UNIVERSITY OF LJUBLJANA

SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS AND BUSINESS

MASTER`S THESIS

AN ANALYSIS OF EMPLOYEE ONBOARDING: THE CASE OF LIFECLASS HOTELS

Ljubljana, March 2021   NIKOLINA KOSTOVSKA

AUTHORSHIP STATEMENT

The undersigned Nikolina Kostovska, a student at the University of Ljubljana, School of Economics and Business, author of this written final work of studies with the title "An analysis of employee onboarding: The case of LifeClass hotels", prepared under supervision of doc. dr. Kir Kuščer, PhD.

DECLARE

1. this written final work of studies to be based on the results of my own research;

2. the printed form of this written final work of studies to be identical to its electronic form;

3. the text of this written final work of studies to be language-edited and technically in adherence with the SEB LU's Technical Guidelines for Written Works, which means that I cited and / or quoted works and opinions of other authors in this written final work of studies in accordance with the SEB LU's Technical Guidelines for Written Works;

4. to be aware of the fact that plagiarism (in written or graphical form) is a criminal offence and can be prosecuted in accordance with the Criminal Code of the Republic of Slovenia;

5. to be aware of the consequences a proven plagiarism charge based on the this written final work could have for my status at the SEB LU in accordance with the relevant SEB LU Rules;

6. to have obtained all the necessary permits to use the data and works of other authors which are (in written or graphical form) referred to in this written final work of studies and to have clearly marked them;

7. to have acted in accordance with ethical principles during the preparation of this written final work of studies and to have, where necessary, obtained permission of the Ethics Committee;

8. my consent to use the electronic form of this written final work of studies for the detection of content similarity with other written works, using similarity detection software that is connected with the SEB LU Study Information System;

9. to transfer to the University of Ljubljana free of charge, non-exclusively, geographically and time-wise unlimited the right of saving this written final work of studies in the electronic form, the right of its reproduction, as well as the right of making this written final work of studies available to the public on the World Wide Web via the Repository of the University of Ljubljana;

10. my consent to publication of my personal data that are included in this written final work of studies and in this declaration, when this written final work of studies is published.

Ljubljana, March 18th, 2021   Author's signature: _____

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF APPENDICES

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CEO- Chief Executive Officer
HR- Human Resource
HRM- Human Resource Management
MICE- Meetings, Incentives, Conventions and Events

INTRODUCTION

In the past thirty years, Human Resource Management, (hereafter: HRM) has gained enormous popularity in every social, business, and management aspect (Rowley & Keith, 2011). Researchers, practitioners, managers, and employees represent just a small portion of the large pool of interested parties (Hughes, 2002) investigating and practicing this phenomenon. As a complex and strategic approach, HRM covers numerous different activities, functions, and steps, among which is employee onboarding.

The onboarding concept is not new, as a matter of fact it has existed for decades now (Louis, 1980), but the term itself is quite recent. So far, numerous authors, researchers, and practitioners have analyzed the topic from various angles and came up with different names for the same concept. Therefore, the thesis is going to elaborate all of them.

Moreover, despite the different names, all researchers and practitioners agree that onboarding is a crucial element that plays a significant role in making newcomers feel welcomed and accepted. As a series of consecutive actions that help a newcomer adjust to the new surrounding and become a productive member (Bauer, 2015), onboarding has implications not only for organizations but also for individuals and groups (Saks & Gruman, 2018).

In the recent literature, authors advocate the implementation of more emotional, creative, interactive, dynamic, and involving employee onboarding programs which will truly help newcomers feel good at the new surrounding (Sims, 2011; Harpelund, 2019). But even despite their efforts employee onboarding is still unconsciously ignored and neglected (Messmer, 2000; Klein & Heuser, n.d.; Caldwell & Caldwell, 2016; Cesario & Chambel, 2019),

Therefore, the aim of the thesis is to understand and investigate how LifeClass performs employee onboarding, while the purpose is to determine whether LifeClass overlooks the onboarding concept and based on that provide recommendations for future improvements. The end result should help LifeClass hotels with the evaluation and improvement of their current onboarding state while making the organizational socialization less difficult and more captivating.

Additionally, the thesis will provide a clearer understanding of the importance of well-developed onboarding programs, while focusing on their value for LifeClass hotels. With that in mind, the main goals are: (1) to examine and analyze the current onboarding practices in LifeClass hotels, (2) to examine the importance of onboarding as perceived by employees and the managers in LifeClass hotels, and (3) to come up with ideas on how LifeClass hotels can further improve their current onboarding programs. Achieving these goals will help LifeClass hotels to face the current situation, reduce the high employee turnover rates, and increase retention and employee satisfaction.

Consequently, to the purpose and the goals, the research questions are:

1. What kind of onboarding programs do LifeClass hotels offer to their newcomers?
2. How optimized are LifeClass`s onboarding programs?
3. How did the employees perceive their onboarding period at LifeClass hotels in terms of helpfulness?
4. What are the most important elements leading to a successful onboarding process according to both the managers and the employees?
5. What are the missing elements and factors that can make the onboarding process in LifeClass hotels better and more captivating?

To properly achieve the purpose and the goals of this thesis, I have used several different scientific research methods. The descriptive part is solely based on relevant secondary sources of information, reports, books, articles, statistics, and other Internet sources. The entire literature is systemically reviewed and classified in order to best serve the purpose of this work. After gathering the necessary secondary data, in order to do the empirical part of the thesis, I conducted semi-structured in-depth interviews with six LifeClass managers and eleven employees. In the end, I used the synthesis method, which helped me link the theory with the empirical research.

The thesis will provide a deeper understanding of the employee onboarding process in LifeClass and once again underlain the importance of having effective onboarding practices. Additionally, it will enrich the current literature and fill in a small part of the big gap that exists in the literature when it comes to onboarding in the hospitality industry.

1 ONBOARDING

As a consequence of the increased human capital mobility, people nowadays go through a higher number of onboarding processes at different companies. Accordingly, organizations put a bigger accent on the implementation and the importance of well-developed onboarding programs which is why onboarding is in the spotlight of successful organizations (Bauer, Bodner, Erdogan, Truxillo, & Tucker, 2007). In light of that, this chapter is going to cover everything crucial about employee onboarding.

The chapter is going to start with a definition of the term onboarding after which I am going to talk about orientation as part of the onboarding process followed by a clear explanation of these two terms that are usually misunderstood and thus misused. After that, I am going to talk about creating effective onboarding programs, the impacts of onboarding, the current onboarding trends, the main reasons for neglecting onboarding, the onboarding challenges, and finish the chapter with a description of the scale of onboarding implementation.

1.1 Defining onboarding

In 2007, Dai & De Meuse, referred to onboarding as a relatively new term, although there is earlier evidence showing the existence of onboarding (Bauer & Erdogan, 1996). Even

though onboarding is not a new phenomenon, the term itself is relatively recent and has particularly emerged in the management sphere in the beginning of the 21st century (Becker & Bish, 2019). Nowadays, many people may not have heard of onboarding, but a high percentage of the population has heard of organizational socialization.

As part of HRM, onboarding or also known as organizational socialization (Bauer & Erdogan, 1996; Saks, Uggerslev & Fassina, 2007; Bauer et al., 2007; Bauer, 2010) and employee induction (Antonacopoulou & Guttel, 2010) represents a key segment of every successful organization. For the purpose of this thesis, I am going to refer to organizational socialization and employee induction strictly as onboarding, which is also supported by The Society for Human Resource Management that described the organizational socialization and orientation with the same umbrella term, onboarding (Stanley, 2012).

The existing literature provides numerous definitions that differ in terms of terminology and sentence construction, but in the end, they all explain the same essence with slight changes. Back in 1976, Feldman defined employee onboarding as a transformation of a newcomer, or as he referred to an outsider into a productive insider. Only a few years later, Louis (1980) described onboarding as a process in which a newcomer learns how to appreciate the organization`s mission, values, expected behaviors, and social knowledge crucial for his integration in the organization. According to Bauer (2015), onboarding represents a series of actions serving the purpose of integrating newcomers into the new work surrounding and getting them up to speed as soon as possible. Similar to that, Sims (n.d.) describes onboarding as a long-term process that helps employees in understanding how to be successful in their everyday job and how their work contributes to the overall business.

Bradt & Vonnegut`s (2009) definition is also very similar to the above-mentioned ones, but they use slightly more elevated wording while focusing on the consecutive steps. They describe onboarding as a process starting with acquiring newcomers, followed by accommodating them, then assimilating them into the work surrounding and finishing by acceleration. Additionally, Anderson-Gough, Grey, & Robinson (2000) describe onboarding as a complex phenomenon that consists of numerous formal and informal molding actions whose aim is passing on relevant information from both business and social point of view.

A bit different from the others, Harpelund (2019) referred to onboarding as a matter of emotions. In his, book Onboarding: Getting new hires off to a flying start, he highlights the importance of putting the emotional aspect in the spotlight of onboarding instead of treating it as an activity checklist that just needs to be done according to a given framework. Throughout the book, he continuously explains that in order for newcomers to truly become valuable assets and loyal employees, the organization needs to awake positive feelings.

1.1.1 Onboarding`s timeframe

The length of onboarding programs receives an increasing attention. Different authors and organizations have different opinions on the required length of onboarding programs (Harpelund, 2019). Some authors think they should be shorter, others that they should be extended over a longer period, but at the end of the day, no fixed timeframe works for everyone. Simply on size does not fit all, because of the difference in expectations, priorities, and the industries` requirements (Stanley, 2012).

According to Dickson (2008), onboarding programs last between three to six months counting from the beginning of the employment. A year before that, Dai & De Meuse (2007) stated the same length, but also added that the duration can be extended beyond those timeframes in case it is needed.

Researchers have begun talking about abandoning the traditional one-week and single day orientation programs based on the evidence that they do not bring anything to the table (Laurano, 2013). Unlike more extended onboarding programs, these actions have shown to be ineffective and fail to present real evidence of improved productivity, retention and engagement, because newcomers need a bit more time to adjust and understand their new position.

Klein & Polin (2012) stated that out of 482 Human Resource (hereafter: HR) professionals included in their research, 20% answered that their companies offer onboarding programs lasting two to three days, 19% have 90 days programs, and 18% offer programs lasting one day or even less. Further on, 17% of the respondents` organizations offer programs in duration between 8 days and a month, only 3% have onboarding programs for more than 6 months, while 6% of the respondents answered that the length depends on various factors.

Laurano`s research published in 2014 stated the variations in onboarding duration among different organizations. Her data showed that 17% of organizations have only a one-day orientation, 19,6% have a one-week onboarding program, 11,7% extend that over a period of two weeks, 10,5% over a period of one month, 24,9% have onboarding programs in duration between one to three months. Furthermore, 5% offer onboarding in duration between four to five months, 10% of organizations have onboarding programs in the duration of six months and only 1,2% go beyond that and offer onboarding programs throughout the entire first year since the newcomer has joined the organization (in Harpelund, 2019, p.189). Two years later, Aberdeen published another article stating that 37% of organizations have onboarding programs lasting for more than a month, 29% have onboarding programs in duration between one to three months, while 15% offer it for just one day (Aberdeen, 2016).

In 2017, Harris Poll from CareerBuilder also conducted a survey about the meaning of onboarding and the negative effects of its weak, or in some cases non-existent implementation. The research which included 2380 HR professionals indicated that 25% of those organizations had only one day of onboarding or even less, 26% dedicate up to a week,

21% had programs lasting up to a month and only 11% extended their onboarding programs up to three months or longer (CareerBuilder, 2017).

Obviously, not many companies have onboarding programs lasting for more than three months, but those that have them certainly do not regret it. Some examples of organizations having 90 days onboarding programs are LinkedIn, Mish Guru, and StreetEasy (Robinson, 2018; Warren, 2018), while NASA, Microsoft, and PwC organizations believe in onboarding programs longer than a year (Bauer, Erdogan, Caughlin, & Truxillo, 2018).

1.1.2 Person-job fit, person-organization fit, and information seeking

Person-job fit is all about a newcomer`s learning of his job duties, and gaining abilities and skills to properly do the job, while person-organization fit refers to the newcomer`s understanding of the organizational values and culture (Anderson & Ostroff, 1997). For an onboarding program to be complete and comprehensive it needs to cover both person-job and person-organization fit, because one is useless without the other and vice versa. However, companies and managers often forget about person-organization fit and concentrate mostly on the person-job fit, by teaching newcomers the basic and most important skills while neglecting the socialization and the understanding of consequential behaviors (Dickson, 2008)

Information seeking represents a huge part of onboarding and a personal trait of proactive newcomers. As an important element of onboarding, it is also connected to relationship establishment because in many cases they happen at the same time. Morrison`s research (1993) showed that proactive newcomers look for five types of information and the way they are presented influences the newcomer`s onboarding process. These five types of information, based on Ostroff`s & Kozlowski`s (1992) primary information typology sought during onboarding (task, role, group, and organization) cover:

- Technical information- refers to information on how to do the work tasks
- Normative information- covers the values and norms of the organization
- Referent information- are connected to role clarity and information about the demands of the new job
- Performance feedback- covers how other members of the organization perceive the newcomer`s performance during his beginning period which is connected to role clarity and task mastery
- Social feedback- as the words suggest, it covers the social aspect of the newcomer`s onboarding, or more precisely how his manner of conducting is perceived by the other employees and organization members.

Seeking these types of information is helpful for the newcomers because it lowers the uncertainty which represents an anxiety trigger (Saks & Ashforth, 1997). For newcomers to achieve both person-job and person-organization fit, all five types of information are needed.

1.1.3 Onboarding tactics

Back in 1977, van Maanen & Schein proposed six dimensions or tactics in which onboarding might be performed. These onboarding tactics are:

- Collective vs. individual- refers to whether newcomers are onboarded collectively as a group or individually and in a way excluded from the others.
- Formal vs. informal- means whether newcomers go through a formal onboarding program while being isolated from the other employees and real work itself, or just participating in non-formal onboarding where they are in touch with other more experienced employees.
- Sequential vs. random- refers to whether or not newcomers are specifically noted about arranged or planned onboarding activities, steps and events.
- Fixed vs. variable- refers to whether or not newcomers are given specific schedules and deadlines regarding starting and finishing consecutive onboarding activities, steps and stages.
- Serial vs. disjunctive- refers to whether or not newcomers receive help from experienced employees whose purpose is being role models since they have already gone through the process and have once worked at the same job position as the newcomer now.
- Investiture vs. divestiture- refers to whether the new organization wants to accept the newcomer along with their personal characteristics and take advantage of that as best as possible, or wants to change certain things about the newcomer`s personality, attitudes, and behaviors.

Jones (1986) classified these six dimensions into two broader categories: institutionalized (collective, formal, sequential, fixed, serial, and investiture tactics) and individualized (individual, informal, random, variable, disjunctive, and divestiture tactics). He also divided them by context (collective and formal), content (sequential and fixed) and social (serial and investiture). Moreover, research has shown that often institutionalized tactics are connected to decreased uncertainty, newcomer`s anxiety, and thus positive overall emotions (Saks, Uggerslev, & Fassina, 2007). Nevertheless, each one of these tactics is unique in its own way and might have both positive and negative effects on the onboarding process (Jones, 1986). The usefulness and efficiency of each tactic depend on various factors and conditions, such as the newcomer`s personality along with his experience (Cooper-Thomas & Anderson, 2006), the personality of the other employees, as well as the organization`s size, hierarchy, and way of conducting business. At the same time, the main goal behind onboarding is to lower the newcomers` uncertainty and make them perceive the process as a positive experience. (Jones, 1986; Saks & Ashforth, 1997; Bauer et al., 2007).

1.2 Orientation

Browsing and searching through the available academic research and literature, there are various opinions and explanations of the term orientation. In one way, they all share some similar segments and details, but in another way differ from each other.

An orientation program or also known as an orientation seminar represents a short-term and in a way automated activity intended to get newcomers started at the new workplace (Hamilton, 2008). In other words, it is a one-time event whose main purpose is to welcome the new employees and officially establish them as part of the company. In most cases, this event happens during the first day or week on the job and is designed for all new employees, regardless of their role. The best-case scenario is when the orientation happens on the first day because the entire main purpose of an orientation program is to create the first encounter between the newcomer and the representatives (Hamilton, 2008).

Orientations cover the so-called transactional activities (Hamilton, 2008) and include finishing paperwork, a tour of the facility, and welcome speeches (Nakamoto, 2019). But that is not all, they also provide the basic information about the organization, its culture, nature of the business, history, mission, vision, values, policies, procedures and rules along with the requirements and benefits of the new working contract (Cirilo & Kleiner, 2003; Sims, n.d.). This information intends to familiarize the newcomer with the organization and its meaning. It enables a newcomer to understand the essence of the new institution. Gives the newcomer a sense of how things are being done around here, helps him see the external factors influencing the organization, and enables him to understand the current status of the organization (Cirilo & Kleiner, 2003).

According to Jerris (1999) orientations answer the so-called "what" questions newcomers have on their first day of work, such as "What is my manager`s name?", "What are the names of my co-workers?", "What are the rules, regulations, policies, and procedures I need to know?". Starting a new job is a naturally complicated process, which at the same time awakens both exciting and anxious feelings (Wanous, 1976). A newcomer faces immense pressure, coming from different directions, which is why all of these questions must be addressed. Answering them lays a foundation for the newcomer and represents the first step towards becoming a productive employee. Without having answers to these questions, the newcomers fell lost and instead of thriving, they quickly begin sinking.

This one time, individual event (Graybill, Carpenter, Offord, Piorun, & Shaffer, 2013), is usually performed by someone from the HR department (Stone- Romero, 1997, quoted in Schmidt & Akdere, 2007) due of several reasons. They are the creators, organizers, and performers of the orientation not only because they are responsible for the employees and their well-being, but also because they are the ones doing the selection and recruitment of new employees. In addition to that, they already know the organization and therefore are the most competent individuals to represent the organization for what it is and what it stands for.

1.2.1 Creating an effective orientation

Creating and implementing an effective orientation program requires a lot of thinking, planning effort, and creativity. These requirements come from the fact that a useful and effective orientation should cover all necessary elements and information, properly welcome the newcomers, and still be interesting and not too overwhelming or boring.

Successful orientations must be planned ahead and in order to achieve that, to create and shape them to best serve and represent the company, the developer of the orientation program must have a clear idea and knowledge of what the program should cover (Luenendonk, 2016). Once the program is designed, the organization must assign a person responsible for the performance of the orientation. This person is crucial to the effectiveness and success of the orientation because he is the one pulling the strings. He is the only one who has the ability to convert a good orientation plan into a great practice because he is the person standing between the newcomer and the organization. This person needs to create a welcoming atmosphere where the newcomers feel comfortable and safe, while at the same time introduce them to their new surroundings and the reality which is often intimidating and frightening. Further on, the orientation should always go from general to specific and must put an accent on the shared vision (Abell, 2004).

According to Cirilo & Kleiner (2003) three segments create an effective orientation: presentation, staff involvement, and supporting material. Presentation refers to the previously mentioned conference seminar that is something like a story telling provided with the help of visual tools and technological gadgets. Supporting materials are the materials that newcomers can take with them and bring at home so they can browse them in their free time. The most common supporting material is an employee handbook that contains the necessary information about the organization and usually covers the same topics covered by the official presentation. The last element, staff involvement refers to the people conducting the orientation, usually a representative from the HR department and someone from the management because research has shown that managerial involvement during the orientation brings positive results (Cirilo & Kleiner, 2003).

1.2.2 Importance of orientation

According to Wallace (2007), the first few days at a new organization severely influence the future motivation and success of the newcomer. The first impression is generally essential because it can either be positively or negatively memorable and crucial for the newcomer`s opinion towards the organization. Successful orientations reduce anxiety, develop realistic job expectations, awake gratitude towards the organization, and create a positive mindset (Brown, 2005).

The orientation seminar is highly important because it serves two main purposes. The first one is transmitting information and the second one is connecting people. In other words, not only that newcomers get to meet some of their colleagues during the orientation but also

learn about the company and maybe even meet the higher managers, directors, or a Chief executive officer (hereafter: CEO). All of this is important because it represents a starting point for future socialization and a base for satisfaction.

1.2.3 Employee handbook as a big element of orientation

Very often organizations spend a lot of resources and time on branding and marketing to make sure their customers see them in a certain light (Schaefer, 2016). However, they fall short when it comes to branding themselves to potential, current, and just starting employees. The employee handbook, or also known as staff handbook (Harpelund, 2019), employee manual (Zojceska, 2018) and an employee brochure is a basic and most common element of newcomers` orientation, which very often falls into the category of organization`s failure due to lack of proper design and decision making. On a general level, it serves the purpose of showing newcomers the general information about the organization, such as the organization`s main policies, rules, procedures, and culture (Zojceska, 2018), but it actually covers a number of elements. Table 1 represents all crucial elements included in a comprehensive employee handbook.

Table 1. Handbook elements

No.	Elements
1.	Welcome letter
2.	Table of contents
3.	Introduction
4.	Your first few days
5.	Company`s history
6.	Vision
7.	Mission
8.	Values
9.	Objectives
10.	Culture: Dress Code; Habits; Beliefs
11.	Rules
12.	Health and safety
13.	Management style: Policy; Quick tips
14.	Holidays
15.	Wage system
16.	Bonuses
17.	Health insurance
18.	Sick leave
19.	Use of controlled substances
20.	What if: What if I make a mistake and What if I want to drop out
21.	Obligations
22.	How do we communicate: Contacts
23.	Map of the property

Source: own work.

All of the elements mentioned in Table 1 are crucial for the newcomers, but if misrepresented or poorly structured, they cannot create any benefits. In other words, they should be included in the handbook only if structured in a way that is understandable and attractive. Creating a modest employee handbook is easy because there are many pre-prepared templates available on the internet, but preparing a unique and genuinely alluring handbook requires a bit more effort and critical thinking. In order to achieve greatness, the handbook must be personal, simple, short, precise, entertaining, and written in an adequate language and style. It is not about documenting everything but highlighting the essential things.

The most important question an organization needs to answer before creating a handbook is: What is the crucial information we want to represent? By answering this and determining the smooth flow of that information, they get a full picture of what the final product should look like and have already done more than half of the work required to prepare a handbook.

At the end of the day, each organization has its own idea of how the employee brochure should look like. Some prefer a printed version, others want to be modern and help the environment by saving paper and making the brochure available only in a digital form, while some implement both forms in order to cover each employee with its different preferences. However, despite the used tools, well-structured and precise handbooks are still beneficial for both the organization and the newcomers because they decrease the newcomer`s risk of making obvious mistakes as they show the expectations and what is allowed versus what is not.

Although there is no written rule saying that organizations must have an employee handbook, most of them have one just to cover their backs. Organizations do this in order to protect themselves from lawsuits and accusations on their behalves from newcomers claiming that their actions are a result of an insufficient amount of information or knowledge on how to act and what to do during their working hours (Harpelund, 2019).

Unfortunately, while mainly focusing on the prevention of legal disputes, organizations forget about the handbook`s logistics and making it as useful and enhancing as possible. In many cases, the employee handbooks are overwhelming, poorly structured, boring, and thus unhelpful. Under such circumstances, the newcomers often do not read the whole handbook that can result in unwanted and unpleasant situations, or even worse, legal issues that might be expensive, time-consuming and exhausting. Because of this organizations sometimes make newcomers sign documents claiming that they have read the handbook and are familiar with the rules and procedures (Heathfield, 2019), however that is not an optimal solution.

1.3 Distinguishing between onboarding and orientation

In the literature and in many real practical cases it is not uncommon for onboarding to be confused with orientation (Brown, 2005; Graybill, Taesil Hudson Carpenter, Offord, Piorun, & Shaffer, 2013; Kime, 2014; Nakamoto, 2019), even though the two of them have different meanings. Thus before going any further there is a need to clearly

distinguish between onboarding and orientation in order to avoid and prevent any wrongful usage of the terms.

As mentioned before, very shortly and generally, the difference between onboarding and orientation is that, unlike onboarding which is a comprehensive and long-term process, orientation is a narrow one-time event (Sullivan,2006; Davila & Pina-Ramirez, 2018). Based on that reference itself, the two of them have different characteristics coming from their individual natures. In Table 2, I clearly state the differences between onboarding and orientation based on several characteristics.

Table 2. Distinguishing between onboarding and orientation

CHARACTERISTICS	ONBOARDING	ORIENTATION
Nature	Broader	Narrower
Strategy	Strategic	Transactional
Duration	Long-term	Short-term (one time event)
Setting	On the job and online	Conference room and online
Occurrence	Begins before the first working day	Happens within the first week
Subject/ topic	Addresses employees` needs	Addresses organization`s needs
Focus	Concentrates on the initial newcomers` socialization	Concentrates on completing paperwork
Context	Employees` specific departmental role	Employees` general role at the organization
Purpose	Making newcomers comfortable at the new work environment and helping them become productive employees	Getting newcomers familiar with the organization and its monumental working system

Adapted from Welcome (2014); Lewkovich (2017)

Onboarding is no longer the newcomer "orientation" of the past and the differences are obvious. The checklists associated with onboarding have evolved into an integrated experience (Aberdeen Group, 2016), while the orientations` checklists are very specific and straight forward.

Recent research and papers argue that orientation programs should in fact be part of the broader concept named onboarding (Ross, Huang & Jones, 2014), as onboarding programs are something fundamentally different and more sophisticated (Harpelund, 2019) than orientations. Dai & De Meuse (2007) explained onboarding as a concept that contains the initial orientation process and ensuring three to six months or however long it takes to get the new manager "up to speed" in a particular company or discipline. Today, a large number of the big companies perform well in terms of orienting newcomers but fall short when it comes to onboarding (Hollister & Watkins, 2019).

1.4 Creating an effective onboarding

Snell (2006) suggests four crucial points of effective onboarding programs: process analysis, implementation, integration, and reporting. According to her, these four elements play a significant role in creating and maintaining high-quality onboarding programs because onboarding newcomers is a continuous process that requires strategic thinking. Process analysis refers to the examination of the onboarding program. It takes under consideration all individual parts and components of the process which at the end must be logically put together in a way that brings out the best of everyone and everything. In other words, process analysis is the planning part that is then followed by an implementation.

Going deeper, according to Klein & Heuser (2008), effective onboarding is achieved by informing, welcoming, and then guiding newcomers. Informing refers to the effort put into providing newcomers with all necessary information and materials in order to successfully get them started. It covers resources, communication, and training (Klein & Heuser, 2008) each being equally important for the newcomer`s adjustment. Welcoming refers to the effort put into making newcomers feel welcomed at the new organization. It is concentrated on the emotional aspect of each newcomer and his socialization within the organization. Guiding refers to the organization`s direct and actual help provided in order to transform a newcomer into a productive insider.

Further on, Reese (2005) suggests that some of the main components leading to an effective onboarding are: well-structured strategic plan, a well-balanced team, timeframes, minimal administrative work and obligations, combination of all relevant elements and participants, peer groups, mentoring programs, and feedbacks.

According to Cooper (2015) effective onboarding programs are in accordance with at least a few of the following principles:

- Personalization of the program
- Letting newcomers have control over their actions
- Leaning towards Learning Management System
- Digitalization, media usage, and entertainment
- Stimulation of newcomers` critical thinking and decision making
- Simplifying and making the program as more interactive and understandable as possible while at the same time extending it throughout a longer period.

All of the above mentioned elements refer to the same process and aim towards achieving the same goals, although reaching them it is never easy. All of these elements, policies, and principles should be taken under consideration while creating an effective onboarding program, because they have individual benefits and meanings. Creating effective onboarding programs is not a piece of cake, just the opposite it requires a compelling organizational structure and adequate communication between all organizational levels and departments (Tolbert & Hall, 2009). Most of the work belongs to the HR department, but without the

support from other departments and the management, no onboarding implementation would be possible.

