Hire Orientation (NHO) initiative, PNNL worked with Vivid Learning Systems and key thought leaders, stakeholders, subject matter experts, managers, and recent recruits to capture feedback and input on required and recommended training content.

Client Focus

In their Strategic Research Learning Assessments of existing training, PNNL and Vivid...

- Reviewed the process to understand the audience, requirements, and content.
- Conducted a learning assessment with key players.
- Reviewed gaps in transfer of important information.

Using data from the learning assessments and analysis, PNNL and Vivid identified the key messages, required content, best structure, desired outcomes, delivery method, and implementation of a revamped training system.



The in-depth learning assessment included one-on-one and focus group interviews. PNNL and Vivid discovered several recurring messages that did not exist in the training but are essential to communicating and evoking the culture message, such as PNNL's mission, vision, and purpose, as well as the following:

- “You are now part of the legacy.”
- “You are vital to our mission.”
- “Your work at PNNL makes a difference in the world.”
- “You are serving the nation by enabling discovery.”
- “This is not just any job.”
- “Research is key—if you’re not conducting research, you’re supporting it.”



PNNL and Vivid developed a learning roadmap for a new design approach that delivers the initial NHO training creatively the first day in less than an hour. The goal of the final product is to generate excitement and understanding about PNNL and to effectively deliver compliance outcomes in a seamless but effective manner. Additional training is delivered over several weeks in shorter, engaging courses delivered just in time and on demand (from home or office).

Using an interactive learning digital flipbook design—a unique alternative to the traditional online training module—NHO provides an inviting and inspirational welcome. As new hires transition from page to page, various graphics and content pop up—making the flipbook.

Based on the learning assessment analysis, the goal of NHO is to provide new PNNL staff with an inspirational introduction and welcome to PNNL. Specifically, PNNL new hire staff learn about:

- What PNNL is as an organization
- The science and technology work PNNL does
- The culture at the Lab, including what it means to be an employee and how to live and work successfully at the Lab
- Actions employees can take to make their time at PNNL successful



The Result

NHO is now in parallel with the innovative projects and discoveries occurring at PNNL, where new employees are not only welcomed to the organization but are inspired to innovate and be proud of the PNNL culture. NHO is an excellent example of delivering learning material to a large audience while recognizing the value of each employee and his or her direct impact on the organization.



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