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Most companies suck at on-boarding new team members. Here's how to on-board yourself when starting a new job:

Many companies don't have a formal on-boarding process. It's rare to get 3-4 weeks to just absorb and meet cross functional team members. You might have time for that at a bigger company but at a growing company or smaller organization, there's no such luxury. If you wait to have information handed to you on a silver platter, it won't happen.

The reason you were brought on in the first place is because the team was stretched for bandwidth. They probably couldn't wait any longer to bring someone on, which is why they hired you.

So how do you set yourself up for success? You need to take charge of your own on-boarding process. Here are 6 principles for a successful self on-board:

1. Take charge of the process.

- a. No one is as invested in your success as you are.
- b. Everyone else is busy with their existing job!
- c. So embrace that you'll need to take the reins.
- d. This is an opportunity to show you are proactive and self-directed something every boss appreciates.
- e. Ask and answer some key questions:
 - i. What information do I need to start contributing?
 - ii. What do I need access to?
 - iii. What hypotheses are you starting to develop?
 - iv. What's an easy win in the first month?
 - v. What key open questions do you have?

2. Start developing a point of view.

- a. Write down:
 - i. What you agree/disagree with
 - ii. Ideas that provoke a reaction
 - iii. Questions & hunches
- b. Most people ask questions.
- c. But it's even more important to share hunches.
- d. Even if you're wrong, it opens up conversation & learning moments.
- e. You might think "I'm still absorbing, I shouldn't speak up yet."
- f. But your fresh perspective is one of the most valuable things you bring.
- g. Don't shy away from sharing what you're noticing.

3. Review information with an active stance.

- a. Your new team might send you lots of docs, resources, and links.
- b. The great thing about high performing environments is regardless of who you are, the team expects you to drive projects forward with accountability.
- c. There's no time for meetings just for the sake of it.
- d. If you're setting a meeting, think about how to make the best use of the time.
- e. Come prepared with an idea of what you want to get out of the meeting.

4. Gather what you need to suggest next steps.

- a. There's a difference between passive vs active observation.
- b. You should take time to absorb because you're learning the business, context, etc., as a new hire.
- c. But assume you'll be asked to make recommendations in the near future too.
- d. Questions to ask yourself:
 - i. Biggest gaps at the moment and how you can fill them
 - ii. What you might want to start/stop/continue
 - iii. How you want to lead and contribute
 - iv. The sequence of what you want to do
 - v. What you want to prioritize given finite resources
- e. Remember:
 - i. You won't answer these questions in the first week.
 - ii. It'll take time.
 - iii. Be patient with yourself.
- f. The goal is to start pondering these questions because it'll help you get grounded & feel more confident.

5. Assume you'll lead the meeting.

- a. You behave differently when you're a participant versus the meeting leader.
- b. If you were driving the meeting, how would you operate?
- c. This mindset puts you in an active stance.

6. Identify the types of decisions you'll make.

- a. Knowing the type of decisions and when you'll need to make them helps focus your efforts.
- b. An upcoming decision implies not all info is equal.
- c. Seek info that's relevant to you, so you can prioritize your on-boarding efforts.

By following these six principles, you'll be able to:

Show your value

Start a new job with confidence

Make an immediate impact

On-boarding doesn't have to suck. Make it work to your advantage.

Btw if you're a hiring manager, you should still try to be thoughtful about on-boarding. Just because your new hire can drive their on-boarding, does NOT mean you are absolved of responsibility.

Both new hire AND manager should do their best to create a positive experience.