Creating effective onboarding means concentrating on what the newcomer can bring to the organization and best outlining those strengths. Organizations often fall into the trap of self-showing and praising that they forget about the differences between humans. Trying to put newcomers into pre-selected boxes does not create effective onboarding. They are all different and have unique sets of skills that need to be recognized and encouraged in order to make the onboarding process a successful story.

In the end, creating effective onboarding requires conducting onboarding surveys that ask newcomers about their expectations before the first working day and then shortly afterward (Bates, 2013). The purpose of this is to identify the gaps as early and possible and then be able to fill them in before the newcomer feels disappointed.

1.5 Impacts of onboarding

Onboarding is a complex process, but in the end it is highly helpful and if properly implemented creates numerous benefits for the organization as an entity, specific groups, and each employee individually (Saks & Gruman, 2018). This often neglected phenomenon (Messmer, 2000; Klein & Heuser, n.d.; Caldwell & Caldwell, 2016; Cesario & Chambel, 2019), has major importance in terms of coherent and consistent organizational success, but it is also perceived as fundamental in the eyes of newcomers because it gives them access to necessary information and skills required for the new position (Mornata & Cassar, 2018). According to Saks & Gruman (2014) onboarding influences all organization's outcomes. On one hand, onboarding positively influences employee satisfaction (Saks & Gruman, 2014), increases the firm`s reputation in the eyes of the potential employees and newcomers (Stein & Christiansen, 2010), and strengthens productivity, and engagement (Harpelund, 2019). Besides that, organizations that have onboarding programs have bigger chances of retaining newcomers and report noticeably increased profits (Ellis, Nifadkar, Bauer, & Erdogan, 2017).

Proper onboarding programs guide newcomers towards becoming proficient employees as quickly as possible by helping them figure out their roles, duties, and tasks (Cooper-Thomas, Anderson, & Cash, 2012). Undergoing a proper onboarding program has positive long-lasting impacts on newcomer`s behaviors and attitudes which are later carried on during the entire employment at the organization (Bauer, Morrison, & Callister, 1998). This is an essential process because it preserves and sustains the organizational culture transferred among newcomers and employees (Louis, 1980). The newcomers who understand the demands of their new job position and adjust to the requirements feel individually effective in doing their job. At the same time, they form meaningful and useful relationships with the peers and thus feel a stronger connection to the organization which results in a lowered quit rate (Bauer et al., 2007). Other positive results coming from employee onboarding are an

increased eagerness of the newcomers to do more and perform better than it is officially required, increased innovativeness and desire to improve the current working methods and heightened commitment towards helping the organization achieve its goals (Anderson & Ostroff , 1997). In 2016, Sattigeri acknowledged the significance of onboarding as an element which positively impacts employee loyalty towards the organization that was also supported by Gupta, Bhattachary, Sheorey and Coelho (2018) who classified onboarding as one of the most significant social resources which affect the newcomer`s desire and decision to stay or leave.

On the other hand, not having an onboarding program and letting newcomers manage their socialization by themselves has shown not only as unsuitable and ineffective but also as a cause of serious consequences, and negative effects (Cooper-Thomas & Anderson, 2006). Overseeing onboarding results in unmet expectations, disappointment and negative perceptions of the organization because once the organization leaves a poor first impression it is extremely difficult to reverse the already set up opinions and emotions (Bates, 2013). More precisely lack of effective onboarding programs has negative influence on talent retention, derailment rate, and time to performance (Hollister & Watkins, 2019), followed by an increased possibility of wasting the time and effort put into recruiting and selection of employees (Smart, 2012).

Although all of these segments are connected to one another, the most frequently mentioned benefit from onboarding is a reduction of the employee turnover rate (Derven, 2008; Stein & Christiansen, 2010; Cooper-Thomas et al., 2012; Saks & Gruman; 2014, Pike, 2014; Harpelund, 2019). Due to its frequency, the connection between onboarding and employee turnover will be further explained on the following page along with a couple of other important segments.

1.5.1 Onboarding and turnover

Although not every segment of the onboarding process is entirely and deeply investigated, there is one element that appears in almost every article, publication, book, and report, and that is the connection between onboarding and employee turnover (Louis, 1980; Bauer, 2015; Stanley, 2012; Harpelund, 2019). As a widely mentioned term in the business world, employee turnover has long been a concern of numerous different industries, companies, and managers who are trying to cope with the problematic aspect of this phenomenon.

Employee turnover is rather a coherent phenomenon that affects the entire organizational performance than it is a separate issue concerning the HR department. Different researchers suggest that the high magnitude of employee turnover, not only does create costs in terms of financial expenditure, but also impacts the organization`s profitability (Narkhede, 2014; Guilding, Lamminmaki, & McManus, 2014).

Ineffective onboarding results in increased employee turnover, which always comes at a price (Louis, 1980). Employee turnover puts additional pressure on the managers and creates

higher costs for the organizations dealing with its extensive magnitude (Ongori, 2007). According to Denvir and McMahon (1992), employee turnover is incredibly costly, because it creates both tangible and intangible costs. In terms of money, the primary costs of employee turnover are distinct, as the company needs to go over an entire hiring process once again for the same job position which is not only financially expensive but also time-consuming. Besides that, the hiring is not the only component that needs to be redone from the beginning, before that there is selection and recruitment, while later on there is a need of onboarding, socialization, empowerment, training, and overall development of the newcomer. Moreover, as mentioned before, turnover rates are connected with a decrease in employee morale and values, but those are not the only negative impacts, there is also a decreased job performance, absenteeism, the inability of creating stable and continuous employer-employee relations based on trust and collaboration and thus achieving mutual responsibility (Denvir & McMahon, 1992).

Many researchers and authors have investigated the extent of employee turnover in the hospitality industry along with its characteristics, consequences and most common triggers (Yang, Guo, Wang, & Li, 2019; AlBattat, Som, & Helalat, 2013; Ayres, 2014; Self & Gordon, 2019; Iverson & Deery, 1997), but still, the results in many practical cases are devastating. AlBattat et al. (2013) referred to the employee turnover rates in the hospitality industry as a "crisis".

1.5.2 Onboarding and retention

Onboarding is one of the key elements that has an immense impact on employee retention and keeping newcomers on board (Quigley, 2014). The concept is crucial in terms of retention strengthening because organizations spend a lot of time, effort, and money on replacing employees when actually they want to have stable and long-lasting human capital.

Back in 2008 employee retention was the main driver making organizations invest resources into adopting well-prepared onboarding programs (Aberdeen Group, 2008). Organizations were aware of the competitive talent market and believed that onboarding is a great way to keep talents within the organization for a longer period because they would start off on the right foot and get a positive first impression.

According to Laurano (2013), 90% of organizations strongly believe that newcomers decide whether to stay or leave the organization within the first year of their employment. Research has shown that organizations with standardized onboarding programs experience 50% higher newcomer retention, in comparison to organizations that do not have any form of onboarding (Elearning infographics, 2015; Aberdeen, 2016). In addition to that, according to Laurano (2015) organizations with great onboarding programs experience retention improvement of 82%, unlike those with poor programs that have increased chances of losing their newcomers within the first year. Furthermore, newcomers who underwent structured onboarding programs showed a 58% higher chance of staying at the organization for longer

than three years, while that percentage went up to 69 for those who underwent a great onboarding routine (Baumann, 2018).

1.5.3 Onboarding and productivity

According to Aberdeen (2008), back in 2006, the number one reason why organizations invested in onboarding was productivity. The increase and improvement of employee productivity represented a driving factor that was achieved via an effective and successful onboarding. Two years later, productivity took second place on the top pressure drivers list, right after retention (Aberdeen Group, 2008).

Different researches show different numbers regarding the impact of onboarding on the employee`s productivity. According to Laurano (2015) organizations with strategically well-developed onboarding programs experience above 70% improvement in productivity. CareerBuilder`s report (2017) indicated that organizations that offered structured onboarding reported 42% higher productivity, while Baumann (2018) stated that organizations with formal onboarding programs experience 54% better newcomer`s productivity. Although the numbers vary as a consequence of various elements such as the number of participants, the structure of the sample size and, and the timeframe in which the research is carried out, the numbers always show positive influences which underline the importance of onboarding in terms of productivity.

1.6 Current onboarding trends

The current onboarding trends represent a reflection of today`s society. They mainly portray the rapid global digitalization that brings technological solutions in almost every aspect, but also characterize how individuals seek a human touch and connection. Organizations are prone to selecting the trends based on their philosophy, the environmental circumstances, and the cost. However, the literature stands for a wider and better use of the modern technology in terms of onboarding along with personalization of the process (Laurano, 2013; Harpelund, 2019).

1.6.1 Digitalized orientation

Since orientations are part of onboarding, before going further on first there is a need to reflect upon the current orientation trends. Even with the digitalization, still many organizations hold on to the traditional orientations which means holding them in a conference room or an office where more people can be present at the same time, while information is presented and transferred through presentations supported by various modern visual aids or tools (Sims, n.d.; Akdere & Schmidt, 2008). However, not all companies use this obsolete technique, which might be seen as overwhelming and boring (Mathis & Jackson, 2008). As time goes by more and more companies recognize the value of an

effective orientation which is why they start implementing new modern technology and the internet to improve their employee orientation programs (Graybill, Taesil Hudson Carpenter, Offord, Piorun, & Shaffer, 2013). They use sophisticated technological devices and the internet to create better and more effective ways of orientation that are less time-consuming, more interactive, more flexible, and interesting. This way of orientation is especially appealing for the millennials who are generally technically savvy, but also for the baby boomers who are taking advantage of the technology (Vogels, 2019).

1.6.2 Digitalized (automated) onboarding

As a consequence of the digitalization, organizations started replacing the outdated versions of onboarding with automated versions (Efficient Hire, 2019). There are already cloud-based software and platforms such as "Efficient Hire", "HRCloud", "BambooHR", "Boardon", "Shortlist" and others that provide digital solutions for onboarding (Capterra, n.d.)

However, not everyone is on board with the automation and digitalization of the employee onboarding programs. According to a report from CareerBuilder (2017), 39% of the organizations included in their research had a highly digitalized onboarding, 47% had somewhat automated onboarding programs while 14% did not have any sort of onboarding digitalization even though they spent at least three hours per employee on manually collecting and processing their onboarding data.

1.6.3 Social media tools

According to Willyerd (2012), social media tools that are privately adopted within an organization can create advantages for the newcomers in terms of productivity, timesaving, and teamwork because the technology allows them to quickly and more effectively integrate into the new work surrounding and into the specific team. Through the usage of social media tools newcomers can join an active online community where people can share news, information, documents, tips, and pictures, but at the same time communicate with each other and create meaningful relations that ease the integration process. The best advantage coming from this technology is that it can be used even before the first working day, which gives the newcomer a chance to look into the organization beforehand and thus has more knowledge of what to expect.

1.6.4 Gamification

At its core, gamification has game-based thinking that uses game features and systems to combine real-life events with virtual reality and game theories. The concept is based on links between numerous different fields such as human behavior, learning, entertainment, behavioral economics, healthy competition, both individual and collaborative thinking, decision-making, motivation, user-friendly design, interactivity, mobility, and others

(Simpson & Jenkins, 2015). Gamification does not represent an entire game, but rather just a sum of game elements such as earning points, passing levels, receiving medals, badges, and commendations.

In terms of HR, gamification is all about attracting attention, transferring knowledge, motivating and engaging employees (Kapp, 2014). Its purpose is to utilize the HR activities and make them easier, more transparent, visible, and alluring for the employees. By using gamification the HR department, inspires employees to set higher but still achievable goals, learn in a fun manner, and thus professionally improve themselves while reaching the organizational goals.

According to Simpson & Jenkins (2015) in order for the gamification to be successful, its designer must take under consideration nine important elements: the purpose of the gamification, personal motivation, performance, progression, participation, partnership, politics based on gamification`s fit with the organizational culture, players, and potential.

Gamification is an innovative way of learning and onboarding newcomers because it is very flexible, engaging and interactive. Newcomers can participate from various devices, locations, and time periods, which makes the gamification a very convenient method. Generations Y and Z prefer gamified onboarding over non-gamified, consider gamified onboarding as more interesting, interactive and a nice way to meet new colleagues even before the first working day (Heimburger, Buchweitz, Gouveia, & Korn, 2019). In addition to that, even though it is assumed that older people do not like and support gamification, Kapp (2014) states that organizations can adopt it with all employees regardless of their age.

Via gamification, the organization can successfully transfer knowledge to the newcomers by using some of the game elements and thus stimulate newcomers to spend more time reading online materials about the organization, take quizzes, revise important information, and just in general, to get familiar with the organization even before their first working day.

Looking from the aspect of social interactions, gamification is pretty useful. It can be set out as a game or a challenge in which in order for newcomers to advance in the "game" they would have to begin communicating with their colleagues. Their interaction scores would be based on the number of visited profiles, friend requests, shared news and messages which would set them somewhere on the score table in accordance with their activity and the scoring system. According to Depura & Garg (2012), this way of establishing connections among newcomers and their new colleagues is considerably entertaining and beneficial.

Gamification is rapidly making its way to the top in many business fields, but it is still not extensively used in terms of HR and employee onboarding (Harpelund, 2019). Although it is becoming a trend and there are organizations using gamification as a helping onboarding tool, there is still a place for improvement.

Gamification has shown great results in terms of employee retention, productivity, and engagement (Laurano, 2013; Harpelund, 2019) which is why its peak is yet to come in the

next several years. According to Laurano (2013) organizations that have incorporated gamification as part of their HR processes notice a 48% increase in employee engagement in comparison to the 28% of organizations without implemented gamification and a 36% improvement in employee turnover compared to 25% of those which have not incorporated gamification.

1.6.5 Personalization

As a highly helpful and useful element, personalized onboarding programs are one of the raising HRM trends. Personalized onboarding programs are specifically created to best serve a particular job position. They are focused on providing relevant information about that role and contain specifically chosen and accurate details about the working process. Personalized onboarding programs begin with individually crafted welcome messages based on a personal touch and continue with caring about the newcomer along with shaping his future at the organization.

Personalized onboarding programs decrease information overload and thus positively influence the newcomer`s mindset, making him feel more valued and in control which then leads to an increase in productivity (Cognology, n.d.). Well-developed personalized onboarding programs can improve employee performance by 11,5%, while their consistency over a longer period can result in newcomers becoming productive organizational members 34% quicker in comparison to shorter programs (Talmundo, 2016).

1.6.6 Data-driven progress

The Internet is a public network that overloads the users with notifications asking about HTTP cookie permissions. This happens because researchers, websites, and organizations available on the Internet try to closely follow the Internet movement and based on that personalize the things users see and hear whenever they go online.

The same pattern is easily transferred to the employee onboarding domain. As mentioned before, organizations create digitalized and personalized onboarding programs that contain numerous quizzes and questions covering various topics. Some of the questions that might be on this list are: did you like the digitalized part of your onboarding; did you find the program interesting; were you overloaded with information, etc. The answers to these questions give organizations data about the general value and authenticity of the provided onboarding program, as well as a look into their newcomers` opinions. After a certain amount of personal data is gather and protected by law, the organization is able to draw conclusions about the current onboarding program and based on that improve it to better serve the basic intention and the newcomers` needs (Cognology, n.d.).

1.6.7 Onboarding buddies

The highly satisfying results of implementing a buddy system have made a boom among private and public organizations worldwide (Harpelund, 2019). Nowadays, this approach is used in almost all sectors including the tourism and hospitality industry.

The idea behind the "buddy" system is to provide the newcomers with as much help as possible and to give them a tangible person who can guide them through the stressful socialization period. To find an appropriate person for a buddy role is not an easy task, in fact, according to Sims (2011) a buddy should:

- Have worked at the organization for more than a year
- Have something in common with the newcomer
- Have enough time to properly guide and help the newcomer
- Have a solid performance history
- Understand the newcomer`s job position and its duties
- Be willing to be a buddy
- Be a positive role model admired by the others
- Have patience and a well-developed sense of communication
- Be willing to invest time and energy.

At first sight, finding the right buddy might seem scary and exhausting, but in the end it is all worth it because a buddy can (Sims, 2011):

- Be highly informative and provide answers to all questions
- Help the newcomer understand his duties and assignments
- Help the newcomer meet his new colleagues and create meaningful relations
- Be a tour guide
- Help train the newcomer
- Identify meaningful resources and sort out the priorities
- Boost the newcomer`s self-confidence.

Further on, assigning an onboarding buddy creates three important advantages (Klinghoffer, Young, & Haspas, 2019):

- Provides organizational context- meaning that the buddy helps the newcomer in understanding his role and the ways he should contribute to the organization`s success,
- Positively influences newcomer`s satisfaction- self-explanatory,
- Speeds up and increases productivity- self-explanatory.

This system is mutually beneficial for the newcomers and their onboarding buddies, because the buddies get a chance to show, develop and improve their leadership and managerial abilities. In addition to that having a buddy creates better stability and thus contributes towards having a more relaxed work atmosphere.

In order for this program to be effective, the person in charge of assigning buddies must take under consideration the onboarding buddy`s current job duties, activities, and the overall workload, because otherwise, it might be a complete miss. Besides that, both the newcomer and the buddy must be aware that the relationship has a timeframe and it is not going to last forever.

1.6.8 Welcome kits and onboarding swag

Welcome kits along with onboarding swags are among the current raising trends in the business world (Harpelund, 2019). Welcome kits include all necessary materials newcomers need to begin working and start gaining an understanding of the organization. Usually, they consist of an employee handbook, important paperwork and copies of their contracts, uniforms, name badges, organizational IDs, information on how to access the organization`s Wi-Fi, links to internal portals along with usernames and passwords which allow newcomers to log in, maps of the surrounding (village, city or country), and last but not least swag materials (Zoe, 2019).

Swag materials represent powerful promotional items that contain the organization`s logo and name. They increase brand awareness, employee appreciation, and recognition. Organizations usually avoid spending a lot of money on these items, but at the end even small gestures and tools go a long way. For an organization to achieve having an unforgettable welcome kit branded swag items do not necessarily have to be expensive, but just creative and practical. Some of the most common swag pieces are: water bottles, coffee mugs; technological gadget such as USB drivers, headphones, car clippers or power banks; fitness gear, and clothing items such as t-shirts, sweatshirts, hats and hoodies. Besides that, there are also fun materials such as balls, umbrellas, Frisbees, playing cards, stickers and badges; office and writing goods such as pens, pencils, bookmarkers and notebooks, as well as backpacks, bags and even some sweets. IBM, Facebook, eBay, Uber, Ferrero, Cactus Software, BP, FanDuel, Percolate, TAP Portugal, Nike are just some of the organizations offering thoughtful swag packages.

1.7 Main reasons for neglecting onboarding

Although most organizations are aware of the importance of having effective onboarding, they often remain either completely unimplemented or partially implemented as a result of several pragmatic reasons that represent real obstacles. According to Klein & Polin (2012), the most common reasons for having underdeveloped onboarding programs are the time concerns and restrictions; lack of adequate HR personnel to implement better onboarding programs covering a higher number of activities; financial concerns and restrictions; and lack of senior management support.

Depura & Garg (2012) also stated a few reasons for neglecting onboarding:

- Different starting dates – employees join the organization at different times which creates a problem for the organization because that limits the possibility of having a unified onboarding program and thus saving time and financial resources.
- New generations and changing perspectives – new generations want bigger and better use of modern technology. They want to ease their onboarding and the entire working process through the usage of technological gadgets that provide flexible online learning schedules accompanied by interactive tools.
- Time constraints (fast reaching productivity) – overlaps with Klein`s & Polin`s (2012) finding. Spending too much time in classrooms is no one's desire; neither the organization nor the newcomers want to invest themselves and their resources into long, unattractive and ineffective programs. Especially the organizations want to get newcomers off to a flying start. They want their newcomers to become productive individuals and efficient team players as soon as possible, which is why they might avoid having long-term onboarding programs since that scares them. In addition to that, onboarding is not a single one-time event dedicated for only one person, but more a repetitive process created for each newcomer as he/she joins the organization. That repetition requires organizational resources and it is time-consuming for the mentors, which is why organizations might decide to go for shorter onboarding programs that in the end might not have the full effect.
- Different geographical locations – bigger international organizations have properties at different locations which makes it more difficult for the organization to have one standardized plan of how to onboard newcomers. Different locations mean different cultures and perspectives which results in complicated onboarding planning, not to mention that one unified onboarding program is completely off the table since that would be impossible and irrelevant.

1.8 Onboarding challenges

As a systemic and long-term process, onboarding faces numerous difficulties and obstacles not only throughout its entire implementation but also during its creation and development phase (Willyerd, 2012). To shape a good hire into a great employee and to make him fully effective, the organization will need resources, connections, and abilities (Watkins, 2019). Onboarding requires dedication, effort, strategical thinking, knowledge of the organization, and understanding of the basic human psychology.

On one hand, these obstacles come from the people themselves, their diverse mindsets and backgrounds. Each human being is unique because it has different beliefs, needs, expectations, education, culture, moral , ethical values, etc. On top of that, there is the anxiety that comes from a new job (Allen, McManus, & Russell, 1999), the feeling of surprise (Louis, 1980) and the newcomer`s fear of being rejected by the coworkers and therefore being unable to integrate into the new surrounding (Miller & Jablin, 1991). The end-results of onboarding are affected by the newcomer`s prior knowledge, experience, and expectations (Filstad, 2004).

On the other hand, the perplexity of onboarding comes from the process itself. Firstly, the development of the program is complicated because it requires strategic thinking, experience, knowledge of onboarding, and understanding of the organization, its culture, and the future plans. Secondly, the implementation is a long-term process that involves many people with different roles. In other words, in order to have an effective onboarding program, the entire organization should work as one united complex machinery, where everything and everyone is connected which is easier said than done.

Moreover, effective onboarding represents a challenge itself because in many organizations the management concentrates on the needs of the organization and its goals, rather than putting the needs of the newcomers first (Snell, 2006). In other words, some of the organizations that have employee onboarding programs, still do not primarily do that for the employees` wellbeing, but rather for the organization`s success which at the end has no positive results. Therefore, every ineffective onboarding program is in the way of an effective employee onboarding.

1.9 The scale of onboarding implementation

Back in 2008, Aberdeen`s Group report indicated that 72% of the organizations included in their research had implemented formal onboarding programs. According to Allied Workforce Mobility Survey in 2012, only one in five organizations had an onboarding budget, while 22% of the organizations covered by their research did not have any formal onboarding program. Most of the organizations, or more precisely 48% of them reported having somewhat successful onboarding programs, 1% reported having unsuccessful onboarding programs while 28% ranked their onboarding programs as highly successful. Besides that, their research also concluded that in comparison to other organizations, Best in class organizations invest more money in onboarding and are more likely to have budgets dedicated exclusively for onboarding. However, the discouraging news about Best in class organizations is that even among them only 31% had specific onboarding budgets (Allied HR, 2012).

In 2013, Allied HR published another research indicating that the same year 62% of the organizations included in their research had implemented onboarding programs intended for all their newcomers, while 22% offered formal programs to only some of the newcomers (PRWeb, 2013).

Furthermore, onboarding of alternative or also known as nonstandard employees represents a sub-problem in this field, as they are often excluded from any formal onboarding programs that might be offered to the standard full-time employees. Deloitte`s 2018 report written by Abbatiello et al. indicated that 46% of their HR respondents did not have onboarding programs for their nonstandard employees.

Despite its importance, strategic onboarding is still an underrated and under-implemented concept. According to Aberdeen`s research, only 37% of the organizations have invested in strategic onboarding for more than two years (Laurano, 2013).

Southwest Airlines, Wipro, Wegmans Food Markets, and Zappos represent true examples of companies that follow the onboarding trends and shift from the traditional, short programs that do not bring too much value. According to Rivas et al. (2015), these four organizations have unique, specific, long-term and very much people-oriented onboarding programs. Moreover, although onboarding is often overlooked these are not the only organizations worth admiring and praising.

2 ONBOARDING IN HOSPITALITY

With annual revenue of over 550 billion U.S. dollars, the hospitality industry is one of the fastest-growing sectors in the world. Due to the growth, there is additional demand for employment in the industry, but unfortunately, there is an acute shortage of labor force willing to work in hospitality. As explained by Elshaer & Marzouk (2020) two main reasons stand behind the work force shortage. The first one is the characteristics of the industry while the second one is connected to the HRM practices and policies. Besides that, other factors influencing the hospitality situation are the generational expectations and desires, the technological advancements, and the required skills.

For the situation to be even worse, this problem goes hand in hand with the high fluctuation noticed in the hospitality industry. The constantly high employee turnover rates observed in this industry are caused by various reasons ranging from unsatisfying payment and unpredictable working hours to poor organizational culture and unmet expectations.

These two problematic areas together represent one enormous challenge for the hospitality industry and its subdivision, the lodging sector which is why hoteliers fight hard to increase the retention rates and improve their talent acquisition methods. Due to all of this, employee onboarding is especially important in the hospitality industry. The onboarding benefits mentioned in the previous chapter represent a starting point for solving a great portion of the problem. However, for that the happen hoteliers must be aware of the onboarding importance and dedicate enough time for their newcomers.

2.1 Practical examples from hotel chains around the globe

As a subdivision of the hospitality industry, the hotel industry concentrates on providing clients with lodging services. There is a range of different hotel types usually categorized by function, size, cost, and offered services (Lock, 2020). Additionally, the hotels are also categorized by the ownership and their affiliations. According to that, there are independent or so-called single owned hotels and hotel chains. As an immense part of the hospitality

industry and the lodging sector, hotel chains play an important role in shaping today`s tourism.

By definition hotel chains, are administration companies that manage numerous hotels with the same name located in different places. They usually impose certain standards, policies, and rules that must be followed in order to keep their unique identities, but even despite all of that what truly distinguishes them from their competitors are their employees. The hotel`s staff is the only thing that competitors cannot copy and thus taking care of them and keeping them satisfied is crucial for the business.

As an early on process, onboarding is the first step on the ladder toward having satisfied, motivated, productive, and happy employees. The biggest and most profitable hotel chains understand the onboarding concept and recognize its importance which is why they have already implemented various onboarding strategies and actions.

First and foremost, the onboarding practices heavily depend on the available capital dedicated to onboarding. Besides that, unsurprisingly, the onboarding methods always depend on the hotel`s size, the number of employees, the geolocation and other general features. The last two items influencing the look of the onboarding programs are the innovativeness of the creators and the hotel`s technological maturity.

In regard to the research, the following pages are going to look deeper into the onboarding practices of some of the most successful hotel chains in the world. The included practical examples will give the reader a better sense of the onboarding representation in the hospitality industry and will serve as starting points for future recommendations in case that is needed.

2.1.1 Marriott International

With more than 6.900 properties all around the globe and approximately 176.000 employees in 2018 (Marriott International, 2019), Marriot International is in great need of well-developed and effective onboarding programs. In the past, Marriot International has been conducting employee onboarding in the old-fashioned way, by printing materials, having meetings in conference rooms, and using the intranet, but in recent years, that has changed due to the digitalization that made things more interesting and interactive. This, now outdated method offered a very limited communication not only between newcomers and employees in each Marriott property individually but also at a broader geographical level. As a consequence of that employees received only a partial image of what Marriot International really is and what it stands for. In addition to that, the old method could not follow the constant growth rate in terms of properties and employees which made the organization change its onboarding process for the better.

In 2013, Marriott International got in step with the rapid digitalization and modern technology by introducing Voyage which represents a virtual onboarding environment (ON24, n.d.). This digital solution helps Marriott hotels to interactively and effectively onboard their newcomers by giving them all time and anytime access to various necessary information and resources available in twenty-two different languages. Its entire design is made to encourage newcomers to actively use the platform which is why it was created in a fun and easy-going learning matter.

