



# The New Efficiency Frontier: Online Agency Onboarding

**How agency training and onboarding can significantly improve client/agency engagement and drive cost-effective use of talent.**

**BY BRUNO GRALPOIS**

Author/Speaker, Thought-provocateur, Client/Agency Guru, Entrepreneur, Innovator

**How long does it take for the average individual to be up and running efficiently in a new role?** 60, 90, perhaps 120 days? In a fast moving and competitive environment where clients change agencies regularly and agency personnel attrition reaches astronomical figures, brand advertisers see new agency staff come on to their business at a much faster speed than ever before. This higher turnover leads to countless hours training and onboarding agency staff members who are trying their best to learn their client's business, as well as remain compliant with various internal processes to effectively perform their tasks. These countless hours turn into large budgets of wasted efforts and resources due to the lack of effective training and onboarding resources. According to a past ANA study, only 39% of brands have a standardized process when they hire a new agency. That was then and this is now. Brand advertisers are awaking to the under-tapped opportunity of streamlining and automating the training and onboarding of their agencies as the new frontier of improved client/agency engagement efficiency and effectiveness.

## **New agency: speedy onboarding**

It's no secret that brands have accelerated the magnitude and volume of agency reviews, leading to vast change in their agency roster as they seek newer competencies and improved agency relationships. It has come at a high cost, however. With the excitement of the review completed, they enter the honeymoon phase of the relationship realizing that the entire agency team must be onboarded to take on the work and quickly ramp up. As the incumbent agency phases out, the work is piling up quickly, putting incredible pressure on the partnership with high expectations from

the client looking for improved performance. How long will it take the new agency to perform at the expected level? What options are available to brands looking to accelerate this process?

## New talent at existing agency: effective use of agency resources

It's all about talent. You've heard it for the past few years. Talent scarcity has significantly impacted the agency business looking to aggressively acquire and retain talent. However, agency staff turnover rates have never been higher.

Some refer to 25 to 33% annual staff attrition, meaning that an agency could have an entire new team in place after four years. If you are a client, you know what this means. New names show up on the org chart and attend meetings, often looking like deer caught in the headlights. The agency has kept old files in its archives or come up with its own cocktail of various documents to train its new team members before sending them to the battlefield, half equipped to take on new projects. It takes three to four times longer than it should for them to be "client ready" as they waste valuable time (read "your fee budget") trying to find relevant documents, learn new processes and comply with. Do the math. If it takes someone new six weeks to get up to speed on your business and you could have it done in two, that's 1/12 of your retainer that is potentially underutilized. At a 25% attrition rate, that's a fairly substantial wasted opportunity. Who is to blame? Don't look at the agency. It is doing the best with what it has. Are you setting it up for success? A recent study also found that "new employees are 69% more likely to stay longer than three years if they experience well-structured onboarding." The efficient use of agency resources is a long-term play.

## Greater compliance and productivity: the impact of knowledge

All client organizations have spent a fair amount of time and resources defining their internal processes, establishing well-articulated brand guidelines to ensure consistency for the work they produce with their agencies. They expect their own team members and their vendor community to fully comply with these important requirements but rarely have the resources in place to support the adoption and consistent compliance.

The most sophisticated brands have embraced Learning Management Systems (LMSs) to train their agencies, no matter how many they may have or where they reside around the world. No need to pay outrageous travel costs to get teams together for a training day or expect agencies to take on the role of training their own personnel on your business.



By implementing online training solutions for agencies, brands can create training modules, which can be customized by agency type or agency role (account, creative, production, media, digital, etc.). All agency staff members receive a personalized email with their training credentials. The training can be interactive in nature, allowing users to fully comprehend the content and interact with it for stronger content recollection. Once completed, the agency leadership team and the client receive training reports showing the results, enabling them to monitor progress and adoption of the training among their teams. The result: agency teams are trained immediately on the right content and these resources can then be assigned to projects with the confidence that they have the necessary knowledge to execute. That's a gift that keeps on giving.

## The hidden cost of knowledge gaps

Most progressive clients are asking new agency staff to be onboarded within a few weeks. They may even add some language in their Service Level Agreement (SLA) with the agencies that require them to have new staff trained within one or two weeks of touching their business, ensuring full readiness of the newly assigned agency individuals. Often overlooked, the lack of streamlined and automated solutions to train new agency partners and new talent at the agency is a huge opportunity loss, which ultimately costs advertisers millions of dollars every year and slows down their ability to compete effectively.

In the ANA study referenced earlier, of those brand advertisers that do not have a standardized process (61%), more than three-quarters (79%) would like to establish one. Training your employees is common sense. Common sense is not so common when dealing with agency talent. Use your investment wisely and reinvest your efficiency gains in a far more impactful use of talent.



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Bruno Galpois is the co-founder of Agency Mania Solutions, a premier service and technology firm specialized in helping companies realize the transformational value of managed partnerships. Bruno is the author of best-seller "Agency Mania" and the former chair of the Association of National Advertisers (ANA) Client/Agency Committee and a faculty member of the ANA School of Marketing.

Our clients' continued accomplishments result from cutting-edge practices in the area of client/agency performance evaluations. See how stronger relationships contribute to better marketing.

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