Voyage is primarily based on three main principles: connection, involvement, and communication, but at the same time, it offers multiple functions such as webcasting, smartphone access, and media unification. In its design Voyage includes a gathering hub, a learning library, documents and PDF files, quizzes, video content, interactive tutorials, a social network named Network Café where newcomers and employees can easily talk to each other, a feature called Town Hall where newcomers can easily access important presentations whenever they want, webcasts, and others (Talent Management, 2013). The main intentions standing behind the solution are engagement and participation stimulation, which are expected to result in quicker and easier integration of the newcomers.

To make sure that the desired results and goals are being obtained, Voyage has an option that allows managers to follow the newcomers and their usage of the virtual environment which gives them a chance to catch the gaps or problematic areas at an early stage. So far the results from Voyage`s implementation, show improvement in the onboarding process accompanied by overwhelmed positive newcomers who demonstrate greater effectiveness and quicker understanding of the organization and their new roles (ON24, n.d.).

Nowadays besides Voyage, Marriott International also offers a various portfolio of onboarding programs and courses intended to familiarize newcomers with Marriott`s brand, culture, values, goals, objectives, the specific region, and the hotel (Hotel Management Staff, 2010). One of the numerous onboarding programs called "Get On Board" is designed to introduce new managers to International Lodging and Marriott`s policies, rules and culture while creating meaningful relationships with the new colleagues.

According to Comparably, 72% of Marriott`s employees who filled in a given questionnaire, had a positive onboarding experience, while 68% stated that their direct manager was helpful during their onboarding (Comparably, n.d.). Further on, in the same research on a scale from very unprepared to very prepared, 18% of the respondents said that Marriott was very prepared to welcome them on their first day of work, 36% stated that the organization was prepared and only 5% of them ticked the very unprepared option.

2.1.2 Gaylord Hotels

Gaylord Hotels is a premium hotel brand owned by Marriott International. The brand invests a great amount of effort, capital, and resources to onboarding along with orientation as part of it. They try hard to transfer the values and culture to the newcomers and make their initial

socialization at the organization as smooth as possible. Gaylord Hotels dedicate up to 60% of the onboarding time teaching newcomers about the organizational culture because in the mind of the management that is one of the most crucial elements that newcomers need to understand at the beginning of the employment (Ford, Sturman, & Heaton, 2011).

The hotels are especially worth mentioning in terms of onboarding because they have implemented a program called STARS and a Convention of the STARS that represents a creative way of onboarding newcomers in groups (Ford, Sturman, & Heaton, 2011). They designed this program based on the hotel itself and its characteristics. Since the hotel`s basic conduct of business is conventions and professional meetings and gatherings, the onboarding program was meant to be organized to look like a convention. At the beginning of the program, newcomers receive a badge with their name together with a lanyard to carry it on, a bag with materials, a list with the main guests and speakers, and a list with timelines and pauses. The event is both highly professional and entertaining, supported by technological tools, presentations, a speaking podium, and a banquet. Ninety days after the initial event there is a follow-up meeting with the newcomers to make sure how they feel, whether they have found their places in the work environment and if something is lacking. In addition to that, the management also implemented quick everyday meetings before the beginning of the shift, which should inform newcomers about the daily tasks and make sure that everything is under control.

The name STARS is an acronym that stands for smiles, teamwork, attitude, reliability and service with passion (Ford, Wilderom, & Caparella, 2008). tThe name is simple enough to attract attention, be memorized and motivational. Additionally, the hotels refer to the newcomers/ employees as stars which makes them feel important and valued. The program is so smart that at the same time it teaches newcomers about the essence of the business and the organization itself, and gives them a sense of belonging while making them feel welcomed. With this program, newcomers have one sort of an employment guarantee and an open possibility to have successful and productive communication with the management.

2.1.3 The Ritz-Carlton

With 97 hotels and resorts all over the world and around 40.000 employees (The Ritz-Carlton, n.d.), The Ritz-Carlton, just like any other big hotel brand is in great need of effective employee onboarding programs. The Ritz-Carlton does not use the term onboarding, but they do have some type of onboarding programs. They believe in the power of good employees and in order to shape the newcomers into productive and good employees, they put a lot of effort into making them feel appreciated and familiar with the organizational culture and values (Michelli, 2019).

As part of their onboarding, they offer an initial orientation and a "Day 21" Certification (ICMR, n.d.). The initial orientation is an obligatory two-day session, in which someone from the top management, or ideally the CEO personally represents the organization`s

values, mission, culture, and beliefs. It is important for them that someone high ranked speaks during the orientation, because they believe that, that gives a higher value to the orientation session. The management does this because they want to show newcomers that The Ritz-Carlton is grateful to have them and with that, they want to make newcomers feel seen, valued, and respected (Quigley, 2014). The orientation firstly covers the Gold Standards including Ritz-Carlton`s credo, motto, the three steps of service, the service values, the sixth diamond, and the employee promises. But that is not all, the orientations also provide emotional experience and transmit Ritz-Carlton`s culture.

In the first twenty-one days after the beginning, the newcomers are assigned an experienced employee who needs to guide them and help them integrate into the surrounding. This technique, also known as "Day 21" Certification, is very useful because during this period newcomers learn their job duties and the proper way to do their jobs while being supported by someone who can help them at each step of the way.

2.1.4 Four Seasons Hotels and Resorts

Similar to The Ritz-Carlton, Four Seasons Hotels & Resorts also have a two-day orientation session for their newcomers. According to Debbie Brown, a former vice president of HR at Four Seasons the orientation session, or as she calls it a "fairly religious experience" is a great way to start the employment because with that the newcomers are effectively teed up (Kaplan & Mount, 2018). To make the orientation more valuable some of the keynote speakers are the general manager, the HR manager, and managers from the operating departments. Their main task is to transfer knowledge and awake positive feelings through real stories and open conversation because at the end of the day every newcomer wants to know the top management and the important people.

At the orientation, each newcomer is assigned a partner or as they refer to a trainer who is more experienced and can effectively mentor the newcomer. To boost up the trainer`s motivation to teach the newcomer, each trainer is given a premium treatment and everything that comes with it. This partnership is meant to last 90 days and make the newcomer`s onboarding experience as comfortable as possible. Four Seasons refers to this tactic as an introductory training, but it is in fact onboarding because its purpose is to prepare the newcomer for the new job duties, teach him about the organizational culture and familiarize him with the work environment (Four Seasons, n.d.). During this period, newcomers are encouraged to follow the organizational values and standards but are also given a chance to be spontaneous and go with their guts if they believe that is the right choice to make the guest happy and satisfied. Since millennials desire constant feedback, in these 90 days, newcomers are stimulated to give this feedback and also to improve their skills mostly via very short and brief everyday meetings.

At the end of the 90-day introductory training, which is also a test period, all successful newcomers receive a complimentary experience at the hotel as a sign of appreciation (Four

Seasons, n.d.). This is a nice event because Four Seasons hotels strongly believe that their new employees should experience the hotel`s offer from the eyes of the guests.

2.1.5 Huntington Hotel group

Unlike Four Seasons, that uses a more traditional way of onboarding, the Huntington Hotel group takes a bigger advantage of modern technology and uses it for the purpose of effective onboarding. They use an electronic solution that distributes all necessary onboarding documents that need to be taken care of at the beginning of the employment to the newcomers and allows them to electronically sign them after reviewing them with their managers or supervisors (Kaplan & Mount, 2018).

Besides that, each newcomer also completes five online video classes covering different topics such as benefits, organizational culture, ethics, values, a harassment matter, etc. After watching the video content, they are asked questions based on the videos and tested to see whether they were paying attention and if they have learned the materials. Successful electronic onboarding is followed by on-job training which needs to teach newcomers about the job duties and shape their skills.

2.1.6 Hostmark Hospitality Group

The hotels under the leadership of Hostmark Hospitality Group vary from one another in size, infrastructure, targeted segments, and services offered, which is why there is also a difference in employee onboarding between different hotels under the same corporation. Most of their onboarding is done electronically by transferring important documents to the newcomers, but this technique is much more than just signing documents. The purpose of their electronic solution is to be present and get in touch with the newcomers even before their first official working day. With this, the management represents the hotels and gets an opportunity to create connections with the newcomers while putting an accent on the entire Hostmark family (Kaplan & Mount, 2018).

2.1.7 InterContinental Hotels

InterContinental Hotels Group on-boards their newcomers via a set of consecutive activities. The whole process starts with a Department Orientation, whose purpose is introducing newcomers to both their department and the colleagues, and explaining their job roles and the departmental rules and operations (IHG, n.d.). It always happens on the first day of work when the newcomers get familiar with the organization, the facility, the work conditions, the safety procedures, and all other development plans. To make sure that everything is in order, every department has designated mentors or coordinators responsible for the departmental orientation. These trainers are accessible, experienced, ready to help and answer all of the newcomers` questions to make their adjustment less stressful.

After finishing the department orientation, the coordinator gives the newcomer an Initial Job Training Plan which is all about the first few weeks on the job (IHG, n.d.). The goal of this action is to inform newcomers about the upcoming activities, demands and expectations, and most importantly to highlight the crucial tasks that need to be learned in the approaching period.

The next consecutive action on their onboarding list is a program called New Employee Cross Exposure which takes place somewhere during the first three months on the job. With this, newcomers learn about the hotel in a broader sense, because they get a chance to witness and discover the work of other departments that are closely connected to their own. The purpose of this action is to stimulate better connections between different roles and departments and thus awake a sense of collaboration. This teaches newcomers about the importance of each employee and role because at the end of the day they are all connected and if something or someone is missing the offer will not be satisfying.

After six months of employment, at the end of the onboarding program, InterContinental Hotels have an Orientation Review conducted by a representative from the HR department. Each newcomer has a meeting with the representative, where they discuss the past six months and the newcomer`s feelings regarding the work environment and his place in it. The HR department does this because they want to be sure that the newcomer is happy and that there are not any problems that need solving. With this the official onboarding is finished, although they refer to is as orientation. Afterwards, the HR department organizes occasional informal meetings even though the newcomers are allowed to contact them whenever they want to or have the need for it.

Besides all of this, throughout the entire onboarding and later on, the newcomers can always turn to the extensive employee handbook which covers various important and some less relevant topics. In there, newcomers can find answers to questions such as benefits, vacations, rules and regulations, opportunities and career progress, transfers, compensation, policies, work safety and injuries, voluntary separation, probationary period, standards, dress codes, information about the onboarding program (IHG, n.d.) etc. Although all hotels under the ownership of InterContinental Hotels Group have employee handbooks, each different brand has its own design based on the needs, the culture, the geographical area, the brand`s attributes, facilities, and the services offered (Holiday Inn, 2017).

2.1.8 Hyatt Hotels Corporation

Hyatt Hotels Corporation tries to create an effective onboarding program through formal orientation programs, materials for the newcomers such as an employee handbook, and other starting training. In order to make the learning of the organizational culture, mission, values and goals more understandable and captivating the corporation has implemented internal brand standards named "People Brand Standards", which are incorporated in every stage of the employment including the onboarding period called "Welcome stage" (Savitt, 2012).

Each hotel has its own "Our Brand Ambassador" responsible for the implementation of the "People Brand Standards" (Savitt, 2012). During the "Welcome stage", the ambassadors make sure that each newcomer gets a positive onboarding experience. That means informing newcomers about the organizational expectations, giving them a pre-prepared activity schedule, and assigning each newcomer a mentor or a trainer who will help them better understand their duties and the role.

In addition to that, Hyatt Hotels also put an accent on the importance of having qualified, motivated, and dedicated supervisors who will address the newcomers` questions and constantly and objectively report their social and professional adjustment at the organization. After ninety days, every newcomer has a meeting with a representative from the senior management, followed by an official evaluation and a report.

2.1.9 Hilton Worldwide Holdings

With more than 5.600 properties in 113 countries and territories (Hilton, 2019) and around 169.000 employees in 2018 (Macrotrends, n.d.), Hilton hotels must pay close attention to employee onboarding. As part of their onboarding process, they offer an hour and a half customer-service training before the first day on the job (Speizer, 2004), a New Hire Orientation program, and departmental and legal training (Hilton, n.d.). Besides that, they also have another onboarding training named "The Spirit of Hilton" which is a starting point of the so-called "Espirit" training (Anonymous, 2004).

The "New Hire Orientation" program is primarily created to present Hilton`s vision, mission, and the values. Nevertheless, it also serves the purpose of explaining newcomers how to implement those elements into their new job roles. Furthermore, the program describes each newcomer the steps of the onboarding and the future actions connected with the professional development. The other steps of their onboarding explained during the New Hire Orientation program cover topics about Hilton`s policies, expectations, standards, and services offered presented via separate specified training or seminars. Hilton hotels have this program because they want to put an accent on the organizational culture and raise awareness of collaboration and diversity acceptance.

"The Spirit of Hilton" investigates the newcomers` perception of Hilton as seen from their own eyes. It first happens on a departmental level and then, each newcomer has a meeting with the HR department where they discuss the newcomer`s personal development (Hilton hits the heights of hotel service with HR initiative: Equilibrium scheme creates the right balance for guests, 2004). Throughout this whole period, newcomers are encouraged to fill out surveys regarding the effectiveness of their training and thus their onboarding.

2.1.10 Accor

Just as every other hotel, Accor hotels also aim towards attracting and retaining quality employees and especially graduates in the field of hospitality. In order to achieve that they have various programs and actions among which is employee onboarding. As stated in Accor`s Registration Document and Annual Financial Report (2012) their onboarding program starts with a seminar named "Keys to success" whose purpose is presenting the organizational vision to the newcomers. After the initial seminar, each newcomer undergoes a structured training lasting at least one week, depending on the role and the position. In between managers hold official meetings and obligatory training to better explain the brand and its culture because they believe that the quality of the service depends on the employees, their mindsets, the understanding, and their spirits.

Almost ten years ago, with an intention of increasing employee retention, one of Accor`s hotel brands, Novotel implemented an HR policy that included a six-month onboarding program for all newcomers (Accor, 2012). Besides that, each Accor brand also has a specifically dedicated e-learning program called "Welcome to Accor" (Accor, 2015), based on the brand`s characteristics. The idea behind the electronic solution is to make the onboarding more effective and interactive while familiarizing newcomers with the entire Accor corporation and its principles. Further on, Accor`s Registration Document and Annual Financial Report (2015) states that in order to increase on-job safety during the onboarding period newcomers are given information and online training on topics such as handling sharp objects, prevention of musculoskeletal disorder, and other health-related issues again depending on the job position.

3 PRESENTATION OF LIFECLASS HOTELS

Even though most of the hotels might seem similar to one another, every hotel chain and brand has its own identity. Because of that, the purpose of this chapter is to provide information about LifeClass and familiarize the reader with its organizational structure. To achieve that and convey such information, the chapter is going to cover a few crucial segments of LifeClass`s operation.

First, I am going to start the chapter with general information about LifeClass and gradually go deeper into the subject. I am going to talk about their hotels and the strategy along with their main focuses and the tourist segmentation. After that, I am going to provide a comprehensive range of statistical data that fully depicts LifeClass hotels and accompany those numbers with formulas explaining them and their meanings. While I am at the statistical part, I am going to concentrate on the employee turnover rates and go deeper into that. Since this is highly important for this thesis, I am going to spend more time on it. First I am going to analyze LifeClass`s summarized turnover rates over the year and then I am going to continue with a more segmented analysis about each separate department.

3.1 General information about LifeClass hotels

Under the leadership of Istrabenz Holding Company, LifeClass hotels represent a chain of six hotels out of which five are located in Portorož-Slovenia, and one in Croatia. Under their wing are: Mind Hotel Slovenia, Grand Hotel Portorož, Wellness Hotel Apollo, Hotel Riviera, Act-ION Hotel Neptun, and Socializing Hotel Marina. Out of the six hotels three are ranked as four-starred superior hotels, two are four-starred and one is ranked as a luxury five-starred hotel. The hotels together with Spa Portorož, offer hotel, catering, wellness, and congress services with a personal touch.

Although LifeClass hotels offer diverse experiences and themes they mainly focus on individual guests that account for around 80% of the business (D. Trobec, personal communication, July 10, 2019), while another important segment is the MICE tourists. The business tourists are an integral target group for LifeClass as they represent a great revenue booster and promise exponential growth.

To deliver high-quality services, LifeClass hotels have many employees and one HR department responsible for all employees. The HR department performs all necessary HR functions including recruitment and selection, hiring, creation and implementation of health and safety regulations, maintaining a safe environment, enabling fair compensation and benefits, firing and separation, preparing labor law compliances, training, and carrying out various administrative responsibilities and activities.

At the same time, the HR department also handles employee rotation between the hotels which is performed in order to achieve higher cost optimization and greater competitive advantage (D. Trobec, personal communication, July 10, 2019). These rotations occur due to the high seasonal demand and the occasional necessity of an experienced workforce.

3.2 Statistical data about employment in LifeClass hotels

As represented in Table 3, in 2019 the total number of employees in all six hotels was 445 which was slightly lower in comparison to 2018 when they had 455 employees. Further on, the total number of employees in 2019 was higher in comparison to the years before that (2014-2017). The inconsistent number of employees throughout the years is mostly due to the demand-supply situation, but that is not the only factor influencing the numbers. Another important element affecting the changing numbers is a mismatch between a job position and an employee which is not a rare occasion (S. Bencic, personal communication, July 10, 2019). Newcomers often start working expecting everything to be easy when in fact the job responsibilities require much more effort and knowledge (S. Bencic, personal communication, July 10, 2019). The mismatch especially happens in the housekeeping department where the newcomers have lower levels of education, higher expectations, and poor knowledge of languages including Slovenian. Besides that, other critical aspects are the hospitality`s work conditions such as flexibility and possible growth opportunities (S. Bencic, personal communication, July 10, 2019). Lack of flexibility is generally a huge

problem for the hospitality industry as employees often do not have strictly set schedules and do not know what to expect each upcoming day. In addition to that, newcomers often start working wanting to gather some experience and then go to work in other international hotels outside Slovenia where they get higher salaries.

The number of employees is unevenly divided across the several main departments. The largest department with more than 180 employees is hotel operation which is constructed of reception, food and beverage, and housekeeping. The second-largest department is the spa and medical health care with approximately 80 employees (D. Trobec, personal communication, July 10, 2019). Same as the number of employees, the number of newcomers and the number of employees who have left are both considerably inconsistent throughout the years. On one hand, in 2019 there were 101 newcomers, while on the other hand, 117 employees left LifeClass.

Reviewing the statistics for the past six years, 2018 was a record year for both the number of newcomers and the number of employees who have left. Namely, that year 165 people started working at LifeClass while 160 employees left the hotels. The next year, in 2019 LifeClass welcomed 101 newcomers and said goodbye to 117. Those numbers are crucial in calculating the coefficient of net turnover. As equation (1) shows, the coefficient of net turnover is determined by taking away the number of new employees from the number of employees who left and then dividing that number with the average number of employees after which we multiple it by 100.

$$Coeff. of\ net\ turnover = \frac{Number\ of\ employees\ who\ left - Number\ of\ new\ employees}{Average\ number\ of\ employees} \times 100\ (1)$$

Based on the data represented in Table 3, the coefficient of net turnover in 2019 was -3,59%. That number is a bit concerning, but it is not as bad as the coefficient of net turnover in 2015 which was -9,60% with 54 newcomers, 91 departures and 386 employees. Further on, as equation (2) shows, the coefficient of departure turnover is calculated by dividing the number of employees who left that year with the average number of employees working that same year.

$$Coeff. of\ departure\ turnover = \frac{Number\ of\ employees\ who\ left}{Average\ number\ of\ employees} \times 100 \qquad (2)$$

For example, in 2018 the coefficient of departure turnover was 35,15%, while in 2019 it dropped to 26,29%. Looking at the data from the past six years LifeClass hotels had the highest coefficient of departure turnover in 2015 and the lowest one in 2014.

As represented in Table 3, the 2019 coefficient of gross turnover was significantly lower than the one in 2018, but still higher than in 2014 and 2015. The high result of 71,39% in 2018 represented a cause for concern among LifeClass board members.

Table 3. LifeClass`s employee turnover rates

Indicators/Year	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Number of new employees	56	54	132	147	165	101
Number of employees who left	55	91	81	115	160	117
Average number of employees	401	386	390	434	455	445
Coeff. of departure turnover (%)	13,70%	23,60%	20,79%	26,52%	35,15%	26,29%
Coeff. of net turnover (%)	0,25%	-9,60%	13,09%	7,38%	1,10%	-3,59%
Coeff. of gross turnover (%)	27,65%	37,60%	54,68%	60,41%	71,39%	48,98%

Source: own work.

Table 4. LifeClass`s departmental employee turnover rates in 2019

Departments in 2019	Arrivals	%	Departures	%	Arrivals-Departures
F&B	37	22%	62	53%	-25
Accommodation	33	20%	32	27%	1
Wellness and health	22	13%	16	14%	3
Supporting services	9	5%	7	6%	2
Total	101	60%	117	100%	-16

Source: own work.

Table 5. LifeClass`s departmental employee turnover rates in 2018

Departments in 2018	Arrivals	%	Departures	%	Arrivals-Departures
F&B	102	62%	105	66%	-3
Accommodation	35	21%	28	18%	7
Wellness and health	15	9%	18	11%	-3
Supporting services	13	8%	9	6%	4
Total	165	100%	160	100%	5

Source: own work.

Table 6. LifeClass`s departmental employee turnover rates in 2017

Departments in 2017	Arrivals	%	Departures	%	Arrivals-Departures
F&B	99	67%	77	67%	22
Accommodation	19	13%	17	15%	2
Wellness and health	13	9%	11	10%	2
Supporting services	16	11%	10	9%	6
Total	147	100%	115	100%	32

Source: own work.

Table 4, 5 and 6 represent LifeClass`s departmental employee arrivals and departures from 2017 until 2019. In the past three years, the F&B department had the highest number of newcomers per year, but was also a leader in terms of employee departures. On one hand, these results were not surprising at all because of the generally well-known astronomical turnover rates following the F&B sector. On the other hand, the ratio between the arrivals and departures in 2019 is a bit concerning because that year 37 people started working in the F&B sector while 62 left the hotels causing a negative ratio of -25.

4 ANALYSIS OF LIFECLASS`S CURRENT ONBOARDING PRACTICES

This chapter represents the heart of the thesis and thus contains the most important and unique information gathered by empirical research. To convey the information in the best possible manner, I am going to cover every possible angle and step of the research.

First, I am going to define the problem and directly connect that to the purpose and the goals of the research. After that, I am going to thoroughly explain the research methodology. In this part, I am going to talk about the chosen research method, its benefits, and the execution followed by an extensive analysis of the results. The findings are going to be separated into themes based on the respondents` answers and later discussed and summarised in the discussion subchapter. I am going to finish the chapter with some relevant recommendations and the limitations of my research while also giving direction for future research.

4.1 Problem definition, purpose, and goals of the research

Behind the motivation for this research stand two factors. On one hand are the high employee turnover rates in tourism and hospitality (Iverson & Deery, 1997; AlBattat, Som, & Helalat, 2013; Ayres, 2014; Self & Gordon, 2019; Yang, Guo, Wang, & Li, 2019), while on the other is the often neglect of onboarding (Messmer, 2000; Klein & Heuser, n.d.; Cesario & Chambel, 2019). Further on, as previously mentioned, the aim of this research is to determine how LifeClass puts newcomers into the working process and based on that provide recommendations for further improvements.

The main goals are: (1) to examine and analyze the current onboarding practices in LifeClass hotels, (2) to examine the importance of onboarding as perceived by employees and the managers in LifeClass hotels, and (3) to come up with ideas on how LifeClass hotels can further improve their current onboarding programs. Achieving these goals will help LifeClass hotels to face the current situation, reduce the high employee turnover rates, and increase retention and employee satisfaction.

4.2 Research questions

Based on the available literature, my motivations, and the aim of this thesis, the research questions are:

1. What kind of onboarding programs do LifeClass hotels offer to their newcomers?
2. How optimized are LifeClass`s onboarding programs?
3. How did the employees perceive their onboarding period at LifeClass hotels in terms of helpfulness?
4. What are the most important elements leading to a successful onboarding process according to both the managers and the employees?
5. What are the missing elements and factors that can make the onboarding process in LifeClass hotels better and more captivating?

The first and the last research question are connected to one another, as they both represent two sides of the same coin. The first one examines what LifeClass`s onboarding approach includes and the other one what the approach does not offer but should be implemented in the future. These questions were created based on the literature that says that onboarding is a long-term process (Bauer, 2015; Sims, n.d.; Dickson, 2008) that should include an orientation seminar, an employee handbook, a welcome kit, a buddy system, fun activates for the newcomers (Harpelund, 2019), electronic solutions (Graybill at al., 2013; Sims, n.d.), etc. Additionally, the second question is also connected to these elements because the optimization directly depends on what does the onboarding approach include, as well as who carries it out (Harpelund, 2019).

Furthermore, according to the literature, there are numerous important elements leading to a successful onboarding experience (Bradt & Vonnegut, 2009; Harpelund, 2019). Some of these elements are mentioned above, but there are many more which is why I intend to investigate what are the most important onboarding elements according to my respondents. Finally, yet importantly, the third research question examines the respondent's perception of the onboarding process. Obviously, the perceptions may vary between employees, but as Harpelund (2019) states, generally taken the onboarding period should be perceived as a period for learning, practicing, and adjusting. Additionally, the perception is quite important because as Gupta et al. (2018) explained, onboarding is the most significant process which affects newcomer`s desire and decision to stay or leave.

By answering these questions, I am primarily helping LifeClass`s HR department with seeing the bigger picture and evaluating the current situation. Furthermore, the answers will enrich their existing knowledge and understanding of onboarding practices, which can positively influence the whole work process.

4.3 Research methodology

To answer the research questions I decided to employ one of the most popular qualitative data collection methods. Interviews were a great fit for my thesis as they represent conversations in which someone gathers information while someone else is giving the information (Easwaramoorthy & Zarinpoush, 2006; Rowley, 2012). In other words, this easygoing communication between people with different purposes and goals who need to come together and tell their sides of the examined story seemed to highly correlate to my field of interest that explores people and their perceiving.

Prior to the conduction, I comprehensively researched the types of interviews in order to find the most appropriate one. According to their design, there are three types of interviews (Easwaramoorthy & Zarinpoush, 2006):

- Structured: an interviewer specifically follows a strict list of predetermined questions about a particular topic of interest without changing the order of the questions or their formulation.
- Semi-structured: an interviewer uses a list of predetermined questions, but does not necessarily follow the order nor the exact wording of the questions.
- Unstructured: the interviewer does not have a predetermined list of questions, frames, restrictions, or guidelines which means he is free to ask broad question that will make the interviewee feel comfortable and thus engage in an open conversation.

To best execute the research I chose to perform semi-structured face-to-face interviews, as they are the most suitable ones for systemically collecting in-depth data. With this approach, I got a great deal of flexibility and extent of probing while communicating with the interviewees.

Before conducting the interviews, I formulated two flexible lists of relevant questions. One set of questions was intended for the managers and one for the employees. With that approach, I intended to be as precise and relevant as possible which in the end proved to be a solid decision.

All in all, I conducted 17 semi-structured interviews out of which 11 were with LifeClass`s employees and 6 with LifeClass`s managers. The sample size included managers and employees from all departments with varying work experience, age, and gender. It was important for me to have managers and employees from each department because I wanted to understand the onboarding process in LifeClass hotels on a deeper and more profound level.

The administered interviews took place on October 1 at Grand Hotel Portorož, were in English, and lasted between 15 and 40 minutes. The discussions covered a variety of themes relevant to the fundamental aims of the research, including the most important elements of

onboarding, the composition of LifeClass`s onboarding program, its efficiency, and the missing elements.

4.4 Findings

At first, I considered using an electronic coding program, but after thoughtful consideration, I decided that manual coding is the way to go. Before making a final decision, I read numerous articles and studies about the subject and although there were some different opinions and suggestions, I decided to follow Saldana`s (2016) recommendation about first-time coders. As she explains, first-time coders dealing with smaller data sets have a better chance of successfully processing the data by hand than doing it on a keyboard and a monitor (Saldana, 2016). She based her opinion on the fact that most of the electronic coding programs are too perplexed and thus overwhelming. Besides that, the manual coding also allowed me to better understand the data and find more details that a machine can cross off as unimportant.

Based on the answers separate sets of themes were created for both the employees and the managers. Before creating the codes that were later summarized in themes I reread the interviews a couple of times trying to get a better sense of the subject. Following that, I created the themes based on the references, the connections, and the wording frequencies. During the process, each code and then theme had a separate color that made everything clearer. In the end, the employees` answers were divided into four themes, while the managers` answers naturally created seven themes. Tables 7 and 8 represent the themes that will be further discussed below.

Table 7. Themes for managers

THEMES FOR MANAGERS
Familiarization with the term employee onboarding
Adjustment and becoming a productive member
Structure of LifeClass`s onboarding program
Awareness of beginner`s stress and adjustment difficulty
Turnover rates
Most important elements of onboarding
Optimized efficiency of the onboarding programs, weaknesses, and improvements

Source: own work.

Table 8. Themes for employees

THEMES FOR EMPLOYEES
Structure of LifeClass`s onboarding program
Perception of the complete onboarding experience
Most important elements of onboarding
Optimized efficiency of the onboarding programs, weaknesses, and improvements

Source: own work.

4.4.1 Themes for the managers

The interviews with the managers were generally longer than those with the employees which is one of the main reasons why I was able to extract seven themes instead of four as for the employees. As portrayed above, based on the manager`s answers I was able to extract the next themes: familiarization with the term employee onboarding, adjustment and becoming a productive member, structure of LifeClass`s onboarding program, awareness of beginner`s stress and adjustment difficulty, turnover rates, most important elements of onboarding, optimized efficiency of the onboarding programs, weaknesses, and improvement.

The following pages are going to cover these themes in the same order as they are stated here. Each theme will provide the reader with a deeper understanding of LifeClass`s onboarding mindset and their current situation.

4.4.1.1 Familiarization with the term employee onboarding
As previously depicted, there is still a lot of confusion when it comes to the term employee onboarding. Different researchers, authors, and practitioners have different names for the same process (Bauer & Erdogan, 1996; Saks, Uggerslev & Fassina, 2007; Bauer, 2010; Antonacopoulou & Guttel, 2010; Stanley, 2012). The research showed that none of the managers was familiar with the English term employee onboarding, but after explaining it to them, they all knew the meaning of it and what it covers, which was also evident through the rest of the interviews:

- What does that mean?... Mhm. How he is feeling this first day. It is very important that she accepted this work and the team, and then she will stay and try to do everything. If not she will leave the company at the beginning.
- I do not understand it… In that terms, okay, I understand now. I did not know the English term.
- What kind of sense?... Yes, all right.
- What do you mean with this?... Okay, okay.
- I am not sure I understand you… Of course.

40

4.4.1.2 Adjustment and becoming a productive member

Although a long time ago, the connection between personality and work adjustment has been neglected, nowadays that is not the case (Walsh & Savickas, 2005). The individual difference in thinking, acting, perceiving, feeling, and behaving, heavily influence the newcomer`s adjustment and their roads to becoming productive members of the team. Not surprisingly, all managers indicated that the duration of the employees` adjustment depends on themselves:

- More or less two weeks. Minimum two weeks sometimes more. It depends on the person…
- It depends on themselves. I think longer than I did. I think 4-5 months depending on the job position.
- Depends on the employee.
- The improvement depends on how busy we are and how fast the newcomer learns…
- It depends on the person. Approximately 5-6 days to adjust to the new surrounding.

When it comes to a newcomer becoming a productive member, the managers gave a few different timeframes, but in the end, almost all of them agreed that the period depends solely on the person and his characteristics:

- Independent in three weeks, a month. It depends on the person. Somebody is quick somebody is lazy. We are different people.
- It depends on themselves… I know the first week you need to see how it works, the second week you need to do something alone and the third week you have to do it independently…
- Everyone receives the same approach and then depends on the person. A lot of psychology.
- It depends on what kind of experience they have, how much experience they have, and what is the energy they give into the work.
- They cannot work by themselves for at least a month and maybe even more. You are never alone during the first two-three weeks for sure or almost a month depending on the person.

4.4.1.3 Structure of LifeClass`s onboarding program

This is the most extensive theme out of all seven. It covers findings of the unity of LifeClass`s onboarding program, the newcomer`s first day and first week on the job, LifeClass`s orientation, a "buddy" system, digitalization of the onboarding approach, the onboarding timeframe, official meeting with a department`s boss or manager, and giving a tour of the hotels.

➢ Unified onboarding

Different departments can concentrate on different sub-segment of the onboarding program, but in the end, it is crucial that the organization has one written and setup an onboarding program for all newcomers. To be successful and achieve its purpose, the onboarding program should be well-thought, properly designed, and implemented (Harpelund, 2019). Onboarding is not something a manager can just figure out at the moment, but rather a systemic process that requires predetermined governance, administrative system, a great deal of effort and organization (Stein & Christiansen, 2010).

The research revealed that LifeClass hotels do not a written and unified onboarding program, instead each department and manager is left to handle the newcomers on its own. They all have individual approaches created by themselves, but none of them is too strict nor mandatory:

- In some companies the HR department has clear onboarding rules and programs, here we do not have that. Every department has its own approach.
- It is not standardized [regular checkups], it depends on the department and the chief… Just for the reception department. Every department has its own onboarding programs and approaches.
- Other departments have different approaches, but yes every department has some sort of onboarding programs, maybe they are not like ours and a bit more modest but yes there are some onboarding programs. We have a more specific approach because of the workload and its difficulty. There is nothing general or unified for the entire chain hotel. Every department has its own approaches.

These answers indicate that LifeClass hotels do not have a designed, planned, organized, and implemented onboarding program. Thus, the onboarding depends solely on the managers, their willingness, creativity and dedication toward the newcomers.

➢ First day and first week

There is extensive literature on the newcomer`s first day on the job along with its importance. As noted in Grote`s article (2011) a newcomer should go home after the first day convinced that the organization is a great fit for him. Multiple authors and researchers claim that the first day should be dedicated to an orientation accompanied by other useful and fun activities (Sims, 2011; Cable, Gino & Staats, 2015).

The research revealed that the first day in LifeClass is not strictly structured and does not include an orientation. All managers stated their approaches that are very similar to one another but not entirely the same. Based on the answers it is evident that on the first day LifeClass`s managers convey information, introduce the newcomers to other employees, and teach them how to be part of the team:

- They work with another housekeeper. She shows them the work, they observe and learn how to use the housekeeping mobile app.

- We tell them the rules at the beginning…
- When you come here the first time, you first go to the HR office. They give you the documents, a badge with your name (nametag), and a chip for checking in and out of work. After that, you come to the reception and we give you a uniform, show you where to check-in and out of work, show you around the hotel and explain to you the safety hazards/measures. We explain to you what to do in case of an emergency, like if there is a fire, or what to do in case someone is hurt. We show you the emergency exits and how to call 112. We explain the schedules and how the reception is organized. When they come to the reception, we have a presentation and give the basic information about working at the reception. We give information on what to do when a guest comes in and how to approach him. How to explain where the parking is, where to put the luggage or where is the restaurant. We give the newcomer enough basic information so he will not feel useless and get a sense of the work. We want him to be able to explain something on the first day. Always the reception`s chef welcomes the newcomers, except on those rare occasions when the chef is not at work, so someone more experienced does the welcoming. In other words, the first day is organizational. We show him the hotel`s facilities, wardrobe, canteen, describe the hotel, give information about the hotel and how to navigate around.
- When a newcomer comes, we try to teach him something from the very first day. We try to show him the way the company and the department functions… On the first day we give him his uniform and take him to the facility where he needs to work. We introduce him to his colleagues from the department…

Immediately after the first day follows another critical moment which is the firsts week on the job. During this period most of LifeClass`s newcomers observe the working process and start to perform their tasks explained by someone more experienced or the manager:

- One-two days just looking and then the newcomer starts working with help, someone more experienced… At the beginning always work with a more experienced employee. We overlook the process and decide when they are ready to start working by themselves.
- I know the first week you need to see how it works… I prefer they are not just watching, so I can see how they work…
- … then we start to learn the program. The improvement depends on how busy we are and how fast the newcomer learns. We see the program we use. We try to explain how to make room keys. First, maybe the second day of the first week they learn how to check in a guest, how to put it in a computer, particular situations, and how to approach the guest. In the beginning, the newcomer is observing the check-in process. He starts to do new tasks when he feels ready and know what to do. We ask the newcomer how you feel about doing a check-in, so we first assist him. They first role-play, have a simulation of checking-in a guest. We ask the newcomer about the procedure and to explain how everything is done. We try to be as discrete as possible in front of the guest, so they won`t notice they are dealing with some new. Or, we are very upfront and tell them that this is

a newcomer and it is his beginning, so they will know from the start. Talking to the guest is complicated and we try to teach them everything they need to know before throwing them into the fire.

- Then we introduce him to his duties and show him the working process for a few days…. … then the manager of the department takes it over. He is introducing him to the workload and the duties for a couple of days because we all need some time to adjust… We explain our goals, what we want to achieve, and how we do that… After a few days, we let him work, but we still observe and direct him.

➢ Orientation seminar

The literature talks a lot about orientation (Hamilton, 2008; Jerris, 1999; Cirilo & Kleiner, 2003), but as it seems LifeClass does not organize any sort of orientation seminar. When asked to describe the onboarding process and the programs, none of the managers mentioned a standardized orientation, but half of them talked about providing newcomers with some general company information.

Two managers mentioned something that serves as orientation but is not an actual orientation. In addition, one of them also indicated the presence of orientation in the past and stated her opinion on having such an event right now:

- …all while representing the organization`s identity.
- No, we try to get this at least at the beginning. How to work, the policies and everything but so far nothing… Years ago there was a small video presentation telling them [newcomers] the policies and rules, but they did not learn anything. But it is not a bad idea to have that at the beginning. It helps. You are sitting and looking at the presentation while someone is explaining to you so that makes it better. Visual tools plus explanation. Newcomers can learn more that way… [Prefer] to be done by someone else.

Besides that, another manager indicated the importance of explaining the standards and representing the company`s codex, which yet needs to be discovered and presented:

- Having enough time to explain them the standards and make them feel the aim of the company… Written brochures, a codex… Written brochures are important and a must have because even if you have a meeting where you explain stuff newcomers can easily forget information, so they need to have these brochures at home. I want the codex because that will make us more presentable…

➢ Buddy program

According to Klein et al. (2015) having a buddy program is highly beneficial and yet infrequently offered among organizations. In my interviews, none of the managers mentioned a buddy system as part of the onboarding experience which is why some of them were explicitly asked to share their opinion on having a "buddy" person. When asked about

it they expressed open eagerness towards implementing such a program and stated the helpfulness of having a "buddy":

- It is helpful if the buddy person is a correct and positive professional…
- [A buddy] could be helpful. I would like to see that is action…
- Having a buddy might be very helpful, especially if the connection is good. I am in for something like that…

➢ Digitalization

Nowadays, digitalization is a solution for many global problems, but also a step towards a more modern and unique way of doing business and performing crucial actions. As mentioned in the theoretical part there are already dozens of different cloud-based software development companies that offer digital solutions for onboarding (Capterra, n.d.), but not many organizations are on board with the digitalization (CareerBuilder, 2017).

As expected, the research revealed that LifeClass hotels do not have a digitalized onboarding. The managers indicated that there is no mobile application for onboarding, nor any other digitalized tool aimed to help newcomers. Furthermore, half of the managers supported the idea of implementing an onboarding application, but also stated their concerns which were mainly about the seriousness and the standardization of the app:

- Yes, but only if it is a real app, not just some social interaction tool like Viber and stuff…
- It is good if it is standardized. It is okay, but again it depends on the person. Now we do everything on paper. We give them papers about the rules, guidelines, etc.
- Good thing. It would be nice to have that. It would be helpful. We do not have it now, it would be good because people do not have enough time to learn and that would be easily usable… It needs psychology… With an application, it would be easier. You can find more data, information and see whatever you want whenever you want. You can choose what to read and when. You will have everything in one place which is important… [It needs to have] advices. Advices on how and why…

Two of them were neither against nor for implementing an onboarding application, while one manager was completely against it because she believed the employees would not understand the language:

- I am against technology. No idea how it would work… That would be helpful to know how to work but for the other things I am not sure… Video, yes I think it is a good, that is great but for the other things I think you need to go through them in person to see what works…
- Yes, in this time a meeting can be done over Zoom or something like that…
- No [to an employee onboarding application]. They do not understand Slovenian nor English…

➢ Timeframe

As mentioned in the theoretical part of this thesis, different authors and researchers have different opinions on the perfect onboarding timeframe (Harpelund, 2019; Stanley, 2012). Some of them suggest a few weeks, others a few months and some even mention a whole year, but my research showed that LifeClass hotels do not have any set timeframe. According to the managers, LifeClass does not have one unified onboarding program and thus does not have a fixed onboarding timeframe that needs to be followed.

- Nothing strict, just in my mind…
- What program? Do we have a program?... It is a never-ending story but it is especially important at the beginning…

➢ Official meeting with a department manager or boss

Meeting "important" people at the very beginning is seen as a powerful move that conveys a great deal of devotion towards the newcomers (Harpelund, 2019). This simple action gives an impression that the management is interested in the newcomers and their adjustment. In addition to that, newcomers who know the boss tend to feel more secure (Harpelund, 2019).

Half of the interviewed managers did not mention organizing an official meeting between them and the newcomers, while the other half said there is nothing like that. On top of that, one of the managers confused the official meeting with a job interview:

- Yes, we do that every time. First a meeting then we decide whether to employ the person…
- No official meeting only an unofficial one organized by me. People are easily putting out the trouble at unofficial meetings. If we have an official meeting, two hours later nobody knows what are the responsibilities, the dates, and the deadlines.
- There is no official meeting, although that would be very helpful.

As mentioned in one of the previous sections, even though the managers did not indicate a presence of an official meeting they did express meeting the newcomers on their first day or in the first week depending on the circumstances. In addition to that, two of the managers explained that instead of conducting an official meeting they organize unofficial ones as they have proven to be more useful:

- Only an unofficial one [meeting]. People are easily putting out the trouble at unofficial meetings. If we have an official meeting two hours later nobody knows what are the responsibilities, the dates, and the deadlines.
- Yes, we sit down to talk to every newcomer for about an hour or an hour and a half sometimes more if we see that the person is very frightened. We talk about the expectations in a way that is not too strict and frightening.

➢ Giving a tour of the hotels

According to Nakamoto (2019), giving a tour of the facility should be part of an organized orientation together with other activities. In the interviews half of the managers indicated that someone is giving newcomers a tour around the hotels, although that is not part of a standardized orientation:

- … we show them the facility.
- … we show him the hotel`s facilities (wardrobe, canteen), describe the hotel, give information about the hotel and how to navigate around…
- There is a tour of the hotel…

4.4.1.4 Awareness of beginner`s stress and adjustment difficulty

It is widely known that newcomers experience significant amounts of stress during the beginning period (Bourne, 1967; Wanous & Reichers, 2000), but unfortunately, that anxiety often stays unrecognized by the management and the HR professionals (Wanous & Reichers, 2000). In the interviews, all managers explicitly indicated their awareness of the beginner`s stress and talked about the approaches they use to help newcomers feel less anxious and tensed:

- I know the beginning is difficult and we try to explain million different things which is overwhelming…
- Tell them the rules when they first come. Explain exactly how we work and how long we work…
- LifeClass is huge so when you start working you get a million information and that might be overwhelming… You need time to learn… I think half of it depends on the employee and the other half on the manager or the supervisor. So 50/50, an employee needs to feel comfortable with any stress, with a lot of information at the beginning…
- You can imagine when someone is coming he is afraid, not completely confident and you have to help him. Here is not the end of the story you have to be with him the entire time…
- Put the right person at the right hotel… You cannot learn everything in one day that does not work… We always say: if you see that you have already received enough information for the day just tell us…
- We try to decrease the stress and fear. We want to make newcomers feel like they have been here for over a month although they have been working only for a few days… It is very difficult for someone to be left by himself especially if that is his first time in our hotels… They (newcomers) are afraid of the adjusting period, so they ask themselves: how are we going to adjust, is everything going to be okay, etc…

4.4.1.5 Turnover rates

Evidence shows that the hospitality industry has immense turnover rates (Chikwe, 2009) and that employee onboarding plays a significant role in decreasing those numbers (Louis, 1980; Bauer, 2015; Stanley, 2012; Harpelund, 2019).

In this segment, the research matched the theory. Almost all managers sadly acknowledged the high turnover rates in their departments:

- High turnover rates, huge.
- There are many lost opportunities to decrease turnover rates and keep the employees.
- Some receptionists work for a longer period, but we also have some new ones… every year one or two go away, but we also have some that stay… two receptionists work here for more than 10 years.
- High turnover rates because of the seasonal work. We employ students in order to manage the workload.

The only departments that do not have high turnover rates are animation and reception. The animation manager explained that the reason behind the low turnover rates is the small number of employees in the department who mainly work during the summer season and the holidays.

- No high turnover rates in the department.
- Some receptionists work for a longer period, but we also have some new ones… every year one or two go away, but we also have some that stay… two receptionists work here for more than 10 years.

4.4.1.6 Most important elements of onboarding

Besides one manager, the rest unanimously agreed that explaining is the most important element of onboarding newcomers. They explained that it is important how and when information is being conveyed while at the same time giving newcomers unconditional support:

- To explain…
- …tell them they are not alone and I will be there for everything you need. I can tell something once or ten times if they need it… Tell them the rules when they first come. Explain exactly how we work and how long we work that is the most important thing.
- A lot of work has to be done with the newcomers. We need to take time for the newcomers… Support and encouragement… You have to treat different people in different ways… Having enough time to explain to them the standards and make them feel the aim of the company… Written brochures, a codex…
- Take time to explain… first the training part and also to divide the newcomers so there is some time between their coming… presentation of what we do before they come to the reception because once they are there they have to talk to the guest and have to have some basic understanding of the working process.
- Everything is important: how we explain the work activities and when, how do we give information, then how welcome does he feel and how he perceives his onboarding… to feel like he is at the right place. That is very important because if he feels that way he works better, puts more effort, there is no stress and is more positive… Mistakes happen and that is okay.

4.4.1.7 Optimized efficiency of the onboarding programs, weaknesses, and improvements
This theme is composed of several crucial elements merged together in order to depict a clearer picture and create higher value. The theme covers answers about the optimized efficiency of the offered onboarding program as perceived by the managers, the missing elements, the most common mistakes that can happen during employee onboarding, and the ways to improve the employee onboarding experience.

➢ Optimized efficiency
In terms of optimized efficiency, LifeClass`s manager indicated that the onboarding programs are all right, but they can be better:

- Can be better for sure, but we must find solution for better.
- It is okay.
- This year is something special… We do well. There is enough information provided for the newcomers.
- Because of my own experience I try to do much more… We could be better. We have to be braver and more carrying…
- We try to do stuff in a way that is easier for us.
- In my department, I would not really add much… [I am] Very satisfied. I learned from my own experience. The approach in my department has shown good results.

Based on the wholesome interviews, these answers should be taken with a reservation. That reference comes from the indication that LifeClass does not offer certain onboarding activities, guidelines, and timelines offered by the literature. Due to that, the question remains without an accurate and reliable answer and thus a further investigation is needed.

➢ Missing elements of the onboarding programs
Almost all managers stated that LifeClass`s onboarding process lacks designated courses and/or training for the newcomers. According to the housekeeping manager, they are in great need of a Slovenian language course, while the other managers would like the newcomers to go through practical training:

- No courses. Nothing like that. Now we will start with a Slovenian language course, but normally we do not have it.
- Maybe the departmental managers or the top manager should have some courses for the newcomers.
- We never have enough staff at the reception… It is difficult to take the time to explain everything to the newcomer because there is a lot of work… It would be easier for us if there is some organized seminar or training at the beginning.
- For a long period the hotels have not had some educational seminars or courses.

Further on, one manager strongly indicated the lack of a company`s codex which according to him is an immense omission:

- The company itself does not provide enough general information at the beginning… I think there is nothing like that [a written brochure/codex].

➢ Most common onboarding mistakes

Caldwell & Caldwell (2016) recognized ten classical onboarding mistakes: overlooking the beginner`s stress, miscommunicating key information, overloading newcomers with important information, providing confusing and chaotic information, delaying the transmission of crucial information, mistiming the transmission of essential information, failing to honor commitments, mishandling scheduling basic needs, failing to conduct a timely realistic job preview, and last but not least ignoring building networks with other employees.

Half of the managers indicated that one of the worst and maybe most common mistakes that can happen during the onboarding is to overwhelm newcomers with information that matches the theoretical perspective given by Caldwell & Caldwell (2016):

- Giving them too much information…
- Overwhelming them [newcomers] with information and not being supportive enough… Not boosting the newcomer`s confidence. If we are not organized well…
- We try not to make mistakes…the higher management sends us a newcomer during the busiest hours and then we cannot dedicate time to the newcomer… It is important not to overwhelm them with too much information…
- When you do not pay attention to what the other person is saying… if everything is clear from the beginning then we will have a nice collaboration.

➢ Improvements to the onboarding process

Almost all managers indicated that the onboarding process in LifeClass can be improved by implementing courses and practical training which will help newcomers be more prepared and thus integrate quicker and easier:

- First of all, we need to get enough employees… Small video at the beginning together with an explanation... Language, English course, education, accommodation and higher payment.
- One week or ten days training with newcomers. Stimulations of lunch, dinner or something like that for waiters… More individual contact and more practical information.
- The company should create standardized onboarding programs. The other thing can be the middle management from each department to take care of the onboarding activities explaining the most important parts, who we are, etc. Written brochures are important and a must have because even if you have a meeting where you explain stuff newcomers can easily forget information, so they need to have these brochures at home. I want the codex because that will make us more presentable… We need to take time for the newcomers.

-   We would like to have less persons at once. We want to have a course with the programs because they are very complicated. Also we like to have a presentation, but not only one in one day because there is a lot of information that needs to be transferred. On these presentation we want to explain the newcomers what to do and how to approach a guest… It would be easier for us if there is some organized seminar or training at the beginning so that the newcomers will hear what they need to know before starting to work at the reception and also to know more about the program… First the training part and also to divide the newcomers so there is some time between their coming. That way we can give them more attention and dedicate time for them. presentation of what we do before they come to the reception because once they are there they have to talk to the guest and have to have some basic understanding of the working process…
-   Right people at the right places and right directions, information… Education.

4.4.2 Themes for the employees

As previously mentioned, based on the relevance and frequency of the employees` answers/statements I was able to create four themes. These themes are: structure of LifeClass`s onboarding programs; perception of the complete onboarding experience; most important elements of onboarding; and last but not least optimized efficiency of the onboarding programs, weaknesses, and improvements.

All of these themes represent small but important parts that together portray LifeClass`s employee onboarding situation. The first two themes are the most extensive ones in this set because they cover several subthemes each equally important for answering the research questions.

4.4.2.1 Structure of LifeClass`s onboarding programs
Due to its essence, this theme is elaborated in both the managers` and the employees` part of the research findings. The theme includes information and results about the newcomers` first day and the first week on the job, providing information, team introduction, orientation, "buddy" program, onboarding timeframe, and finally yet importantly social events organized specifically for the newcomers. All of the sub-themes will be deeply elaborated in the upcoming pages.

➢ First day
The first day on the job represents a critical phase of the onboarding process because it sets a tone for the organization and its energy (Krasman, 2015). The newcomers soak in everything that is happening around them. They are trying to see the bigger picture and understand the core values of the organization while putting an accent on their immediate colleagues and bosses. Their focus is on the others` perception of them and their perception of the others which is why the first day should be designed in an interesting and symbolic manner (Harpelund, 2019).

The interviews did not discover any evidence of fun activities, nor special treatments on the first working day. Instead, for numerous respondents observing and learning were the main elements of their first working day:

- I was noticing people around me and observing what they are doing and what I should do. I was learning simple information like when and where…
- I was just observing what my colleagues were doing. I was orienting and learning.

In addition to the observing and learning fragments, these statements also show evidence of a newcomer`s first-day mindset that is consistent with the explanation given above. Although observing and learning seem to be the most common components of a first working day, two respondents mentioned meeting colleagues on the first day and expressed high satisfaction with the way they were welcomed. Those two answers overlapped with Shepherd`s (2012), theory saying that newcomers who meet their colleagues on the very first day tend to feel more affiliated in comparison to those who do not.

➤ First week

The first week is another crucial period of the employee onboarding process (Klein & Polin, 2012). According to Savitt (2012) this period is merely introductory. The respondents indicated that the first week at LifeClass is usually all about learning. They were learning their tasks and getting help from their more experienced colleagues or supervisors:

- Someone was always with me. It depends on the personality and how fast you learn, but at the beginning you always get help from someone more experienced.

➤ Providing information

The literature does not have a strict rule about who needs to give information to the newcomers, as long as the information is correctly and timely transferred. In the best-case scenario the information comes from a buddy whose one of the main purposes is to feed the newcomer with information about anything (Sims, D., 2011; Harpelund, 2019), but even though that might be the perfect situation at the end of the day the transfer itself is more important than the person who did it.

In terms of who provided them with information, the majority of newcomers explicitly indicated the helpfulness of their bosses and colleagues. Their combined effort was perceived as an exceptional help in the process of learning and collecting necessary information.

- The colleagues and the boss were amazing… She [the boss] told me everything… My colleagues showed me around. They showed me the facilities.
- The boss of the department showed me the facilities and explained what is what. After that she explained the main activities and told me more about my duties… My colleagues were amazing and very helpful.

- It depends what I wanted to know. Sometimes I was asking my boss, sometimes my colleagues, but anyway they were always there for me.

➢ Team introduction

The theory behind who introduces a newcomer with the team is similar to the theory standing behind the previously mentioned sub-category. According to some authors, one of the buddy`s responsibilities is to introduce a newcomer to his colleagues and help him connect (Sims, D., 2011; Harpelund, 2019). But, the literature does not stop there and also mentions that this task can be performed by the department manager/direct boss who has more authority and better knowledge of the team members. In this case, the manager has the capacity to briefly familiarize the newcomer with the roles of each team member and thus make him feel less anxious (Sims, D., 2011).

Nearly all respondents revealed that they have been introduced to the team by their boss/ department manager:

- My boss welcomed me and then took me to meet the team...

In addition to that, an employee from the F&B department expressed sincere positive emotions towards the introduction process by mentioning how her manager made the situation fun and interesting:

- My boss introduced me to my colleagues and I specifically remember him making some joke to ease the situation…

Her experience it is important because it puts an accent on the importance of understanding the beginner`s stress and finding a simple way to reduce it. Through the manager`s action we can see that making a newcomer feel better is not so difficult if we are willing to be open and understanding.

➢ Orientation seminar

As previously mentioned an orientation seminar is a vital part of any employee onboarding program. This important one-time event should represent the company`s identity, but still, not all organizations have implemented its version of it (Aberdeen, 2016).

The interviews indicated that LifeClass does not offer an official orientation seminar. The respondents unanimously agreed that the hotels do not have a unified and mandatory orientation seminar for their newcomers. However, the employees working at the reception and in the restaurants indicated that their managers and/or supervisors try to familiarize them with the company`s rules, objectives, and goals. They implied that the information is not transferred on an official departmental orientation seminar, by natural and unplanned conversations with their managers:

- I received some helpful notes and tips about the rules from my boss…

- No, we did not have that [an orientation seminar]. I learned some of the rules from my manager.
- Oh I did not have [an orientation seminar], although my boss told me something about that [the company`s values].

➢ Buddy program

A buddy program is an excellent instrument that helps achieve greater retention, satisfaction, and productivity all while making newcomers feel more welcome and accepted (Sims, D., 2011; Klinghoffer et al., 2019). Due to those benefits, implementing a well-organized buddy system is something organizations should aim at.

In my interviews, only two employees indicated the presence of a buddy program, but another five of them indicated having a mentor which according to the theory is something completely different than a designated buddy (Sims, D., 2011):

- My boss was very professional and kind. She was mentoring me the entire time… Also my colleagues were very helpful.

As noted in the manager`s themes, the managers themselves did not indicate having mentorship programs, but the employees indicated otherwise. According to the employees` answers, the managers are perceived as mentors even though there is nothing official or written.

➢ Timeframe

As mentioned in the theoretical part, researchers, practitioners, and organizations cannot decide upon a single most appropriate timeframe for employee onboarding. But, despite that the theory agrees that one day or even one week is far from enough for a newcomer to completely adjust and become a productive employee which means that those onboarding timeframes are inefficient and redundant (Laurano, 2013).

The interviewed employees did not indicate one single timeframe. Instead, they all gave diverse answers varying from 2 weeks to 3 months. Based on the answers, the reception department has the longest onboarding timeframe due to the job`s high demands. In that period, the reception employees learn how to operate e perplexing computer program, how to communicate with the guests, how to best represent LifeClass and a number of other things:

- It was a long process, working with people and the checking-in program is not easy but thankfully I always had a support from my boss…

The interviews indicate that another department with extended onboarding programs is F&B. The respondents working there stated that their onboarding programs lasted 2 months and also explained that the reason for that is the job`s complexity.

- First I had to learn the HACCP standards, then get familiar with the menus and the wine list, learn the ingredients that go into every dish, how to serve, and so many other things…

Further on, when asked to describe their first few months most of the participants said that they were working and did not indicate any theoretically based onboarding components such as official HR meetings regarding their new employment, special activities or events, regular check-ups, satisfaction surveys, etc. In other words, they insinuated that there are no onboarding programs longer than two-three months.

➢ Social events

Newcomers face a number of challenges one of which is building social networks. Meeting people can be stressful and often leads to self-questioning which is why organizations should do something to help newcomers build meaningful relationships early in the process (Bauer, 2015).

Social events such as parties and friendly sports matches cannot be forced upon newcomers but they most certainly help in the process of building social networks (Harpelund, 2019). These types of events encourage newcomers to participate in fun, after-work activities and give them an opportunity to connect with their colleagues on a deeper level. In other words, they represent an effective tool for external and internal communication that enables and fosters interpersonal relationships (Saks & Gruman, 2012). Besides that, they increase satisfaction, motivation, and last but not least, promote positive thinking. Some of the most common social events are holiday parties, team building seminars or weekends, sports events, friendly matches, and tournaments with other organizations.

From the interviews, it became evident that right now LifeClass does not offer any social events for their newcomers. But some respondents indicated that it has not always been like that:

- I have heard that in the past they used to have some sports events like football and basketball matches…
- Some of my colleagues who have been working here for a couple of years tell me that in the past they used to have organized events, but now there is nothing like that.

4.4.2.2 Perception of the complete onboarding experience
The perception theme covers seven sub-themes:

1. Perception of the underwent onboarding
2. Helpfulness of the onboarding programs
3. Satisfaction with the onboarding programs
4. Feelings awaken by the onboarding
5. Pros of the onboarding
6. Cons of the onboarding
7. Most interesting parts of the onboarding programs

All of these sub-themes are based on the interview answers and represent personal views, beliefs, and perceptions of the respondents which is why they might differ from one another. Different people have different backgrounds, motives, believes, values and thus might differently perceive their onboarding experiences. The tricky part here is that no one can say how accurate newcomers are about their own perceiving and the adjustment which is highly subjective and depends on various direct and indirect factors (Bauer & Erdogan, 1996). No matter how differently they perceived their onboarding, at the end of the day each newcomer should see the onboarding as a period for practicing, learning, and adjusting (Harpelund, 2019).

➢ Perception of the underwent onboarding

When asked about the perception of their personal onboarding experiences the employees gave mixed answers. Five of them perceived it as "okay", or "good", while the others used different labels and explanations. Two of the answers lay on completely different sides of the spectrum giving two opposed viewings:

- Swim and survive…
- It was very positive… Everything went well.

Further on two of the respondents put an accent on the teaching and learning part of their onboarding experiences which is in sync with Harpelund`s (2019) theory stating that a newcomer should perceive the onboarding as a period for learning:

- With responsibility and faith to learn…
- Quick and instructive…

➢ Helpfulness of the onboarding programs

Regarding the helpfulness of the onboarding programs the perceptions were evenly split between "OK" and "very". At first, the respondents did not talk a lot about this segment. They were restrained, clear, and precise without giving any in-depth explanations, which is why I had to navigate around the topic a bit more. In the end, their answers concentrated on only a few onboarding elements (getting help and support from their colleagues and managers) and not the entire onboarding experience which should be a series of events, attitudes, and components:

- The boss was very helpful. We really connected and it was a positive experience.
- I mean, it was helpful because I could rely on my supervisor for almost everything…
- [Very helpful] Because everyone around me was willing to help me.
- It was very helpful to learn slowly.
- Mostly because of the manager and the colleagues. They were amazing and very helpful.

➢ Satisfaction with the onboarding programs

Satisfaction is commonly described as a fulfillment of someone's desires, needs, and expectations. The level of satisfaction is an equation of a person`s wants and what he gets or what really happens to him.

Research shows that satisfied employees bring a lot to the table. They exhibit higher productivity, energy, engagement and achieve exceptionally better results (Sageer et al., 2012; Abraham, 2012).

Employee satisfaction depends on emotions and perceptions of many areas and little segments such as management, work conditions, relations with colleagues, recognition, work-life balance, organizational moral, growth opportunities, onboarding programs, etc. Even though onboarding is just one segment of the general employee satisfaction it is still very important because it happens at the beginning of the employment.

More than half of the interviewees expressed high satisfaction explaining that their positive emotions mostly come from their colleagues and managers, and the way they accepted them. In other words, they were satisfied with the colleagues` and managers` willingness to help them whenever they needed.

- I was pretty pleased with the way they noticed me and put me in the job process…
- I was very satisfied because my mentor explained me everything and was very patient…

However, not everyone was thrilled about it. Some, or more precisely four of the respondents said that they are somewhat satisfied and added there are still things that need to be improved and/or added.

➢ Feelings awaken by the onboarding
People are wired to feel, but talking about feelings can be very personal and often uncomfortable. When asked about their feelings during the onboarding period, some interviewees naturally expressed a normal dose of restraint. In the beginning, they hesitate how to answer the question, but at the end gave answers that depicted their state of emotions during the onboarding period.

Some of them talked about the anxiety that comes at the beginning and expressed a low level of nervousness combined with excitement. They elaborated that it was stressful because starting to work for such a big company was intimidating and a bit scary:

- I was a little nervous but also excited of learning new things.
- I was not sure if I am going to fit in or not, but it turned out fine…
- I was excited and a bit frightened… I liked that they asked me how I was doing and feeling…
- Every beginning is scary but I had a lot of support from the people around me and that made me feel better.

However, some of the respondents only concentrated on the positive feelings of the onboarding experience. Almost half of them expressed feeling included and accepted, while some even described being proud and happy with it:

- I was proud to be part of LifeClass and thus felt motivated...
- I felt very satisfied.
- Good and easy because co-workers provided with all information

➢ Pros of the onboarding

Newcomers who feel socially accepted are less stressed out, take more risks, want to know more, and show higher willingness to learn more about their job, role, and the organization (Bauer, 2015). In addition to that, those newcomers who feel welcomed and accepted by their co-workers also show self-efficacy and job-satisfaction (Bauer et al., 2007).

The majority of the respondents indicated that the best part of their onboarding experience was the acceptance from their colleagues. They expressed their positive emotions towards the subject by explaining how they were always able to rely on their co-workers and were not afraid to ask them for help:

- The colleagues were very friendly and very welcoming, so I was very happy…
- My colleagues were amazing and very helpful…

➢ Cons of the onboarding

On the other hand, when asked about the negative sides of their onboarding experiences, the respondents gave generic answers that were not connected to onboarding. Their answers did not depict the onboarding situation as they covered other aspects of the working process:

- …communication between departments…
- …late delivery of information…
- …mutual cooperation and information between departments…
- …I was a bit exhausted at the beginning because I worked a lot…
- …the work was totally different because I have learned other stuff at school.

➢ Most interesting parts of the onboarding programs

The research revealed that newcomers found meeting colleagues and learning about the organization to be the most interesting parts of their onboarding. They truly liked getting to know their co-workers and enjoyed learning more about the big organization which is not surprising. According to Harpelund (2019) newcomers often feel a mix of tension and excitement for the new job. They are happy to be part of something new and look forward to meeting new people, getting to know the new organization and learning their duties.

Further on, their responses once again acknowledged the importance of being socially accepted into the new surrounding:

- Working with the leader and get to know the wider LifeClass organization and all.
- The most interesting part was working in such a big company with so many co-workers.

Having welcoming and open co-workers can contribute to the onboarding experience in more than one way. Their attitude along with the newcomer`s excitement makes the beginning a lot more interesting.

4.4.2.3 Most important elements of onboarding

When asked about the most important elements of onboarding, the employees stated two essential components that align with the theory. Newcomers often get loads of information in a short amount of time which is impractical because it makes them feel overwhelmed and thus confused. To avoid that it is crucial for the management to find a balance between providing the right amount of information and the appropriate time to deliver them (Caldwell & Peters, 2018). Newcomers who receive a lot of accurate, timely and helpful information about their new roles show better adjustment results than those who do not (Klein, Fan, & Preacher, 2006)

Five out of eleven employees mentioned giving information as a crucial element while four talked about the supervisor`s and the manager`s patience. The respondents explained the importance of getting all necessary information without any pressure from the supervisors and shared their own stories. One of them explicitly indicated the need to ask too many questions and directly connected that with the manager`s patience:

- I am a person who wants to know everything and asks many questions, so definitely patience…

4.4.2.4 Optimized efficiency of the onboarding programs

Again, this theme consists of several sub-themes: the employee`s perspective of the current onboarding optimization, elements they would like to add, and ways to improve the onboarding experience. Efficiency and optimization go hand in hand. Efficiency is the driving force in reducing operating expenses while optimization is the tool that helps us achieve this goal.

As expected, the onboarding programs are not fully optimized and there is still a place for improvement. Most of the interviewees ranked the onboarding programs as intermediately optimized. When talking about this they explicitly elaborated on what was missing and what can be improved which will be discussed in the next sub-theme. Further on, one employee gave a very valid point that the efficiency depends on who carried out the onboarding which is true because different people have different approaches and put different levels of effort and energy.

➢ Enrichment of the onboarding program

Newcomers had a lot of different ideas in terms of what needs to be added to the onboarding process. Their ideas primarily came from personal experience, but also from observing the other newcomers during their onboarding periods.

The respondents mentioned adding: more time, more patience, language courses, meeting the bosses, and practical training, but still, the two most mentioned terms in this segment were practical training and more time (ongoing introduction). Almost half of the respondents indicated that they would like LifeClass to add more practical training or courses while three people said they would like the onboarding process to be longer.

➢ Improvements to the onboarding process

According to my respondents, the onboarding process can be improved by implementing courses that will help them perform better. Some of them expressed a desire to have language courses that will enrich their skills while others wanted some more specific courses connected to their job requirements. In addition to that, they also mentioned that having a Slovenian language course for the foreign employees would be very helpful since that would shorten their adjustment time and make everything a lot easier.

Besides that, the research also revealed two other problematic areas worth mentioning. The first one is ineffective communication and collaboration between departments which causes a lot of tension and misunderstandings. Even at the beginning the newcomers noticed the lack of organization between the departments and expressed a strong desire for that to change. The second one is troubling communication between hierarchical levels.

4.5 Discussion

Even though the literature recommends having a standardized employee onboarding program (Lombardi, 2011; Laurano, 20112), the research results indicate that LifeClass hotels do not have a structured and standardized onboarding program. Their approach is neither strategic nor unified, but rather a representation of the momentary willingness and dexterity of the department manager. Every department manager has its own employee onboarding approach but they are all aware of the beginner`s stress and use very similar techniques to onboard their newbies.

Since there is no standardized onboarding procedure it is not surprising that there is also not a strict onboarding timeframe and that the procedure does not start before the first day on the job. Besides that, the research also showed that there are not any special events organized for the newbies and not one part of it is digitalized. Furthermore, as a consequence of the lack of onboarding standardization, some newcomers receive a tour of the hotels, while some do not.

Surprisingly no one indicated existence of an onboarding handbook. On top of that, one manager strongly pointed out the lack of a written brochure that would convey the organization`s codex and all important information about working at LifeClass. This is concerning because the literature strongly recommends having an employee handbook which is also supported by most of the hotel chains mentioned in the thesis.

Contrary to the expectation, the results strongly indicated that LifeClass hotels do not have an official and structured orientation for each newcomer which is seen as a crucial element and a critical period of onboarding (Hamilton, 2008). Instead, some department managers try to convey important information about the organization on their own and familiarize newcomers with the bigger picture and the rules. This is also a red flag because just like the employee handbook, this segment is also frequently recommended by researchers and implemented by practitioners.

Furthermore, the first day is not strictly structured and does not include any special activities or events for the newcomers. According to the managers, this day is used for conveying necessary information, important introductions with other employees, and learning how to be part of the team. After the first, day newcomers observe and gradually begin to learn how to perform their tasks, usually with the help of someone more experienced.

As expected the onboarding perception was deviating between different employees, but still most of them positively perceived their onboarding. Based on what LifeClass offers, the literature, and the possible subjectivity of the respondents, I must mention that this finding should be taken with a reservation. Furthermore, the employees did not rank the helpfulness of the onboarding procedure. Instead, they indicated that the value-added and the help came from the people around them: their supervisors and colleagues who were open to questions and collaboration. In other words, they indicated high helpfulness of the people working around them and not from a designated onboarding program.

The research once again proved that beginnings are scary and newcomers feel anxious (Wanous, 1976; Luis, 1980; Miller & Jablin; 1991). But luckily, LifeClass`s newcomers were able to rely on their managers and colleagues who as they said were the best and most interesting part of their onboarding process. Almost all employees who expressed satisfaction with the onboarding mentioned that their colleagues and managers were very helpful and that contributed towards experiencing positive emotions. In the end, this finding comes down to the basic human need of being accepted and connects to the already known truth that newcomers who are socially accepted by their colleagues are more satisfied and motivated (Bauer et al, 2007).

As to what are the most important elements of onboarding, both employees and managers strongly agreed that there is nothing more essential than providing useful information at the right time all while being patient and supportive. Conveying information is in the essence of every onboarding program, but what is even more important is when and how the newbie receives the information (Caldwell & Caldwell, 2016).

In the end, according to the respondents, LifeClass`s onboarding program is somewhat optimized and mildly efficient with space for improvement. In this case, again the results should be read with caution because the research showed that LifeClass does not have a standardized and structured onboarding program intended for every newcomer. Therefore, the second research question cannot be accurately and relevantly answered. Furthermore, both the managers and the employees agreed that there are some missing elements such as courses and practical training that if implemented can be highly useful and helpful. As they said, they would like to have language courses, especially Slovenian intended for the foreigners, but also recommended implementing more specific training that would enrich their skills and help newcomers get a better practical understanding.

4.6 Recommendations

Based on the literature, the practical examples, and my research findings I make the following recommendations to help LifeClass hotels improve their employee onboarding:

- LifeClass should design and implement a standardized onboarding program
- LifeClass should work on digitalization and gamification of the onboarding procedure
- LifeClass should organize an orientation along with other fun events for their newbies
- LifeClass should prepare a well-written, informative, and interesting employee handbook
- LifeClass should offer language courses and practical training.

For an easier implementation of these recommendations, LifeClass hotels can look at the practices from some of the other hotel chains. As shown in chapter 2.1, most of the major hotel chains have already implemented various onboarding programs tailored to their needs. Their programs vary in many aspects, but in the end, all of them have one goal and that is to help newcomers adjust to the new surrounding by helping them understand their roles and the hotel`s identity.

Although LifeClass is not in the same size category as Marriot International, Ritz-Carlton, Four Seasons Hotels and Resorts, the InterContinental Hotel Group, Hilton, Accor, Hyatt, and the other previously mentioned hotel chains they can still learn a lot from them. Based on their examples along with the literature`s recommendations, LifeClass can and should create its own onboarding programs that will fit their needs. For instance, they can take Marriott`s virtual onboarding environment named Voyage as an example and use that as an idea for their own digitalized onboarding solution. Additionally, to further help themselves create a digitalized onboarding experience, they can also revise Accor`s e-learning method called "Welcome to Accor", or Huntington`s electronic onboarding solutions that include videos and quizzes intended to familiarize the newcomers with the company. These approaches are highly helpful not only because of the technological involvement but also because they spontaneously present the employee handbooks that are available anytime anywhere. With these examples in mind, LifeClass has a nice base for creating and implementing an e-learning platform, or even an entire mobile app dedicated to onboarding.

Furthermore, it would be nice if LifeClass considers some of these hotel chains` overall onboarding approaches because they include several different steps, programs, and methods. For example, InterContinental Hotel Group has an entire set of consecutive actions intended to make the onboarding process as smooth as possible. Their approach starts on the very first day with a department orientation held by a designated mentor. After that during the first few weeks, they offer an "Initial Job Training Plan" followed by a program called "New Employee Cross Exposure" which lasts during the first few months and creates a better connection with other related departments. At the end the HR department reviews the orientation with the newcomers and if needed schedules upcoming informal meetings. In addition to that, they also offer employee handbooks specifically created for all of their different brands. This example is considering because it truly covers many needed aspects

of the onboarding process and thus can give LifeClass some valuable directions when creating their own approaches. Besides that, another example worth mentioning is Marriott`s program called "Get on board" where new managers are introduced to Marriott`s policies and the International lodging. The next example worth considering is Gaylord`s Convention of the STARS which represents a seminar based on the hotel`s characteristics and its target market. In other words, this is a program that offers newcomers an entire experience via a proper convention all while teaching them about the company`s mission, vision, rules, and everything else that is included in a well-prepared handbook.

Another key point is that almost all of the hotel chains mentioned in the thesis offer some kind of orientation seminars for their newcomers. For instance, Ritz-Carlton has a two-day initial orientation where a CEO or someone from the top management speaks to the newcomers in order to establish a neat work dynamic and show them that they matter. Similarly, Four Seasons hotels also have a two-day orientation, while Hilton, Hyatt, and Accor have a one-day seminar where they explain the next steps of the onboarding process and talk about their hotels.

4.7 Contributions, limitations, and future research directions

In previous research, employee onboarding has been examined using different methods and approaches covering various industries. All of them have somehow enriched the onboarding knowledge, but there are still gaps that need to be filled in and this thesis is just one more step towards achieving that. The results from this research primarily advance the knowledge of employee onboarding in the lodging sector and can be taken as a base for future research. At the same time, LifeClass`s case enriches the literature with more data about the level of onboarding representation and raises awareness of the importance of this phenomenon.

Furthermore, the findings presented in this thesis can be used as a starting point for an extended study about employee onboarding which can firstly cover hotels in Slovenia and later on can be extended on a global level. The proposed study is pretty perplexing but also highly needed since so far there is no such an examination available in the literature.

Moreover, this is a first-ever research on the topic carried out at the LifeClass hotels and thus brings high value to the entire organization from a few different perspectives. First and foremost, the research raises awareness of the onboarding situation at LifeClass and points out its strengths and weaknesses. Secondly, the results enlighten the HR department by providing it with a deeper understanding of the employees` mindset and giving them a chance to act accordingly. In particular, the research discovered some employees` desires and wishes which were previously undisclosed and can be used for the greater good. Thirdly, they shine a light on the important elements of employee onboarding as seen from the eyes of LifeClass`s managers and the employees. This along with the implicated missing elements is crucial because it tells LifeClass`s higher managers and the HR department what to concentrate on and what are the segments that can make a change for the better. Last but not

least, with these results in mind, the HR department has a better opportunity for future improvement of the work culture and especially of the onboarding approach.

On the other hand, although the research has made substantial contributions that deserve to be considered by LifeClass`s board of directors, the HR department, the managers, and other researchers and practitioners, there are also some research limitations that need to be considered. Firstly, the language barrier must not be forgotten. Although all respondents knew and spoke in English, the fact that that was not their native language might have influenced the answers and created an unconscious bias. Secondly, the research question about how optimized are LifeClass`s onboarding programs could not be directly and fully answered because as the research showed there are no official or unified onboarding programs intended for all newcomers. Thirdly, the lack of prior research studies on this topic in the Slovenian hospitality industry disabled me to draw a direct correlation between the onboarding process in LifeClass and other hotels inside the national borders. Last but not least, this is a qualitative research which means that there is potential for subconscious bias and inconsistencies (Brown J. D., 2001), as well as unnoticed errors caused by the extensiveness and high range of the qualitative data.

As a result of the last-mentioned limitation, quantitative research is needed. Preferably, this quantitative research will cover a bigger sample size, numerically examine the problem from another angle, and erase every possibility of being biased. Additionally, further research is needed on the issues raised by the findings. For instance, a consequential study should be done after LifeClass decides to take certain actions prompted by the presented findings and the given recommendations. That study can once again examine the onboarding process in LifeClass which together with my research will give an opportunity for a before and after comparison of the onboarding situation. To put it differently, as described throughout the thesis, some promising onboarding ideas and programs have already been developed in some hotels and while these methods have shown great results for them there is yet to be discovered whether they will work for Lifeclass as well. Besides that, carrying out a longitudinal, or in other words, observational study is highly recommended as it should give an even deeper understanding of the topic and especially of the newcomer`s mindset. Finally yet importantly, a more systemic investigation of the direct connection between employee turnover and onboarding should be applied over a longer period.

All things considered, this thesis fills in a small space of the gap that exists in the literature, but there is still a long road ahead of us. Keeping that in mind along with the fact that there is still not enough information about the degree of employee onboarding representation in the Slovenian hospitality sector, I strongly recommend further research on the topic that goes beyond the given suggestions.

CONCLUSION

Employee onboarding is not a recent phenomenon. As a matter of fact, it has existed for decades now, but the term itself is considered to be relatively new. As part of HRM, onboarding is known under different names such as organizational socialization and employee induction.

Furthermore, in the literature and in many real practical cases it is not uncommon for onboarding to be confused with orientation, even though the two of them have different meanings. Unlike orientation, which is a narrow one-time event, onboarding is a comprehensive and long-term process filled with mixed emotions. As a series of consecutive actions, employee onboarding programs play a crucial role in welcoming and helping newcomers adjust to the new surrounding while slowly becoming productive members. Implementing efficient and effective employee onboarding programs is challenging, but the end-results show great overall improvements influencing the entire organization along with its reputation. Companies with well-designed and carefully implemented employee onboarding programs tend to have lower employee turnover rates, higher productivity, increased profits, increased employee satisfaction, better engagement, lower derailment rates, less unmet expectations, and thus less disappointment, higher talent retention, and better time to performance results.

Yet, even despite all the perks of having well-structured employee onboarding programs, the business world often oversees the phenomenon that can change everything for the better. Numerous companies implement only small portions and parts of the employee onboarding concept and thus do not enjoy the full benefits of having a great, long-term program.

Furthermore, as tourism and hospitality have enormous turnover rates and this concept positively influences retention and employee turnover, it is not difficult to understand the necessity of having employee onboarding programs in these two industries. Bigger hotel chains try to follow the trends and already have some sort of onboarding programs in place. Part of that group is Marriot International, InterContinental Hotels, Hilton Worldwide Holdings, Hyatt Hotels Corporation, Hostmark Hospitality Group, Four Seasons Hotels and Resorts, and others.

As a chain of hotels, LifeClass was a suitable choice for this thesis research. The conducted investigation included in-depth interviews with eleven LifeClass`s employees and six managers from different departments. Based on the answers, it was established that LifeClass hotels do not have a structured and standardized program, instead, every manager has its own onboarding approach. Consequently, some department managers try to convey important information about the organization on their own and familiarize newcomers with the bigger picture and the rules.

Since there is no standardized onboarding procedure, there is also not a strict onboarding timeframe, and the procedure does not start before the first day on the job. Besides that, although the literature considers orientation seminars and employee handbooks as essential,

LifeClass does not offer them. Additionally, they do not organize any special events for the newbies and have not digitalized any part of the onboarding process even though that is one of the current onboarding trends that comes with great recommendations.

Further on, most of the employees positively perceived their onboarding, but based on what LifeClass offers, the literature, and the possible subjectivity of the respondents, this finding should be taken with a reservation. In addition to that, as explained by the employees, the helpfulness and thus their satisfaction came from their managers and colleagues who were open for questions and collaboration, and not from a designated onboarding program.

Moreover, both the employees and the managers strongly agreed that there is nothing more essential than providing useful information at the right time all while being patient and supportive. Although there are other equally important elements, this finding is consistent with the literature and once again underlines the importance of information seeking as a newcomer`s trait.

The level of optimization remains without an accurate and reliable answer because even though both the managers and the employees ranked the onboarding as somewhat optimized and mildly efficient with space for improvement, the other findings did not match the statement. Due to that, a further research is needed. Additionally, as indicated LifeClass does not have a standardized and structured onboarding program intended for every newcomer which means their answers are purely based on different experiences and approaches.

After all, it is obvious that LifeClass hotels have a long road ahead of them and there are many ways to improve their onboarding approach. For a start, they should implement courses and practical training, as they were the most requested among employees and managers. Besides that, in order to experience better results, the missing elements and the gaps should be covered as soon as possible.

Nevertheless, this does not mean that LifeClass is not on the right track. Their department managers are highly devoted to helping newcomers and that commitment should be fully exploited to further improve the onboarding procedure. Their approaches include useful elements that if merged into one coherent program could potentially show great results for everyone at LifeClass.

REFERENCE LIST

1. Abbatiello, A., Agarwal, D., Bersin, J., Lahiri, G., Schwartz, J., & Volini, E. (2018). The rise of the social enterprise: 2018 Deloitte Global Human Capital Trends. Deloitte. Retrieved February 12, 2020, from https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/at/Documents/human-capital/at-2018-deloitte-human-capital-trends.pdf

2. Abell, A. (2004, January 15). Practical Tips for New-Employee Orientation. Retrieved November 8, 2019, from The chronicle of philanthropy: https://www.philanthropy.com/article/Practical-Tips-for/183661

3. Aberdeen. (2016, September 22). Perfecting the Onboarding Funnel. Retrieved December 2, 2019, from Aberdeen: https://www.aberdeen.com/hcm-essentials/perfecting-onboarding-funnel/

4. Aberdeen Group. (2008). All Aboard: Effective Onboarding Techniques and Strategies. Aberdeen Group.

5. Aberdeen Group. (2016). Onboarding Benchmark Report. Boston: Aberdeen Group Inc.

6. Abraham, S. (2012). Development of Employee Engagement Programme on the basis of Employee Satisfaction. Journal of Economic Development, Management, IT, Finance and M arketing, 4(1), 27-37.

7. Accor. (2012). Registration Document and Annual Financial Report 2011. Accor.

8. Accor. (2015). Registration Document and Annual Financial Report 2014. Accor.

9. Akdere, M., & Schmidt, S. W. (2008). Employee Perception of Quality Management: Effects of Employee Orientation Training. Online Submission.

10. AlBattat, A. R., Som, A. P., & Helalat, A. S. (2013). Overcoming Staff Turnover in the Hospitality Industry using Mobley`s Model. International Journal of Learining & Development, 3(6). doi:10.5296/ijld.v3i6.4844

11. Allen, T. D., McManus, S. E., & Russell, J. E. (1999). Newcomer Socialization and Stress: Formal Peer Relationships as a Source of Support. Journal of Vocational Behavior, 54(3), 453-470. doi:10.1006/jvbe.1998.1674

12. Allied HR. (2012). 2012 Allied Workforce Mobility Survey: Onboarding and Retention. AlliedHR. Retrieved February 7, 2020, from https://www.yumpu.com/en/document/read/11269917/2012-allied-workforce-mobility-survey-onboarding-and-retention

13. Anderson, N., & Ostroff , C. (1997). Selection as socialization. International Handbook of Selection and Assessment, 413-440.

14. Anderson-Gough, F., Grey, C., & Robinson, K. (2000). In the Name of the Client: THe Service Ethic in Two Professional Services Firms. Human Relations, 53(9), 1151-1174.

15. Anonymous. (2004). Hilton hits the heights of hotel service with HR initiative: Equilibrium scheme creates the right balance for guests. Human Resource Management International Digest, 12(6), 24-26. doi:10.1108/09670730410555756

16. Antonacopoulou, E. P., & Guttel, W. H. (2010). Staff induction practices and organizational socialization: A review and extention of the debate. Society and Business Review, 5(1), 22-47.

17. Ayres, A. (2014). The Impact of Managerial Styles and Job Satisfaction on Employee Turnover in the Hospitality Industry. UNLV Theses, Dissertations, Professional Papers, and Capstones.

18. Bates, S. (2013, May 28). Majority of New Hires Say Job Is Not What THey Expected. Retrieved November 20, 2019, from SHRM: https://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/hr-topics/employee-relations/pages/newhiresfeelmisled.aspx

19. Bauer, T. N. (2010). Onboarding new employees: Maximizing success. SHRM Foundation`s Effective practice Guideline Series.

20. Bauer, T. N. (2015). Onboarding: The power of connection. doi:10.13140/RG.2.1.4980.6163

21. Bauer, T. N., & Erdogan, B. (1996). Organizational socialization: The effective onboarding of new employees. APA Handbook of I/O Psychology, 3, 51-64.

22. Bauer, T. N., Bodner, T., Erdogan, B., Truxillo, D. M., & Tucker, J. S. (2007). Newcomer adjustment during organizational socialization: a meta- analytic review of antecedents, outcomes, and methods. Journal of applied psychology, 92(3), 707.

23. Bauer, T. N., Morrison, E. W., & Callister, R. R. (1998). Socialization Research: A Review and Directions for Future Research. Research in Personnel and Human Resources Management , 149-214.

24. Bauer, T., Erdogan, B., Caughlin, D., & Truxillo, D. (2018). Human resource management: People, data and analytics. SAGE Publications.

25. Becker, K., & Bish, A. (2019). A framework for understanding the role of unlearning in onboarding. Human Resource Management Review.

26. Bourne, P. G. (1967). Some observations on the psychosocial phenomena seen in basic training. Psychiatry, 30(2), 187-196.

27. Bradt, G., & Vonnegut, M. (2009). Onboarding: How to Get Your New Employees Up to Speed in Half the Time. Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

28. Brown, J. (2005). Employee Orientation: Keeping New Employees on Board. Management Resources, 20(02).

29. Brown, J. D. (2001). Using Surveys in Language Programs. Cambridge University Press.

30. Cable, D. M., Gino, F., & Staats, B. R. (2015). Reinventing Employee Onboarding. MIT Sloan Management Review.

31. Caldwell, C., & Peters, R. (2018). New employee onboarding- Psychological contracts and ethical perspectives. Journal of Management Development, 37(1), 27-39.

32. Caldwell, G. B., & Caldwell, C. (2016). Ten Classical Onboarding Errors. Business and Management Research, 5(4), 47-55.

33. Capterra. (n.d.). Onboarding Software. Retrieved November 19, 2019, from Capterra: https://www.capterra.com/onboarding-software/

34. CareerBuilder. (2017, May 11). Press Releases: Thirty-Six Percent of Employers Lack a Structured Onboarding Process for New Employees, According to New CareerBuilder Survey. Retrieved February 12, 2020, from CareerBuilder: http://press.careerbuilder.com/2017-05-11-Thirty-Six-Percent-of-Employers-Lack-

a-Structured-Onboarding-Process-for-New-Employees-According-to-New-CareerBuilder-Survey

35. Cesario, F., & Chambel, M. J. (2019). On-boarding new employees: a three-component perspective of welcoming. International Journal of Organizational Analysis. doi:10.1108/IJOA-08-2018-1517

36. Chikwe, A. C. (2009). The impact of employee turnover: The case of leisure, tourism and hospitality industry. Consortium Journal of Hospitality & Tourism, 14(1).

37. Cirilo, R., & Kleiner, B. H. (2003). How to orient employees into new positions successfully. Management Research News, 26, 16-26.

38. Cognology. (n.d.). Top 5 New Trends in Onboarding. Retrieved January 23, 2020, from Cognology: https://www.cognology.com.au/top-5-new-trends-onboarding/

39. Comparably. (n.d.). Joining Marriott - Employee Onboarding. Retrieved November 29, 2019, from Comparably: https://www.comparably.com/companies/marriott/joining-employee-onboarding

40. Cooper, S. (2015, December 18). How Personalized Onboarding Ignites Your Staff. Retrieved January 23, 2020, from eLearining Industry: https://elearningindustry.com/personalized-onboarding-ignites-staff

41. Cooper-Thomas, H. D., & Anderson, N. (2006). Organizational sozialization: A new theoretical model and recommendations for future research and HRM practices in organizations. Journal of Managerial Psychology, 21(5), 492-516.

42. Cooper-Thomas, H., Anderson, N., & Cash, M. (2012). Investigating organizational socialization: a fresh look at newcomer adjustment strategies. Personnel Review, 41(1), 41-55.

43. Dai, G., & De Meuse, K. P. (2007). A Review of Onboarding Literature. Lominger Limited, Inc., a subsidary of Korn/ Ferry International.

44. Davila, N., & Pina-Ramirez, W. (2018). Effective onboarding (What works in talent development). ATD press.

45. Denvir, A., & McMahon, F. (1992). Labour turnover in London hotels and the cost effectiveness of preventative measures. International Journal of Hospitality Management, 11(2), 143-154.

46. Depura, K., & Garg , M. (2012). Application of Online Gamification to New Hire Onboarding. Third International Conference on Services in Emerging Markets (pp. 153-156). CPS.

47. Derven, M. (2008). Management Onboarding. T+D, 49-52.

48. Dickson, D. (2008). Fostering employee engagement: A critical competency for hospitality industry managers.

49. Easwaramoorthy, M., & Zarinpoush, F. (2006). Interviewing for research. Imagine Canada.

50. Efficient Hire. (2019, April 18). 7 New Employee Onboarding Challenges, Solved. Retrieved November 19, 2019, from Efficient Hire: https://www.efficienthire.com/7-new-employee-onboarding-challenges-solved/

51. Elearning infographics. (2015, October 20). Use Digital Onboarding to Make New Employees Stick Around Infographic. Retrieved December 2, 2019, from Elearning infographics: https://elearninginfographics.com/use-digital-onboarding-make-new-employees-stick-around-infographic/

52. Ellis, A. M., Nifadkar, S. S., Bauer, T. N., & Erdogan, B. (2017). Your New Hires Won`t Succed Unless You Onboard Them Properly. Retrieved November 12, 2019, from Harvard Business Review: https://hbr.org/2017/06/your-new-hires-wont-succeed-unless-you-onboard-them-properly

53. Elshaer, A. M., & Marzouk, A. M. (2020). Labour in the tourism and hospitality industry: Skills, Ethics, Issues, and Rights. Apple Academic Press.

54. Feldman, D. C. (1976). A practical program for employee socialization. Organizational Dynamics, 5(2), 64-80.

55. Filstad, C. (2004). How newcomers use role models in organizational socialization. The Journal of Workplace Learning, 16(7), 396-409.

56. Ford, R. C., Sturman, M. C., & Heaton, C. P. (2011). Managing Quality Service in Hospitality: How Organizations Achieve Excellence in the Guest Experience. Nelson Education.

57. Ford, R. C., Wilderom , C. P., & Caparella, J. (2008). Strategically crafting a customer- focused culture: an inductive case study. Journal of Strategy and Management, 1(2), 143-167. doi:10.1108/17554250810926348

58. Four Seasons. (n.d.). Introductory Training. Retrieved December 1, 2019, from Four Seasons: https://jobs.fourseasons.com/home/working-at-fs/learning-and-development/introductory-training/

59. Graybill, J. O., Taesil Hudson Carpenter, M., Offord, J., Piorun, M., & Shaffer, G. (2013). Employee onboarding: identification of best practices in ACRL libraries. Library Management, 34(3), 200-218. doi:10.1108/01435121311310897

60. Grote, D. (2011, June 28). Making Onboarding Work. Retrieved December 2, 2019, from Harvard Business Review: https://hbr.org/2011/06/making-onboarding-work

61. Guilding , C., Lamminmaki, D., & McManus, L. (2014). Staff turnover costs: In search of accountability. International Journal of Hospitality Management, 36, 231-243.

62. Gupta, P. D., Bhattacharya, S., Sheorey, P., & Coelho, P. (2018). Relationship between onboarding experience and turnover intention: intervening role of locus of control and self- efficacy. Industrial and commercial training, 50(2), 61-80. doi:10.1108/ICT-03-2017-0023

63. Hacker, C. A. (2004). New Employee Orientation: Make it Pay Dividends for Years to Come. Information System Management, 21(1), 89-92.

64. Hamilton, B. A. (2008). Getting On Board: A Model for Integrating and Engaging New Employees. Partnership for Public Service.

65. Harpelund, C. (2019). Getting New Hires off to a Flying Start. Emerald Publishing Limited 2019. doi:10.1108/9781787695818

66. Heathfield, S. M. (2019, January 13). The Purpose of an Employee Handbook. Retrieved January 21, 2020, from The Balance Careers: https://www.thebalancecareers.com/what-does-an-employee-handbook-do-for-you-1918123

67. Heimburger, L., Buchweitz, L., Gouveia, R., & Korn, O. (2019). Gamifying Onboarding: How to Increase Both Engagement and Integration of New Employees. International Conference on Applied Human Factors and Ergonomics, 3-14.

68. Hilton. (2019). The Hilton Effect: 2018 Annual Report. Retrieved December 3, 2019, from

http://www.corporatereport.com/hilton/2018/ar/Hilton_2018_Annual_Report.pdf

69. Hilton. (n.d.). HR Training Supervisor, DoubleTree by Hilton. Retrieved December 3, 2019, from Hilton: https://www.jobs.hilton.com/job/HR-Training-Supervisor/J3L0WB78XY255XQCRVR

70. Holiday Inn. (2017). Employee Handbook. IHG. Retrieved December 2, 2019, from https://www.hialbarshadubai.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/APP79-EMPLOYEE-HANDBOOK-Updated-DEC.-2017.pdf

71. Hollister, R., & Watkins, M. D. (2019). How to Onboard New Hires at Every Level. Retrieved November 12, 2019, from Harvard Business Review: https://hbr.org/2019/06/how-to-onboard-new-hires-at-every-level

72. Hotel Management Staff. (2010, June 8). HR: Marriott employee training and development program. Retrieved November 29, 2019, from Hotel Management: https://www.hotelmanagement.net/human-resources/hr-marriott-employee-training-and-development-program

73. Hughes, C. J. (2002). HRM and universalism: is there one best way? International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management, 14(5), 221-228.

74. ICMR. (n.d.). Employee Training & Development at Ritz-Carlton: Fostering an Exceptional Customer Service Culture. Retrieved December 1, 2019, from ICMR: https://icmrindia.org/casestudies/catalogue/human%20resource%20and%20organization%20behavior/Employee%20Training%20&%20Development%20at%20Ritz-Carlton%20Fostering%20an%20Exceptional%20Customer%20Service%20Culture-Excerpts.htm

75. IHG. (n.d.). All of you at IHG. IHG. Retrieved December 2, 2019, from IHG: http://www.ourpeopleafrica.com/assets/en_for_web.pdf

76. Iverson, R. D., & Deery, M. (1997). Turnover culture in the hospitality industry. Human Resource Management Journal, 7(4), 71-82. doi:10.1111/j.1748-8583.1997.tb00290.x

77. Jerris, A. L. (1999). Human Resource Management for Hospitality. (D. Garza, Ed.) Prentice- Hall. Retrieved June 10, 2019

78. Jones, G. R. (1986). Socialization Tactics, Self-Efficacy, and Newcomers` Adjustments to Organizations. Academy of Management Journal, 29(2), 262-279.

79. Kaplan, B., & Mount, D. J. (2018). Engagement after 90 days: A key to success. FocuseED, 16(1). Retrieved December 1, 2019, from https://cdn2.hubspot.net/hubfs/2419901/FocusED_1st%20TT-2018.pdf

80. Kapp, K. (2014, March 19). Gamification: Separating Fact From Fiction. Retrieved November 9, 2019, from Chief Learning Officer: Gamification: Separating Fact From Fiction

81. Kime, C. (2014, November 13). 9 Surprising Employee Onboarding Statistics. Retrieved November 6, 2019, from Lessonly: https://www.lessonly.com/blog/9-surprising-employee-onboarding-statistics/

82. Klein , H. J., & Polin, B. (2012). Are Organizations On Board with Best Practices Onboarding? (C. R. Wanberg, Ed.) The Oxford Handbook of Organizational Socialization.

83. Klein, H. J., & Heuser, A. E. (2008). The learning of socialization content: A framework for researching orientating practices. Research in Personnel and Human Resource Management, 279- 336. Retrieved June 14, 2019, from https://www.emeraldinsight.com/doi/abs/10.1016/S0742-7301%2808%2927007-6

84. Klein, H. J., Fan, J., & Preacher, K. J. (2006). The effects of early socialization experiences of content mastery and outcomes: A mediational approach. Journal of Vocational Behavior, 68(1), 96-115.

85. Klein, H. J., Polin, B., & Sutton, K. L. (2015). Specific Onboarding Practices for the Socialization of New Employees. International Journal of Selection and Assessment, 23(3), 263-283.

86. Klinghoffer, D., Young, C., & Haspas, D. (2019, June 6). Every New Employee Needs an Onboarding "Buddy". Retrieved November 12, 2019, from Harvard Business Review: https://hbr.org/2019/06/every-new-employee-needs-an-onboarding-buddy

87. Krasman, M. (2015). Three Must-Have Onboarding Elements for New and Relocated Employees. Employment Relations Today, 42(2), 9-14.

88. Laurano, M. (2012). Onboarding: The Missing Link to Productivity. Aberdeen Group.

89. Laurano, M. (2013). Onboarding 2013: A New Look at New Hires. Aberdeen Group .

90. Laurano, M. (2015). Research Brief: The True Cost of a Bad Hire . Brandon Hall Group.

91. Lewkovich, A. (2017, March 1). Employee Onboarding vs. Employee Orientation: What`s the Difference? Retrieved June 12, 2019, from Your training provider: http://www.yourtrainingprovider.com/blog_main/employee-onboarding-vs.-employee-orientation-whats-the-difference

92. Lock, S. (2020, December 9). Hotel industry worldwide. Retrieved from Statista: https://www.statista.com/topics/1102/hotels/

93. Lombardi, M. (2011). Onboarding 2011: The Path to Productivity. Aberdeen Group.

94. Louis, M. R. (1980). Surprise and Sense Making: What Newcomers Experience in Entering Unfamiliar Organizational Settings. Administrative Science Quarterly, 25(2), 226-251. doi:10.2307/2392453

95. Luenendonk, M. (2016, November 27). 10 Tips for an Effective New Employee Job Orietation. Retrieved November 7, 2019, from Cleverism: https://www.cleverism.com/10-tips-effective-new-employee-orientation/

96. Macrotrends. (n.d.). Hilton Worldwide Holdings: Number of Employees 2011-2019 | HLT. Retrieved December 3, 2019, from Macrotrends: https://www.macrotrends.net/stocks/charts/HLT/hilton-worldwide-holdings/number-of-employees

97. Marriott International. (2019). Marriott International, Inc. 2018 Annual Report. Bethesda: Marriott International, Inc. Retrieved November 29, 2019, from https://marriott.gcs-web.com/static-files/8799734e-b9e0-4e53-b194-7bd24a381118

98. Mathis, R. L., & Jackson, J. H. (2008). Human Resource Management. South-Western Publishing Co.

99. Messmer, M. (2000). Orientation programs can be key to employee retention. Strategic Finance, 81, 12-14.

100. Mestre, M., Stainer, A., & Stainer, L. (1997). Employee orientation- the Japanese approach. Employee Relations, 19(5), 443-456. doi:10.1108/01425459710186322

101. Michelli, J. A. (2019, January 24). Training the Talented, the Ritz-Carlton Way. Retrieved November 30, 2019, from American Management Association: https://www.amanet.org/articles/training-the-talented-the-ritz-carlton-way/

102. Miller, V. D., & Jablin, F. M. (1991). Information Seeking during Organizational Entry: Influences, Tactics, and a Model of the Process. The Academy of Management Review, 16(1), 92-120. doi:10.2307/258608

103. Mornata, C., & Cassar, I. (2018). The role of insiders and organizational support in the learning process of newcomers during organizational socialization. Journal of Workplace Learning, 30(7), 562-575.

104. Morrison, E. W. (1993). Longitudinal Study of the Effects of Information Seeking on Newcomer Socialization. Journal of Applied Psychology, 78(2), 173-183.

105. Nakamoto, E. (2019, August 13). Onboarding vs New Employee Orientation: What`s the Difference? Retrieved November 6, 2019, from TAM Recruiting: https://www.tamrecruiting.com/blog/onboarding-vs-orientation

106. Narkhede, P. A. (2014). Employee turnover in hospitality industries: A study of service staff. JIMS, 8(5). doi:10.5958/0973-9343.2014.01230.7

107. ON24. (n.d.). Marriott Virtual Onboarding Environment. Retrieved November 2019, 29, from ON24: http://communications.on24.com/rs/848-AHN-047/images/ON24-Case-Study_Marriott-Voyage.pdf

108. Ongori, H. (2007). A review of the literature on employee turnover. African Journal of Business Management, 49-54.

109.   Ostroff, C., & Kozlowski, S. W. (1992). Organizational socialization as a learing process: The role of information acquisition. Personnel Psychology, 849-874.

110.   Pike, K. L. (2014). New Employee Onboarding programs and Person-Organization Fit: An Examination of Socialization Tactics. Seminar Research Paper Series.

111.   PRWeb. (2013). Allied HR IQ Announces Onboarding and Retention Results of 2013 Workforce Mobility Survey. Chicago: Allied Van Lines Inc. Retrieved February 10, 2020, from https://www.prweb.com/pdfdownload/11260003.pdf

112.   Quigley, J. (2014, October 22). Companies That Really Get Onboarding. Retrieved November 30, 2019, from Bamboo HR: https://www.bamboohr.com/blog/companies-really-get-onboarding/

113.   Reese, V. (2005). Maximizing Your Retention and Productivity with On-boarding. Employment Relations Today, 31(4), 23-29.

114.   Rivas, A., Bell, M. R., Staford Smith, H., Flynn, J., & Bradford Jr., J. A. (2015). Workforce Planning: Maximizing the New Reality of a Revolving Workforce. APTA. Retrieved Februrary 6, 2020, from https://www.apta.com/wp-content/uploads/Resources/members/memberprogramsandservices/leadershipapta/previous/PublishingImages/Team%205%20Report.pdf

115.   Robinson, A. (2018, May 29). Twitter, LinkedIn, and Google have Mastered Employee Onboarding, and You Can Too. Here`s How. Retrieved January 28, 2020, from Inc.: https://www.inc.com/adam-robinson/twitter-linkedin-google-have-mastered-employee-onboarding-you-can-too-heres-how.html

116.   Ross, W. E., Huang, K. H., & Jones, G. H. (2014). Executive onboarding: Ensuring the success of the newly hired department chair. Academic Medicine, 89(5), 728- 733. doi: 10.1097/ACM.0000000000000214

117.   Rowley, J. (2012). Conducting research interviews. Management Research Review, 35(3/4), 260-271.

118.   Sageer, A., Rafat, S., & Agarwal, P. (2012). Identification of Variables Affecting Employee Satisfaction and Their Impacts on the Organization. Journal of Business and Management, 5(1), 32-39.

119.   Saks, A. M., & Ashforth, B. E. (1997). Organizational Socialization: Making Sense of the Past and Present as a Prologue for the Future. Journal of Vocational Behavior, 51(2), 234-279.

120.   Saks, A. M., & Gruman, J. A. (2010). Organizational Socialization and Positive Organizational Behaviour: Implications for Theory, Research, and Practice. Canadian Journal of Administrative Sciences, 28(1), 14-26.

121.   Saks, A. M., Uggerslev, K. L., & Fassina, N. E. (2007). Socialization tactics and newcomer adjustment: A meta-analytic review and test of a model. Journal of Vocational Behavior, 70(3), 413-446.

122.   Saks, A., & Gruman, J. A. (2012). Getting newcomers on board: A review of socialization practices and introduction to socialization resources theory. The Oxford handbook of organizational socialization, 27-55.

123.   Saks, A., & Gruman, J. A. (2014). Making organizations more effective through organizational socialization. Journal of Organizational Effectiveness: People and Performance, 1(3), 261-280.

124.   Saldana, J. (2016). An Introduction to Codes and Coding. In The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers (3rd ed.). London: Sage.

125.   Sattigeri, R. C. (2016). Employee retention and commitment. International Journal of Engineering Technology, Management and Applied Sciences, 4(4), 77-81.

126.   Savitt, M. P. (2012). Welcome. Retrieved December 2, 2019, from Royle Printing: https://pubs.royle.com/article/Welcome/1003414/104171/article.html

127.   Schaefer, M. W. (2016, November 24). Why (and How) HR Needs to Act More Like Marketing. Retrieved January 20, 2020, from Harvard Business Review: https://hbr.org/2016/11/why-and-how-hr-needs-to-act-more-like-marketing

128.   Schmidt, S. W., & Akdere, M. (2007). Employee Perceptions of Vision and Leadership: Effects of Employee Orientation Training. Online submission .

129.   Self, T. T., & Gordon, S. (2019). The impact of coworker support and organizational embeddedness on turnover intention among restaurant employees. Journal of Human Resource in Hospitality & Tourism, 394-423. doi:10.1080/15332845.2019.1599789

130.   Shepherd, W. (2012). Designing for onboarding success at Huntington National Bank. Pre-conference Workshop, The Conference Board's Onboarding Conference. NY.

131.   Simpson, P., & Jenkins, P. (2015). Gamification and Human Resources: an overview. Brighton: Brighton Business School.

132.   Sims, D. (2011). Creative Onboarding Programs: Tools for Energizing Your Orientation Program. The McGraw-Hill.

133.   Sims, G. (n.d.). Employee onboarding vs. orientation: Why you need both. Retrieved November 6, 2019, from Insperity: https://www.insperity.com/blog/employee-onboarding-vs-orientation-need/

134.   Smart, B. D. (2012). Topgrading: The Proven Hiring and Promoting Method that Turbocharges Company Performance (3rd ed.). Penguin Group.

135.   Snell, A. (2006). Researching onboarding best practice: Using research to connect onboarding processes with employee satisfaction. Strategic HR Review, 5(6), 32-35.

136.   Speizer, I. (2004, August 2). Hilton Tries to Clone the Model Employee. Retrieved December 3, 2019, from Workforce: https://www.workforce.com/2004/08/02/hilton-tries-to-clone-the-model-employee/

137.   Stanley, M. L. (2012). An exploratory qualitative study of new employee organization onboarding from a human resource professional`s perspective (dissertation).

138.   Stein, M. A., & Christiansen, L. (2010). Successful Onboarding. McGraw-Hill Professional Publishing.

139.   Sullivan, J. (2006, October 30). From Average to World-Class: Your Onboarding/Orientation Program, Part 2. Retrieved December 5, 2019, from ERE: https://www.ere.net/from-average-to-world-class-your-onboardingorientation-program-part-2/

140.   Talent Management. (2013, December 5). How Careers Become Voyages at Marriott International. Retrieved November 29, 2019, from Talent management: https://talentmgt.com/2013/12/05/how-careers-become-voyages-at-marriott-international__trashed/

141.   Talmundo. (2016, June 6). Let`s get personal: A new kind of employee onboarding. Retrieved January 23, 2020, from Talmundo: https://www.talmundo.com/blog/2016/06/06/personalized-employee-onboarding

142.   The Ritz-Carlton. (n.d.). The Ritz-Carlton: Fact Sheet. Retrieved November 30, 2019, from The Ritz-Carlton: https://www.ritzcarlton.com/en/about/factsheet#Number_of_Hotels

143.   Tolbert, P. S., & Hall, R. H. (2009). Organizations: Structures, Processes and Outcomes (10th ed.). Pearson Education, Inc.

144.   UrbanBound . (2018, April 20). (Infographics) The Onboarding Statistics you need to know (with 2018 Updates). Retrieved February 10, 2020, from UrbanBound: https://www.urbanbound.com/blog/onboarding-infographic-statistics

145.   Van Maanen, J., & Schein, E. H. (1977). Toward a Theory of Organizational Socialization.

146.   Vogels, E. A. (2019, September 9). Millenials stand out for their technology use, but older generations also embrace digital life. Retrieved November 6, 2019, from Pew Research Center: https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/09/09/us-generations-technology-use/

147.   Wallace, K. (2007). Creating an Effective New Employee Orientation Program . Library Leadership & Management , 168-176.

148.   Walsh, W. B., & Savickas, M. L. (2005). Handbook of Vocational Psychology (3rd ed.). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

149.   Wanous, J. P. (1976). Organizational Entry: From Naive Expectations to Realistic Beliefs. Journal of Applied Psychology, 61(1), 22-29. doi:10.1037/0021-9010.61.1.22

150.   Wanous, J. P., & Reichers, A. E. (2000). New employee orientation programs. Human Resource Management Review, 10(4), 435-451.

151.   Warren, L. (2018, April 19). Welcome, newbies: 4 companies explain their new employee onboarding process. Retrieved January 28, 2020, from Built in NYC: https://www.builtinnyc.com/2018/04/19/4-companies-onboarding-process

152.   Watkins, M. D. (2019, May 10). 7 Ways to Set Up a New Hire for Success. Retrieved November 12, 2019, from Harvard Business Review: https://hbr.org/2019/05/7-ways-to-set-up-a-new-hire-for-success

153.   Welcome, D. (2014, June 30). The difference between onboarding and orientation. Retrieved January 28, 2020, from Govloop:

https://www.govloop.com/community/blog/the-difference-between-onboarding-and-orientation/

154. Wesson, M. J., & Gogus, C. I. (2005). Shaking Hands With a Computer: An Examination of Two Methods of Organizational Newcomer Orientation. Journal of Applied Psychology, 90(5), 1018-1026. doi: 10.1037/0021-9010.90.5.1018

155. Willyerd, K. (2012, December 21). Social Tools Can Improve Employee Onboarding. Retrieved November 12, 2019, from Harvard Business Review: https://hbr.org/2012/12/social-tools-can-improve-e

156. Yang, C., Guo, N., Wang, Y., & Li, C. (2019). The effects of mentoring on hotel staff turnover: Organizational and occupational embeddedness as mediators. International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management. doi:https://doi-org.nukweb.nuk.uni-lj.si/10.1108/IJCHM-07-2017-0398

157. Zoe, E. (2019, October 17). What Should Your Onboarding Kit Include (And Why Should You Offer One)? Retrieved January 27, 2020, from TalentLms: https://www.talentlms.com/blog/onboarding-kit-for-new-employees/

158. Zojceska , A. (2018, October 26). Employee Handbook: The What, Why, How and Who. Retrieved January 21, 2020, from TalentLyft: https://www.talentlyft.com/en/blog/article/221/employee-handbook-the-what-why-how-and-who

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Povzetek (Summary in Slovene language)

Vkrcanje zaposlenih ni nov pojav. Pravzaprav obstaja že desetletja, vendar sam izraz velja za relativno novega. Kot del upravljanja človeških virov je vkrcanje znano pod različnimi imeni, kot sta organizacijska socializacija in vključevanje zaposlenih.

V literaturi in v mnogih resničnih praktičnih primerih ni redko, da se vkrcanje zamenja z orientacijo, čeprav imata oba različna pomena. Za razliko od orientacije, ki je ozek enkratni dogodek, je vkrcanje celovit in dolgoročen proces, napolnjen z mešanimi čustvi. Kot vrsta zaporednih ukrepov imajo programi za vkrcanje zaposlenih ključno vlogo pri sprejemanju in pomoči novincem, da se prilagodijo novemu okolju, hkrati pa počasi postajajo produktivni člani. Izvajanje učinkovitih in efektivnih programov vkrcanja zaposlenih je zahtevno, vendar končni rezultati kažejo na splošne izboljšave, ki vplivajo na celotno organizacijo in njen ugled. Podjetja z dobro zasnovanimi in skrbno izvedenimi programi za vkrcanje zaposlenih imajo ponavadi nižje stopnje fluktuacije zaposlenih, večjo produktivnost, višji dobiček, večje zadovoljstvo zaposlenih, boljšo angažiranost, nižje stopnje iztirjenja, manj neizpolnjenih pričakovanj in s tem manj razočaranja, večjo ohranitev talentov in hitreje dosegajo rezultate.

Kljub vsem ugodnostim dobro strukturiranih programov za zaposlene pa poslovni svet pogosto nadzira pojav, ki lahko vse spremeni na bolje. Številna podjetja izvajajo le majhne dele koncepta vkrcanja zaposlenih in zato ne uživajo vseh prednosti velikega dolgoročnega programa.

Poleg tega imata turizem in gostinstvo izjemno stopnjo fluktuacije in ta koncept pozitivno vpliva na zadrževanje in fluktuacijo zaposlenih, zato ni težko razumeti potrebe po vključevanju programov zaposlenih v teh dveh panogah. Večje hotelske verige poskušajo slediti trendom in že imajo vzpostavljene nekakšne programe vkrcanja. Del teh skupin so Marriot International, InterContinental Hotels, Hilton Worldwide Holdings, Hyatt Hotels Corporation, Hostmark Hospitality Group, Four Seasons Hotels and Resorts in drugi.

Kot hotelska veriga je bil LifeClass primerna izbira za raziskavo te naloge. Izvedena raziskava je vključevala poglobljene razgovore z enajstimi zaposlenimi v LifeClassu in šestimi managerji iz različnih oddelkov. Na podlagi odgovorov je bilo ugotovljeno, da hoteli LifeClass nimajo strukturiranega in standardiziranega programa, temveč ima vsak upravitelj svoj pristop k vključevanju. Zato nekateri vodje oddelkov poskušajo sami posredovati pomembne informacije o organizaciji in novince seznaniti s širšo sliko in pravili.

Ker ni standardiziranega postopka za vkrcanje, tudi ni strogega časovnega okvirja za vkrcanje in postopek se ne začne pred prvim dnem na delovnem mestu. Poleg tega, čeprav literatura meni, da so orientacijski seminarji in priročniki za zaposlene bistveni, jih LifeClass ne ponuja. Poleg tega ne organizirajo nobenih posebnih dogodkov za novince in niso digitalizirali nobenega dela postopka vkrcanja, čeprav je to eden od trenutnih trendov vkrcanja, ki dobiva velika priporočila.

Nadalje je večina zaposlenih pozitivno zaznala svojo vključitev, vendar bi bilo treba na podlagi ugotovitev, ki jih ponuja LifeClass, literature in morebitne subjektivnosti anketirancev, to ugotovitev sprejeti s pridržkom. Poleg tega so, kot so pojasnili zaposleni, ustrežljivost in s tem njihovo zadovoljstvo prihajali s strani njihovih managerjev in sodelavcev, ki so bili odprti za vprašanja in sodelovanje, in ne iz določenega programa vkrcanja.

Poleg tega so se tako zaposleni kot managerji močno strinjali, da ni nič bolj bistvenega kot zagotavljanje koristnih informacij ob pravem času, hkrati pa biti potrpežljiv in nuditi

podporo. Čeprav obstajajo tudi drugi enako pomembni elementi, je ta ugotovitev skladna z literaturo in še enkrat poudarja pomen iskanja informacij kot lastnosti prišlekov.

Stopnja optimizacije ostaja brez natančnega in zanesljivega odgovora, ker čeprav so tako vodje kot zaposleni vkrcanje ocenili kot nekoliko optimizirano in blago učinkovito s prostorom za izboljšave, se druge ugotovitve ne ujemajo s trditvijo. Zaradi tega so potrebne nadaljnje raziskave. Poleg navedenega LifeClass nima standardiziranega in strukturiranega programa vkrcanja, namenjenega vsakemu novincu, kar pomeni, da njihovi odgovori temeljijo zgolj na različnih izkušnjah in pristopih.

Navsezadnje je očitno, da je pred hoteli LifeClass dolga pot in obstaja veliko načinov za izboljšanje njihovega pristopa k vkrcanju. Za začetek bi morali izvesti tečaje in praktično usposabljanje, saj so bili med zaposlenimi in managerji najbolj iskani. Prav tako je treba za čim boljše rezultate čim prej pokriti manjkajoče elemente in vrzeli.

Kljub temu to ne pomeni, da LifeClass ni na pravi poti. Njihovi vodje oddelkov so zelo predani pomoči novincem in to zavezanost je treba v celoti izkoristiti za nadaljnje izboljšanje postopka vkrcanja. Njihovi pristopi vključujejo koristne elemente, ki bi lahko, če bi se združili v en skladen program, potencialno pokazali odlične rezultate za vse v LifeClassu.

Appendix 2: Overview of the interviews

Manager 1

Nikolina: How do you understand employee onboarding?
Manager: What does that mean? What do you mean by that?
Nikolina: Okay, well onboarding is a series of events (including orientation) that helps newcomers to understand how to be successful in their day-to-day job and how their work contributes to the overall business
Manager: Mhm. How he is feeling this first day. It is very important that she accepted this work and the team, and then she will stay and try to do everything. If not she will leave the company at the beginning.
Nikolina: What do they expect from a newcomer?
Manager: I expect that he knows the language (Slovenian), because this is the main problem here. Most of the workforce is from outside and then we have problems with communication, understanding the things and rules.
Nikolina: Are there some courses?
Manager: No courses. Nothing like that. Now we will start with a Slovenian language course, but normally we do not have it.
Nikolina: How long does it take a newcomer to adjust?
Manager: More or less two weeks. Minimum two weeks, sometimes more.
Nikolina: How long does it take a newcomer to become a productive employee?
Manager: Independent in three weeks, a month. It depends on the person. Somebody is quick somebody is lazy. We are different people.
Nikolina: How would you describe the newcomer`s first day?
Manager: They work with another housekeeper. She shows them the work. They observe and learn how to use the housekeeping mobile app. One- two days just looking (observing) and then the newcomer starts working with help, someone more experienced. Before that, we explain a little bit about the organization itself.
Nikolina: How would you describe the newcomer`s first week?
Manager: At the beginning always works with a more experienced employee. We overlook the process and decide when they are ready to start working by themselves.
Nikolina: Is there an official meeting at the beginning?
Manager: No. we try to get this at least at the beginning. How to work, the policies and everything but so far nothing. There is no official meeting. Although, that would be very helpful. Years ago, there was a small video presentation telling them the policies and rules, but they did not learn anything. Although it is not a bad idea to have that at the beginning. It helps. You are sitting and looking at the presentation while someone is explaining to you so that makes it better. Visual tools plus explanation. Newcomers can learn more that way.
Nikolina: Would you prefer these official meetings to be done inside the hotel or outside the working hours?
Manager: To be done by someone else (outsourced).
Nikolina: Are there some other onboarding programs?
Manager: No other programs.
Nikolina: What is your opinion on implementing courses for each newcomer or something like a trial period?
Manager: Yes, that will help for sure. This outside firm that works with us, they must have education. They must get the people and then have 2, 5, 7 days of education and then when they understand a little bit to arrive to the process.
Nikolina: What is the biggest problem?

3

Managers: The main problem in housekeeping is that nobody knows anything. The housekeepers are poorly educated. They come without basic knowledge or knowing Slovenian.

Nikolina: How are the turnover rates at your department?

Managers: High turnover rates. Huge. This year there were no big impacts on turnover. We got less people that were more difficult to work with.

Nikolina: What are the most important elements of onboarding newcomers?

Manager: To explain that the work is not easy because they come and think the job is easy but we have standards that have to be followed. Unlike other departments, we have norms that have to be followed.

Nikolina: Is there any way the onboarding programs can be improved?

Manager: English course. Small video at the beginning together with an explanation. Regular, full-time employment. Some of the housekeepers are outsourced. It is easier to work with full-time employees. Different hotels, slightly different approaches. Some are only working with regular full-time employees others not.

Nikolina: What are some of the most common mistakes that happen in the beginning?

Manager: I know the beginning is difficult and you try to explain million different things, which is overwhelming, but I do not know what to do. We try to be nice, to explain slowly, many times.

Nikolina: In your opinion, how efficiently optimized are the offered onboarding programs? Why?

Manager: Can be better for sure, but we must find solution for better.

Nikolina: How can we make the onboarding process easier and more interesting?

Manager: First of all, we need to get enough employees. If I need 10 employees, I need to get 10 employees and not only 5. We do not have enough people and that is a problem. Double amount of work per employee. Everyone is stressed because there is no enough employees. Also language courses, education, accommodation, rooms where they can stay for less money, and higher payment because they always complain about low wages.

Nikolina: I have heard that some employees live in accommodation provided by the hotels, id that correct?

Manager: We have some rooms for these students. Not many, around 40 rooms. Somebody gets a room somebody not. It is 1 euro per day in their rooms, but those that do not have rooms provided by the hotels they pay 10 euros per day. There are 2 houses and rooms near hotels. It will be easier if there is accommodation provided for every employee, but that is not possible. Besides that, we have a canteen and provide meals for the employees, so that is not a problem. They get uniforms. The terms are good.

Nikolina: Yes, I understand. Last but not least, what is your opinion on mobile employee onboarding apps?

Manager: No. They do not understand nor Slovenian, nor English.

Nikolina: Thank you for your time.

Manager 2

Nikolina: How do you understand the term employee onboarding?

Manager: I do not understand it.

Nikolina: Onboarding is a series of events including orientation that helps newcomers to understand how to be successful in their day-to-day job and how their work contributes to the overall business

Manager: In that terms, okay, I understand now. I did not know the English term.

Nikolina: How long does it take a newcomer to become a productive employee?

Manager: It depends on themselves.

Nikolina: How long to adjust?

Manager: I think longer than I did. I think 4-5 months depending on the job position.

Nikolina: What do you expect from a newcomer?

Manager: That they love children, have great ideas and know different languages especially Italian. To be happy.

Nikolina: How would you describe the newcomers` first working day?

Manager: When they come, we tell them: you have to work in the morning then you have some free time and work in the evening. We tell them the rules at the beginning. If you accept, the rules you can stay here if not you can go.

Nikolina: How would you describe the newcomers` first working week? Are they working or just observing you?

Manager: No, I prefer they are not just watching, observing, so I can see how they work. Usually I do the schedule of the day and they all have to follow the list. I am always there helping them adjust.

Nikolina: How are the turnover rates at your department?

Manager: No high turnover rates in the department. Most of them are students and they stay all the summer or all the holidays. One student is coming back every holiday. The others not. We do not need other students.

Nikolina: What are the most important elements of onboarding newcomers?

Manager: I think the best thing you can do for newcomers is to tell them they are not alone and I will be there for everything they will need. I can tell something once, or ten times if they need it.

Nikolina: Is there an official meeting at the beginning?

Manager: Yes, we do that every time. First a meeting and then we decide whether to employee the person. If we like the energy we will employee the person.

Nikolina: Are there any special events organized for the newcomers?

Manager: Nothing official. No, it is only my boss and me so they meet the two of us. We are three in total.

Nikolina: Do you show them the hotels` facilities when they start working?

Manager: Yes, we show them the amenities/ facilities.

Nikolina: Are there any onboarding timeframes?

Manager: Nothing strict, just in my mind. Like 2-3 weeks. Then if you are not good you cannot work. I know the first week you need to see how it works, the second week you just need to do something alone and the third week you have to do it independently.

Nikolina: How satisfied are you with the current onboarding programs?

Manager: I am okay.

Nikolina: What are the missing elements that can make the onboarding process better?

Manager: Organization. The people who work in the offices above us do not fully understand the process. They do not know what it looks like working with people. Climbing the ladder is better.

Nikolina: How do you reduce the beginner`s stress?

Manager: Tell them the rules when they first come. Explain exactly how we work and how long we work, that is the most important thing.

Nikolina: What is your opinion on mobile employee onboarding app?

Manager: No idea how it would work. I am against technology.

Nikolina: What if that app includes elements such as employee handbook, videoss, and some other important information about the work process?

Manager: That would be helpful because then they will know how to work, but for the other things I am not sure. Video- yeah. I think it is good, that is great, but for the other things I think you need to go thought them in person to see what works.

Nikolina: If you can implement one action as part of each newcomer`s experience what would that be?
Manager: I could not make it easier.
Nikolina: Alright, thank you very much for your time.

Manager 3

Nikolina: Can you please explain me how you understand the term employee onboarding?
Yes, of course this is for me more important. Why? I am here now 7 years in LifeClass I have 28 years of work experience in tourism and of course the first impression of the guest is very important. When they come they need to feel comfortable, well received, welcomed with a smile, with all information. Also the bell boy is very important, for the car and luggage.
Nikolina: Okay, and what about when a new employee comes to work at the hotels?
Manager: I can only tell you about my own experience. I had a meeting with the boss and the sourcer/manager. I had an interview with them and then I started working. Of course on the first day I met my departmental boss and she showed me around the hotel.
Nikolina: Can you please describe me your first working day and your first working week?
Manager: A lot of information and a lot of work.
Did you immediately star working by yourself or someone was helping you?
Manager: Yes, I immediately started working by myself, of course with some more classified colleagues at the same time. I had support all the time but I was working alone.
How satisfied were you with your onboarding experience?
Manager: I was satisfied because I knew I wanted to do this job and that was of myself. I really started working, they showed me the computer program, I had already prepared myself at home with all brochures, all information so I decided to learn at home by myself and then the next day I started working like a normal employee.
Nikolina: Do you maybe have information on how are newcomers on boarded now?
Manager: They get information in the same way.
Nikolina: On the meeting, I heard that you are planning some courses in Izola, can you please tell me more about that?
Manager: Yes, those courses will be for the F&B department. They will start with some school.
Nikolina: We want to investigate more about that, are there some courses like that for the newcomers.
Manager: I do not have that information.
Nikolina: Was there something lacking in your own onboarding experience?
Manager: For sure, the most important for me is the communication about all reports. If this is okay at all levels here is just great to work. If the communication stops everything stops, there is a lot of disorientation, miscommunication, and sacrifice. If every department has all information and knows what is going on at all departments at the same time then there is no problem.
Nikolina: How efficiently optimized are the current onboarding practices?
Manager: This year is something special. A lot of employees did not come back because of covid standards and of course we have some space to do best, but I am sure that for that kind of situation we do well this year as well. Normal procedure, meeting with a manager, employer, and then with the departmental boss who gives them more information. We do very well. There is enough information provided for the newcomers. 50/50 employee needs to feel comfortable with any stress, with a lot of information at the beginning.
Nikolina: How long does it take a newcomer to become a productive member?

Manager: Depends on the employee. Everyone receives the same approach and then depends on the person. For me it is half-half, 50% of the worker and 50% of the manager. Of course, the employees need to feel welcome and comfortable with any stress, with a lot of information so they need help at the beginning. As I know they all receive that and then it depends on themselves. There is a lot of psychology behind that.

Nikolina: You said there is a lot of information at the beginning and that can be stressful, so how do you reduce the newcomers` stress?

Manager: That kind of stress was not entirely of myself but all information because LifeClass is huge and when you start working, you receive a million information. It is all together. LifeClass is huge, so when you start working you get a million information and that might be overwhelming but it cannot be changed. You need time to learn. But, that kind of information transferring it is just that way. There is so much information and you need time to learn. Maybe the departmental managers or the top manager should have some courses for the newcomers. For example the waiter should have a training for one week or ten days, something like a stimulation so they will feel like they are working but can learn what to expect.

Nikolina: Besides that, what would you add to improve the onboarding experience?

Manager: For sure, my opinion is the good employee is good to have at the company not just for the high season but for the entire year.

Nikolina: Yes, that is the purpose of this research to find a way to reduce the turnover rates. How do onboarding programs benefit LifeClass?

Manager: For sure they will feel more welcome, they will receive the right energy that the company cares for them and that the employers have a long term goal of giving regular contracts to good workers.

Nikolina: What is your opinion on the "buddy" approach?

Manager: Yes, it is helpful if the buddy person a correct and positive professional.

Nikolina: What is your opinion on a mobile employee onboarding app?

Manager: Yeah, at this time a meeting can be done over Zoom or something like that.

Nikolina: How do you envision the future onboarding? Will something change due to the pandemic?

Manager: Everything will be completely different. This is just the start of a completely new reorganization.

Nikolina: Is there anything you would like to add to make the onboarding experience better?

Manager: For my opinion more individual contact and more practical information. They need trainings before they start working.

Nikolina: Thank you very much for your time.

Manager 4

Nikolina: How do you understand the term employee onboarding?

Manager: What kind of sense?

Nikolina: Employee onboarding or also known as employee induction and organizational socialization is a series of events that help newcomers understand how to be successful in their day-to-day job and how their work contributes to the overall business.

Manager: Yes, all right.

Nikolina: How long does it take a newcomer to become a productive employee?

Manager: It depends on what kind of experience they have, how much experience they have, and what is the energy they give into the work.

Nikolina: How do you onboard newcomers?

Manager: I am quiet new here, since May this year. When I came here they showed me my computer, gave me some instructions about the program and that was it. I needed some time

to get in touch with the employees, to get to know them, and also to understand the IT infrastructure. It takes a lot of time and a lot of information can be given upfront instead of searching them on daily basis. My way is to talk to newcomers a lot. You can imagine, when someone is coming is afraid, not completely confident and you have to help him. Here is not the end of the story you have to be with them the entire time. You have to communicate with them the whole time; you have to ask them, you have to remember them. If there is a positive organizational climate that allows people to think and make some suggestions, which inspires the employees to be polite and honest then you are on the right way. Then there is a possibility to have huge success if not you can go down, down, down, and more down.

Nikolina: Of course. Is there a unified onboarding program for all LifeClass hotels?

Manager: In some companies, the HR department has clear onboarding rules and programs; here we do not have that. Each department has its own approaches.

Nikolina: Are there any deadlines for the onboarding programs?

Manager: What program? Do we have a program? It is a never-ending story, but it is especially important at the beginning. You always have to talk to your employees and motivate them. Some kind of push every now and then. There are different approaches but you have to recognize the appropriate approach for every person.

Nikolina: Are there any pre-meetings for the newcomers?

Manager: Definitely.

Nikolina: Is there a booklet right now? Is there some onboarding brochure for the newcomers?

Manager: I do not know it. I think there is nothing like that.

Nikolina: Is there an organized orientation meeting where the hotel represents itself?

Manager: No, I do not think so.

Nikolina: Is there an official meeting at the beginning?

Manager: No, only an unofficial one organized by me. People are easily putting out the trouble at unofficial meetings. If we have an official meeting, two hours later nobody knows what are the responsibilities, the dates, and the deadlines.

Nikolina: What is your opinion on the "buddy" approach?

Manager: Could be helpful. I would like to see that in action.

Nikolina: How satisfied are you with the current onboarding programs?

Manager: Because of my own experience, I try to do much more. We could be better. We have to be braver and more carrying. We need a sense of the business. We have to recognize the chances to make bigger profits.

Nikolina: What are the missing elements that can make the onboarding process better?

Manager: The company itself does not provide enough general information at the beginning. Every department/ manager has to do it itself. There is no one unique form of onboarding. Besides that, a lot of students work here and we should have an internal codex for those employees who are at the reception, the restaurants etc. Codex actually exists but I do not know it. If you have 100-150 employees among them 50-60 who are newcomers for the season it would be very appropriate when they come here that you can give them a small book with the codex and the items that they need to respect and what is not acceptable.

Nikolina: What are the most important elements of employee onboarding?

Manager: A lot of work has to be done with the newcomers. Support and encouragement are very important. There was one young girl who came here asking for a job. I asked her if she has some experience and she felt very uncomfortable because she had no experience whatsoever. She was very scared that she will not get the job which is why I just immediately said: great we will teach you everything and she was not afraid anymore, she immediately smiled. You know, you have to treat different people in different ways. Besides that, having

enough time to explain to them the standards and make them feel the aim of the company. That approach would be very helpful and everything would be better.

Nikolina: What are the most common mistakes?

Manager: Overwhelming them with information and not being supportive enough. Mistakes are part of the learning. Not boosting the newcomer`s confidence. Also if we are not well organized, if we do not recognize the chances then it is not the right way.

Nikolina: How can we improve the onboarding experience?

Manager: The company should create standardized onboarding programs. The other thing can be the middle management from each department to take care of the onboarding activities explaining the most important parts, who we are, etc. Written brochures are important and a must-have because even if you have a meeting where you explain stuff newcomers can easily forget information, so they need to have these brochures at home. I want the codex because that will make us more presentable.

Nikolina: Do you save resources in the long-run?

Manager: I do not think so. You do not have time to show each newcomer how to work. Maybe it is increasing the resources because the result of the work is not always straightforward.

Nikolina: How are the turnover rates in your department?

Manager: There are many lost opportunities to decrease turnover rates and keep the employees.

Nikolina: What is your opinion on mobile onboarding apps?

Manager: Yes, but only if it is a real app, not just some social interaction tools like Viber and stuff.

Nikolina: If you can implement one action as part of each newcomer`s experience what would that be? What is crucial?

Manager: We need to take time for the newcomers.

Manager 5

Nikolina: How do you understand the term employee onboarding?

Respondent 6: What do you mean by this?

Nikolina: Employee onboarding or also known as employee induction and organizational socialization is a series of events that help newcomers understand how to be successful in their day-to-day job and how their work contributes to the overall business.

Manager: Okay, okay.

Nikolina: How do you onboard newcomers?

Manager: We have a standard of how to accept a newcomer and what he needs to learn. He gets a schedule, what he needs to know and learn, information about the program, the machines, and interaction with the other departments of the hotel.

Nikolina: How would you describe the newcomer`s first day?

Manager: When you come here the first time, you first go to the HR office. They give you the documents, a badge with your name (nametag), and a chip for checking in and out of work. After that, you come to the reception and we give you a uniform, show you where to check-in and out of work, show you around the hotel and explain to you the safety hazards/measures. We explain to you what to do in case of an emergency, like if there is a fire, or what to do in case someone is hurt. We show you the emergency exits and how to call 112. We explain the schedules and how the reception is organized. When they come to the reception, we have a presentation and give the basic information about working at the reception. We give information on what to do when a guest comes in and how to approach him. How to explain where the parking is, where to put the luggage or where is the restaurant. We give the newcomer enough basic information so he will not feel useless and

get a sense of the work. We want him to be able to explain something on the first day. Always the reception`s chef welcomes the newcomers, except on those rare occasions when the chef is not at work, so someone more experienced does the welcoming. In other words, the first day is organizational. We show him the hotel`s facilities (wardrobe, canteen), describe the hotel, give information about the hotel and how to navigate around, all while representing the organization`s identity.

Nikolina: How would you describe the newcomer`s first week/month?

Manager: You are never alone during the first two-three weeks for sure or almost a month depending on the person. Then we start to learn the program. The improvement depends on how busy we are and how fast the newcomer learns. We see the program we use. We try to explain how to make room keys. First, maybe the second day of the first week they learn how to check in a guest, how to put it in a computer, particular situations, and how to approach the guest. In the beginning, the newcomer is observing the check-in process. He starts to do new tasks when he feels ready and know what to do. We ask the newcomer how you feel about doing a check-in, so we first assist him. They first role-play, have a stimulation of checking-in a guest. They ask the newcomer about the procedure and to explain how everything is done. We try to be as discrete as possible in front of the guest, so they won`t notice they are dealing with some new. Or, we are very upfront and tell them that this is a newcomer and it is his beginning, so they will know from the start. Talking to the guest is complicated and we try to teach them everything they need to know before throwing them into the fire.

Nikolina: Are there regular check-ups?

Manager: It is not standardized. It depends on the department and the chef. The chef usually asks the newcomer: how is it going, do you have enough information, is something unclear, etc. These are tot standard check-up, we usually do this when we have more free time.

Nikolina: Is there a unified onboarding program for all LifeClass hotels?

Manager: Just for the reception department. Every department has its own onboarding programs and approaches.

Nikolina: How efficiently optimized are the current onboarding programs?

Manager: We try to do stuff in a way that is easier for us. It would be easier for us if there is some organized seminar or training at the beginning so that the newcomers will hear what they need to know before starting to work at the reception and also to know more about the program.

Nikolina: What are some of the most common mistakes during the onboarding period?

Manager: We try not to make mistakes. Sometimes the higher management sends us a newcomer during the busiest hours and then we cannot dedicate time for him. We have to say "Please wait". This is rare but it has happened because they do not always check with us before they send the newcomer.

Nikolina: What are the most important elements of employee onboarding?

Manager: Take time to explain. The beginning period and the onboarding experience influence the decision of whether to stay or leave the hotel.

Nikolina: What are the missing elements that can make the onboarding process better?

Manager: We never have enough staff at the reception. They never stop working. It is difficult to take the time to explain everything to the newcomer because there is a lot of work.

Nikolina: How can we improve the onboarding experience?

Manager: We would like to have fewer persons at once.

Nikolina: Do you think that some courses might be helpful?

Manager: We want to have a course with the programs because they are very complicated. Also, we like to have a presentation, but not only one in one day because there is a lot of

information that needs to be transferred. On these presentations, we want to explain to the newcomers what to do and how to approach the guest because you cannot remember everything in one day. That does not work.

Nikolina: How can we reduce the newcomer`s stress?

Manager: Put the right person at the right hotel. The newcomer should know in which hotel he is going to work when he applies for the job because working at some hotels is much more stressful than others. In the smaller and calmer hotels, there is more time to teach the newcomers. Besides that, we have tried to stretch the time in which we gave the information. (Disseminate information over a longer period). In two weeks, you will see the bigger picture. Give less information at the beginning, to dose the information. We tried to postpone. We always say: if you see that you have already received enough information for the day, just tell us but again it depends on the person but we have not noticed some significant results.

Nikolina: How are the turnover rates in your department?

Manager: Some receptionists work for a longer period. But, we also have some new ones. It is always very difficult if there are more than two new receptionists in the same season. Every season one or two go away, but we also have some that stay. Two receptionists work here for more than 10 years.

Nikolina: What is your opinion on a mobile employee onboarding app?

Manager: It is good if it is standardized. It is okay, but again it depends on the person. Now we do everything on paper. We give them papers about the rules, guidelines, etc.

Nikolina: If you can implement one action as part of each newcomer`s experience what would that be?

Manager: First the training part and also to divide the newcomers so there is some time between their coming. That way we can give them more attention and dedicate time to them. Presentation of what we do before they come to the reception because once they are there they have to talk to the guest and have to have some basic understanding of the working process.

Manager 6

Nikolina: How do you understand the term employee onboarding?

Manager: I am not sure I understand you.

Nikolina: Employee onboarding or also known as employee induction and organizational socialization is a series of events that help newcomers understand how to be successful in their day-to-day job and how their work contributes to the overall business.

Manager: Of course.

Nikolina: How long does it take a newcomer to adjust and become a productive member of your team?

Manager: It depends on the person. Approximately 5-6 days to adjust to the new surrounding.

Nikolina: How do you onboard newcomers?

Manager: When a newcomer comes, we try to teach him something from the very first day. We try to show him the way the company and the department functions. Then we introduce him to his duties and show him the working process for a few days. We explain our goals, what we want to achieve, and how we do that. No newcomer is left alone (left by himself). When a newcomer comes in, he needs to feel welcomed. It is very difficult for someone to be left by himself especially if that is his first time in our hotels. We try to decrease stress and fear. We want to make a newcomer feels like he has been here for over a month although he has been working only for a few days. We help with the adjustment and the paperwork. On the first day we give him his uniform and take him to the facility where he needs to work.

We introduce him to his colleagues from the department and then the manager of the department takes it over. He is introducing him to the workload and the duties for a couple of days because we all need some time to adjust. After a few days, we let him work, but we still observe and direct him.

Nikolina: Is there one unified onboarding approach for all departments?

Manager: Other departments have different approaches, but yes every department has some sort of onboarding programs. Maybe they are not like ours and are a bit more modest but yes there are some onboarding programs. We have a more specific approach because of the workload and its difficulty. There is nothing general or unified for the entire chain hotel. Every department has its own approaches.

Nikolina: How satisfied are you with the current onboarding programs?

Manager: Very satisfied. I learned from my own experience.

Nikolina: How efficiently optimized are the current onboarding programs?

Manager: In my department, I would not really add much. The approach in my department has shown good results.

Nikolina: Do you save resources in the long-run?

Manager: We are saving energy and time, but we also increase productivity which is important.

Nikolina: Are there official meetings at the beginning?

Manager: Yes. We sit down to talk to every newcomer for about an hour or an hour and a half sometimes more if we see that the person is very frightened. We talk about the expectations in a way that is not too strict and frightening. They are afraid of the adjusting period, so they ask themselves: how are we going to adjust, is everything going to be okay, etc.

Nikolina: Are there unofficial meetings at the beginning?

Manager: Every day there is a short meeting where we talk about the current situations and plans. At those meetings, everyone is encouraged to share his opinion or maybe bring up some problems. Besides that, our doors are always open for anyone who wants to talk to us. We always find time for our people. The employees are important to us.

Nikolina: Do you have something like role-playing or stimulations?

Manager: No. we do not have that because we have not considered it as important. We cannot predict every situation.

Nikolina: What are some of the most common mistakes that happen during employee onboarding?

Manager: When you do not pay attention to what the other person is saying. In other words when you only think about how to achieve the goals written in your mind. Many times that can be messy. If everything is clear from the beginning then we will have a nice collaboration.

Nikolina: What are the most important elements of employee onboarding?

Manager: Everything is important. How we explain the work activities and when. How do we give information. Then how welcome does he feel and how he perceives his onboarding. It is very important to feel like he is in the right place because if he feels that way he works better, puts more effort, there is no stress and is more positive. Welcoming and onboarding a newcomer plays an important role in creating positive feelings about the job. The first impression is very important. Besides that, the mutual understanding is also very important.

Nikolina: How do you decrease the newcomer`s stress?

Manager: We always say that mistakes happen and that is okay.

Nikolina: How are the turnover rates in your department?

Manager: High turnover rates because of seasonal work. We employ students to manage the workload.

Nikolina: How can we improve the onboarding process?

Manager: Right people at the right places and right directions/explanations/information.

Nikolina: What is your opinion on a mobile employee onboarding app?

Manager: Good thing. It would be nice to have that. It would be helpful. We do not have it now. It would be good because people do not have enough time to learn and that would be easily usable. With an application, it would be easier. You can find more data, information, and see whatever you want whenever you want. You can choose what to read and when. You will have everything in place, which is important. Although it needs to be based on psychology. It needs to give advices on how and why.

Nikolina: If you can implement one action to improve the onboarding experience, what would that be?

Manager: Education. For a long period, the hotels have not had some educational seminars or courses. Now we are planning some courses because we noticed that those courses could be very useful. These courses will be available to many employees.

Employee 1

Nikolina: How do you understand the term employee onboarding?

Employee: I am not sure.

Nikolina: Okay, so employee onboarding or also known as employee induction and organizational socialization is a series of events that help newcomers understand how to be successful in their day-to-day job and how their work contributes to the overall business.

Employee: Mhm, mhm, okay.

Nikolina: What did you expect when you first started working for LifeClass hotels?

Employee: I do not know. I do not remember, but I did not have some special expectations. Some expectations were met some not. The onboarding expectations were met.

Nikolina: How would you describe your first day at LifeClass?

Employee: I was excited and a bit frightened. I was noticing the people around me and observing what they are doing and what I should do. I was learning simple information like when and where (when does something open, where to go, and other usual stuff).

Nikolina: How would you describe the first week?

Employee: Someone was always with me. It depends on the personality and how fast you learn, but in the beginning, you always get help from someone more experienced. I was getting along slowly but surely.

Nikolina: How long did it take you to adjust?

Employee: In a week I pretty much learned how to work alone. When I was facing a problem or I did not know how to do something I always used to call a more experienced colleague. For other people might be different. Becoming a productive member of the team depends on the character of the person.

Nikolina: How did the management treat you?

Employee: It was a nice welcome. They helped me a lot and showed me what to do.

Nikolina: How efficiently optimized is the employee onboarding?

Employee: It is not perfect. It is not 100% but there is some stuff lacking. It can be better.

Nikolina: How satisfied were you with your onboarding experience?

Employee: I was pretty pleased with the way they noticed me and put me in the job process. I was satisfied.

Nikolina: What were the lowest or weakest points of your onboarding experience?

Employee: Communication between departments. I know why, people are overwhelmed with work sometimes, but that miscommunication or lack of communication creates

problems. Sometimes you do not get clear and realistic instructions from the upper management. They do not have the bigger and realistic picture.

Nikolina: What was lacking?

Employee: I was pretty much given all the information I needed to start. Clearly, when you start, it is best not to be given too much information because then you are overwhelmed with information and you are confused, do not know what to do or how.

Nikolina: What were the most interesting parts of your onboarding experience?

Employee: The whole experience was interesting because it was new. I met new people and cultures.

Nikolina: What were some of the best practices?

Employee: Everything in the onboarding process is okay. It is lacking some small things but then it gets better. It is easy in the beginning because you have just simple tasks, but then it gets more difficult.

Nikolina: What are the most important elements of onboarding?

Employee: Patience. I am a person who wants to know everything and asks many questions, so definitively patience. Getting along. Getting all information.

Nikolina: How can we improve the onboarding process?

Employee: Communication between the highest management and first-line employees. Two-way communication, not only one-way. We feel like we have no voice and saying. Employees should be asked what the hotels could do better.

Nikolina: Was there an official meeting at the beginning?

Employee: I received some helpful notes and tips about the rules. I was pleased.

Nikolina: Was there a "buddy" system and/or some organized events for the newcomers?

Employee: Some of my colleagues who have been working here for a couple of years tell me that in the past they used to have organized events, volleyball, basketball once a week paid by the company, but now there is nothing like that.

Nikolina: Were there any stimulations or role-playing?

Employee: Yes, there was something like that. Not real role-playing but similar.

Nikolina: Were you asked about your feeling?

Employee: Yes, I was asked.

Nikolina: What helped you reduce the stress from starting a new job in a new surrounding?

Employee: The feedback from the guest. When someone else compliments you. When you hear: you have done a great job.

Nikolina: What is your opinion on mobile employee onboarding apps? What features would you like to see in the app?

Employee: Languages and psychological questions about characteristics.

Nikolina: If you can implement one action to make the onboarding experience better what would that be?

Employee: First, be a guest then an employee.

Employee 2

Nikolina: Can you please explain your onboarding experience? What were you doing during the first day and the first week, who gave you the necessary information and who introduced you to the team.

Employee: Well, my supervisor gave me the necessary information and also he was the one who introduced me to the team. On the first day I first had an inspection of health. Then during the first week I got to know the company.

Nikolina: What was happening during your first few months?

Employee: I got to know the more complex processes.

Nikolina: Were there any special meetings and events?

Employee: No, no there were not.
Nikolina: Okay, what about an orientation seminar?
Employee: Nothing official.
Nikolina: Did you maybe have a mentor or a buddy?
Employee: No, neither that.
Nikolina: How long was the onboarding period?
Employee: About three months. First, I had to learn the HACCP standards, then get familiar with the menus and the wine list, learn the ingredients that go into every dish, how to serve, and so many other things.
Nikolina: How did you perceive the whole onboarding period and why?
Employee: Honestly, swim and survive. It was stressful and getting documentation is definitely not a strong side, but I really like collecting information about the organization and there was good cooperation with co-workers.
Nikolina: How satisfied are you with the onboarding programs and how helpful were they for you?
Employee: There were no programs.
Nikolina: What were the lowest, weakest points of your onboarding experience?
Employee: Undefined onboarding programs and also the opinion of middle management means too much, rumors can destroy new one.
Nikolina: What were the highlights of your onboarding experience?
Employee: Collecting information and having my colleagues.
Nikolina: In your opinion, how optimized are the offered onboarding programs?
Employee: Unfortunately, very low.
Nikolina: What are the most important elements of onboarding newcomers?
Employee: To involve and know whose word weights the most.
Nikolina: How can we improve the onboarding experience?
Employee: With onboarding programs and mentor. They need to define the onboarding programs and add mentors.
Nikolina: Thank you very much for your time.

Employee 3

Nikolina: Can you please explain your onboarding process? Who provided you with information and who introduced you to your coworkers?
Employee: The experience lasted for 1 month. There was one coworker that is now retired who helped me a lot. She was my mentor, she introduced me to the team and informed me about everything.
Nikolina: Can you describe the first day and the first week?
Employee: On the first day I met coworkers and then the first week I started with stacking documents
Nikolina: What was happening during the first months?
Employee: I posted documents and stacked them in binders.
Nikolina: Okay, and what about attending some special meetings or events organized by LifeCLass?
Employee: There was a meeting with my external collaborators.
Nikolina: Was there an official orientation seminar presenting you the organization`s values, mission, vision and etc?
Employee: No, I was getting that information from my mentor.
Nikolina: How did you perceive your onboarding experience and why?
Employee: It was quick and instructive. I felt very satisfied and happy.
Nikolina: What was the most interesting part of your onboarding?

Employee: The most interesting part was learning more about the organization.
Nikolina: What went well?
Employee: Posting materials on ASCOTA machine.
Nikolina: What were the lowest points of your onboarding experience?
Employee: Late delivery of documents to accounting.
Nikolina: So, how satisfied are you with the onboarding programs and how helpful were they for you?
Employee: I am very satisfied, it was so good that it stayed in my memory.
Nikolina: In your opinion, how optimized are the offered onboarding programs?
Employee: Mmm, it depends who carried it out.
Nikolina: What would you add to the onboarding experience?
Employee: Much more patience of the person introducing you in the stuff because you cannot know everything and suddenly.
Nikolina: How can we improve the onboarding experience?
Employee: You must have good mentors. You need to explain all the relevant things and leave out the superficialities.
Nikolina: The last question, what are the most important elements of onboarding newcomers?
Employee: An important element is the explanation and patience to make onboarding good.
Nikolina: Thank you very much for your time.

Employee 4

Nikolina: Can you please explain your onboarding process?
Employee: There were not any official programs, but I would say that the entire process lasted for two months.
Nikolina: Can you describe your first day and the first week?
Employee: The first day, I was learning about reception work and the next days I was doing some smaller tasks, learning about the program and the hotel.
Nikolina: What was happening during the first months?
Employee: After the first month, I was doing all tasks on reception.
Nikolina: Who provided you with information and who introduced you to the team?
Employee: My manager, head of department introduced me to my colleagues and was the person who gave me information along with the other employees.
Nikolina: Was there an official orientation seminar?
Employee: You mean something where they tell us about rules and stuff?
Nikolina: Yes.
Employee: No, we did not have that. I learned some of the rules from my manager.
Nikolina: Okay. Were there and special meetings or events?
Employee: No, nothing like that.
Nikolina: Did you have a mentor or a buddy?
Employee: Yes, I did, the head of department was my mentor.
Nikolina: How did you perceive the onboarding experience?
Employee: It was very positive, everything went well. I felt very welcome.
Nikolina: What were the most interesting parts of the onboarding experience?
Employee: Meeting my coworkers. That was the best and most interesting part. Other staff was very welcoming.
Nikolina: How satisfied are you with the onboarding programs you went through?
Employee: Somewhat satisfied.
Nikolina: How helpful were the onboarding programs for you?
Employee: It was OK. It was helpful.

Nikolina: Can you please elaborate?
Employee: I am saying this mostly because of the manager and the colleagues. They were amazing and very helpful.
Nikolina: In your opinion how optimized are the offered onboarding programs?
Employee: Somewhat optimized. It can be better…
Nikolina: How can we improve the onboarding experience?
Employee: Maybe some courses, that would be helpful.
Nikolina: Last but not least, what are the most important elements of onboarding newcomers?
Employee: To give as much information as possible in very short time.
Nikolina: Thank you for your time.

Employee 5

Nikolina: Can you please explain your onboarding process?
Employee: What exactly would you like to know?
Nikolina: Well, for example who introduced you to the team and who provided you with information?
Employee: All of that was done by the head of the department. He introduced me to my coworkers and gave me information.
Nikolina: Can you please describe your first day and the first week?
Employee: I was working with my supervisor during that period.
Nikolina: What was happening during the first few months?
Employee: I was doing everything by myself, but the supervisor was helping me in case I needed it.
Nikolina: Was there an official orientation seminar?
Employee: At the beginning? No.
Nikolina: Were there any special meetings or events?
Employee: Some of my colleagues who have been working here for a couple of years tell me that in the past they used to have organized events, but now there is nothing like that.
Nikolina: Did you have a mentor or a buddy during your onboarding?
Employee: Yes, I did have a buddy.
Nikolina: How long was the onboarding period?
Employee: One month plus two months probationary period.
Nikolina: How did you perceive the whole onboarding experience and why?
Employee: With responsibility and good faith to learn.
Nikolina: Nice and how did you feel during that period?
Employee: I was proud to be part of LifeClass and thus felt motivated.
Nikolina: What were the most interesting parts of your onboarding?
Employee: Work with the leader and get to know the wider LifeClass organization and all departments.
Nikolina: What went well and what did not?
Employee: Mutual relations did not go well, but the communication and the dispute resolution work were fine.
Nikolina: What were the highlights of your onboarding experience?
Employee: The information, the computer program was extensive but interesting.
Nikolina: What were the lowest parts of your onboarding experience and why?
Employee: Mutual cooperation and information between departments.
Nikolina: How satisfied are you with the offered onboarding programs?
Employee: Mildly satisfied. There are things that can be added and changed.
Nikolina: How helpful were the offered programs for you?

Employee: I would say it was okay. It could have been better, but I liked it.

Nikolina: Can you please elaborate?

Employee: I mean it was helpful because I could rely on my supervisor for almost everything.

Nikolina: In your opinion, how optimized are the offered onboarding programs?

Employee: I would say medium to weak. They need to change the approach and add more ongoing introduction and training before work contract.

Nikolina: How can we improve the onboarding experience?

Employee: Like I said before, long-term cooperation, more ongoing introduction and training.

Nikolina: At last, according to you what are the most important elements of onboarding newcomers?

Employee: Giving the right information about the company, managers, pre-trainings, organization, communication, and motivating successful employees.

Employee 6

Nikolina: How did you feel before your first workday?

Employee: I was a bit nervous and anxious, but that did not last long.

Nikolina: What was it like for you when you started working at LifeClass hotels?

Employee:It was okay, I liked it.

Nikolina: How would you describe your first day at LifeClass?

Employee: The boss of the department showed me the facilities and explained what is what. After that she explained the main activities and told me more about my duties.

Nikolina: How long did it take you to adjust?

Employee: I was left alone after 3 days, but I had an option of contacting someone more experienced and asking whatever I was not sure about in the first 3 months. After 3 months, I was completely prepared and knew every little thing.

Nikolina: What were the highlights of your onboarding experience?

Employee: My colleagues were amazing and very helpful. Plus my manager was very supportive and open.

Nikolina: What were the lowest and weakest points of your onboarding experience?

Employee: Sometimes we were getting last minute information and that can create problems.

Nikolina: How helpful were the onboarding programs for you?

Employee: They were okay they were helpful.

Nikolina: How did you perceive the whole onboarding experience?

Employee: I was happy.

Nikolina: Were there any events to help you meet your colleagues?

Employee:I do not think so, but I quickly got to know them. I mean the colleagues from my department. Although in the past there might have been some sports events or something like that, I am not sure.

Nikolina: Was there an official meeting at the beginning?

Employee:No, I do not think so.

Nikolina: Were there some courses or seminars?

Employee: We had some courses about cosmetics and wellness connected topics. That was 3-4 times per year.

Nikolina: So those were only for your department?

Employee: Yes, yes. I mean I do not know maybe other departments have other courses that are necessary for them, but definitely not these ones.

Nikolina: What are the most important elements of onboarding?

Employee: I think support and giving the necessary information.

Nikolina: How efficiently optimized were the onboarding programs you went through?
Employee: I think they are all right, but definitely not without a mistake, there is still space for improvement.
Nikolina: What is your opinion on mobile employee onboarding app?
Employee: I do not know I do not really like technology.
Nikolina: Thank you for your time.

Employee 7

Nikolina: Can you please explain your onboarding experience?
Employee: I had a specific onboarding program for thermal receptionist, every week I learned to use a different program: Reservation assistant, Metra, etc…
Nikolina: Can you describe your first day and the first week?
Employee: On the first day I was just observing the working process. Later during the week I was learning to use the computer program, learning the whole wellness offer, etc.
Nikolina: What was happening during the first few months?
Employee: I was trying to improve my new skills at the thermal reception.
Nikolina: How long was the onboarding period?
Employee: Hmm, around one month.
Nikolina: And during this period were there any special meetings or events?
Employee: No, nothing like that, but I have heard that in the past they used to have some sports events like football and basketball matches.
Nikolina: What about a mentor or a buddy, did they provide you with something like that?
Employee: I had my boss and coworkers as mentors.
Nikolina: Was there an official orientation seminar at the beginning?
Employee: If the meeting with my boss counts then yes although that was not in a conference room or something like that.
Nikolina: Do you remember who provided you with information?
Employee: Mostly my boss and of course the colleagues.
Nikolina: Who introduced you to the team?
Employee: My boss.
Nikolina: Okay. How did you perceive the whole onboarding experience?
Employee: I was a little nervous, but also excited of learning new things. At the end, almost everything went well.
Nikolina: What did not go well?
Employee: Maybe some misunderstandings with some clients.
Nikolina: What were the most interesting parts of your onboarding experience?
Employee: The most interesting part was working in such a big company with so many coworkers.
Nikolina: What were the lowest and weakest points of the onboarding experience?
Employee: I was a little exhausted at the beginning because I worked a lot. Also weekends and holidays.
Nikolina: How satisfied are you with the onboarding experience?
Employee: I am very satisfied.
Nkolina: How helpful was the onboarding procedure for you?
Employee: It was very helpful to learn slowly because there was a lot of information to learn.
Nikolina: In your opinion how optimized are the offered onboarding programs?
Employee: Every company has its own onboarding program, but I think that this one is the most efficient because it was a slow process.
Nikolina: What would you change about the program?
Employee: I would not change anything.

Nikolina: What would you add to the existing procedure?

Employee: Maybe I would want to know more about the bosses in the company, at least how they look like and to have some foreign language courses. That is how it can be better.

Nikolina: What are the most important elements of onboarding newcomers?

Employee: They need to have the desire to learn and know to listen, to pay attention.

Employee 8

Nikolina: Can you please explain your onboarding experience?

Employee: Can you please give me more information? What exactly would you like to know?

Nikolina: I would like to know how long was the onboarding procedure you went through, of course if you did go through one and what was happening during that period?

Employee: Okay, so the process lasted between two and three months. I had a mentor and every week I learned a specific thing.

Nikolina: What did you do during the first day and the first week?

Employee: The first day I was looking and learning what other do. And the first week I was already learning the program, RA.

Nikolina: What was happening during the first few months?

Employee: Interacting with the guests, making reservations, etc.

Nikolina: Who provided you with information and who introduced you to the team?

Employee: My boss welcomed me and then took me to meet the team. And for the information, well it depends what I wanted to know. Sometimes I was asking my boss, sometimes my colleagues, but anyway they were always there for me.

Nikolina: Was there an official orientation seminar?

Employee: I do not think so.

Nikolina: Were there any special meetings or events?

Employee: No, no.

Nikolina: How did you perceive the whole onboarding experience?

Employee: It was okay, I had a great mentor. Absolutely everything went well, I cannot say that something was wrong.

Nikolina: How did you feel during that period?

Employee: Good and easy because co-workers provided me with all information.

Nikolina: What were the most interesting parts of your onboarding experience?

Employee: Learning something new, socializing and finding out more about the organization.

Nikolina: What were the weakest points of your onboarding experience and why?

Employee: The guests were a bit difficult, I was scared to make a mistake.

Nikolina: How satisfied are you with the onboarding programs you went through?

Employee: I am very satisfied because my mentor explained me everything and was very patient.

Nikolina: How helpful were the onboarding programs for you?

Employee: Very helpful because everyone around me was willing to help me.

Nikolina: In your opinion how optimized are the offered onboarding programs?

Employee: Very good. My mentor had a list what to do every day.

Nikolina: How can we improve the onboarding experience?

Employee: Some courses might be a good idea, that seems helpful.

Nikolina: According to you, what are the most important elements of onboarding newcomers?

Employee: Not to force anything, be patient.

Employee 9

Nikolina: Can you please explain your onboarding experience?
Employee: Sure, what exactly?
Nikolina: Well I would like to know what kind of programs did you go through and how long was the onboarding procedure.
Employee: It lasted for two weeks. I had some seminars about fire safety, workplace safety and process of work.
Nikolina: Can you please describe your first day?
Employee: On the first day I got to know people and the building.
Nikolina: Can you please describe your first week?
Employee: During the first week I was learning how the process of work is carried out and had s software course.
Nikolina: What was happening during the first months?
Employee: I was working independently. Just regular work days.
Nikolina: Was there an official orientation seminar during that period?
Employee: Well I had those seminars about workplace safety and fire safety if that is what you mean.
Nikolina: I was thinking more like a seminar where they familiarize you with the organization and its values.
Employee: Oh I did not have, although my boss told me something about that.
Employee: Okay, nice. Who provided you with information and who introduced you to the team?
Employee: Everyone was informing me, but the boss introduced me to my colleagues.
Nikolina: Did you have a mentor or a buddy?
Employee: I did not have a mentor, just a buddy, my coworker.
Nikolina: How did you perceive the whole onboarding experience?
Employee: It was alright.
Nikolina: How did you feel during that period?
Employee: Well, ever beginning is scary but I had a lot of support from the people around me and that made me feel better. It made me feel included.
Nikolina: What were the most interesting parts of the onboarding experience?
Employee: Getting to know my coworkers and learning about the organization.
Nikolina: What were the lowest and weakest points of your onboarding experience?
Employee: Lack of time, that can be really tricky and exhausting.
Nikolina: How satisfied are you with the onboarding programs you went through?
Employee: Quiet satisfied, but as I said I felt included and that was pretty nice.
Nikolina: How helpful were the onboarding programs for you?
Employee: They were very helpful.
Nikolina: In your opinion how optimized are the onboarding programs?
Employee: They are somewhat optimized, they can be better for sure.
Nikolina: What would you change or add to the onboarding program?
Employee: I would add more practical education.
Nikolina: How can we improve the onboarding programs?
Employee: Adding more practical education, some courses and a mentoring program.
Nikolina: According to you what are the most important elements of onboarding newcomers?
Employee: Getting to know everything and everyone.

Employee 10

Nikolina: Can you please explain your onboarding experience?
Employee: Well, there was not something specified or strict.
Nikolina: Okay, so then can you please explain your first day and the first week?
Employee: On the first day I tried to learn about the working process and the first week I watched my co-worker doing the work.
Nikolina: What was happening during the first few months?
Employee: I tried to be equally useful and important as everyone around me.
Nikolina: Who provided you with information and who introduced you to the team?
Employee: My co-workers told me everything I needed to know, while my boss introduced me to the team.
Nikolina: How long was the onboarding process?
Employee: I would say a couple of weeks.
Nikolina: Was there an official orientation seminar at the beginning?
Employee: No, but that might be good.
Nikolina: Were there an special meetings or events during that time?
Employee: No, I do not think so.
Nikolina: What about a mentor or a buddy, did you have something like that?
Employee: No, neither one, although that would be nice.
Nikolina: How did you perceive the onboarding experience?
Employee: Good because my co-workers provided me with all the information.
Nikolina: How did you feel during that period?
Employee: I felt a little bit anxious, I was not sure if I am going to fit in or not, but it turned out fine.
Nikolina: What were the most interesting parts of the onboarding experience?
Employee: Working co-workers was very interesting, but also acceptance of the knowledge before I remember what someone told me .
Nikolina: What were the lowest and weakest points of your onboarding experience?
Employee: The work was totally different because I have learned other stuff at school.
Nikolina: How satisfied are you with the offered onboarding programs?
Employee: I am very satisfied, my coworkers made everything better.
Nikolina: How helpful were the onboarding programs for you?
Employee: Very helpful due to my coworkers` help.
Nikolina: In your opinion how optimized are the offered onboarding programs?
Employee: Very optimized.
Nikolina: What would you change in the existing procedure?
Employee: I would not change anything, but I would add a little bit more time which tutor spends with a newcomer.
Nikolina: How can we improve the onboarding process?
Employee: Integrate newcomers into comers.
Nikolina: Interesting comment, and the last one, according to you what are the most important elements of onboarding?
Employee: Good tutor who has a lot of advices.
Nikolina: Thank you for your time.

Employee 11

Nikolina: How would you describe your first day at LifeClass?
Employee: The first day when I came here I still did not have a uniform. I was very nervous because it is a very big center and you can get lost with all the people around and all the information. The colleagues were very friendly and very welcoming, so I was very happy on

the first day. I was just observing what my colleagues were doing. I was orienting and learning.

Nikolina: How would you describe your first week at LifeClass?

Employee: The first days I got to know some people that worked here, the boss and the HR manager. My colleagues showed me around. They showed me the facilities. There was a lot of information. I did not remember everything and everyone, but I am improving.

Nikolina: How long did it take you to adjust?

Employee: The preparations are long. 1 month. After a month I was ready to work alone at the spa reception

Nikolina: What were the highlights of your onboarding?

Employee: There were some ups and downs, but the colleagues and the boss were amazing.

Nikolina: What were the lowest points?

Employee: It was more difficult for me to communicate with Germans just because of the language barrier. Also once I got lost inside the spa facilities.

Nikolina: How helpful were the onboarding programs for you?

Employee: The boss was very helpful. We really connected and it was a positive experience.

Nikolina: What was lacking?

Employee: We are missing language courses.

Nikolina: Was there are "buddy" system?

Employee: I did not have a buddy. My boss was very professional and kind. She was mentoring me the entire time. One month of mentoring. Also my colleagues were very helpful.

Nikolina: Were there any courses organized by the hotels intended for the newcomers?

Employee: I needed language courses but nothing was organized by the hotels. They would be helpful. Especially the language courses. Besides that, we had a course about cosmetics and it was very helpful. Besides that we had another one on how to sell products which was very interesting.

Nikolina: What would you add to make the onboarding experience better?

Employee: I would tell the next newcomer to be calm because it is not as stressful as it seems. Just listen and be careful of the details. You have to be initiative.