Now on Now: Onboarding a global distributed workforce

How we've transformed the new hire experience at ServiceNow
Introduction

At ServiceNow, we’re committed to giving our employees a great workplace experience. We believe they deserve the best, and that starts before their first day on the job. We want to make sure that our new hires feel welcome, which is why our HR team has always focused on getting onboarding right. Just like fantastic customer service fosters consumer loyalty, positive interactions at work keep us happy, motivated, and productive. This has been more crucial than ever as we adapt to the challenges created by the COVID-19 pandemic.

While we always provided a good onboarding experience, we relied on manual processes. Recruiting coordinators spent long hours dealing with the mechanics of onboarding, sending out dozens of requests for computers, office space, payroll updates, and more. Things slipped through the cracks, and our coordinators didn’t have enough time to focus on their most important job—supporting our new hires. And, we still weren’t delivering the consumerized onboarding experience that our new employees expect.

ServiceNow Enterprise Onboarding and Transitions gave us the ability to change that.

In this eBook, we talk about our global onboarding rollout—the solution we’ve implemented, the great results we’ve seen, and how we got there. By sharing our story, our goal is to inspire you as you begin your own enterprise onboarding journey.

“We spend a third of our lives at work, so we need to make our employees’ work experiences the best they can be—across every moment that matters—and that journey starts with new hire onboarding. Make a great first impression.”

Pat Wadors, Chief Talent Officer, ServiceNow
Meet the team that has made our global enterprise onboarding journey a success

David Reed
Senior Director, Global Talent Care

Rajeev Sethi
Senior Director, Employee Experience

Matt Parish
Director, Digital Talent Experience

Vasavi Thota
Senior Manager, HR Applications Development

Aparna Sharma
Manager, HR Applications Development

Rachel Wong
Senior Product Manager, Digital Talent Experiences

Tara Zodrow
Senior HR Business Systems Analyst

Tiffany Windmeyer
Lean Six Sigma Process Analyst

Sumeyya Khan
Director, Employee Experience

Shafath Syed
Director HR Product Management

Mary Anne Viegelmann
Senior Manager, Employee Experience Programs
What were our goals?

We’ve already talked about one of our key goals—giving our new hires an intuitive, consumerized onboarding experience. However, we also had several other objectives.

Rajeev Sethi, whose team drives the strategy, architecture, implementation, and adoption of our global enterprise onboarding solution, explains, “ServiceNow was growing quickly and still is. We were reaching the point that our recruiting coordinators couldn’t keep up. It was the same story in other teams involved in onboarding, such as IT. By giving our new hires easy self-service access to onboarding and automating our backend workflows, we could scale our processes and give our coordinators more time to spend with new hires.”

Rajeev continues, “We were also hiring across the world, not just in North America. We wanted consistent onboarding processes across all regions, so we could continue to make enhancements and leverage these globally. And, of course, this was also a great opportunity to be “customer zero” for Enterprise Onboarding and Transitions, working with our product team to provide feedback and recommendations that improve the product for ServiceNow customers.”
How did we get started?

We already had a custom ServiceNow onboarding solution in the US, so we started by replacing that. The existing custom solution helped us to define a minimum viable product (MVP) for our initial rollout. However, this wasn’t just a like-for-like replacement. Rajeev says, “The custom solution automated some of our backend processes, but it didn’t interact directly with our new hires. Because we wanted to deliver a consumerized onboarding experience, our MVP combined process automation with an intuitive new hire portal.”

We also made sure that everything we needed to succeed was in place. That started with joint executive sponsorship from HR and IT, since these two groups form the backbone of any successful enterprise onboarding program. In our case, we had executive support day one from our Chief Talent Officer, Pat Wadors, as well as our CIO, Chris Bedi. We also put in place an effective governance structure and project charter, as well as clearly defined requirements capture, scope definition, development, test, and organizational change management processes. Perhaps most importantly, we made sure that we engaged stakeholders early on—including regional stakeholders as we moved beyond North America—and involved them throughout the entire process.
What does our solution look like?

It starts with an intuitive new hire portal. As soon as a candidate accepts an offer, they can access the portal from their favorite browser or the ServiceNow® Mobile Onboarding app available from the Apple or Google Play stores. You don’t have to be a ServiceNow employee to explore the app; anyone can by downloading the app and tapping “Try with a demo account” at the bottom of the screen. Once they connect, they can watch welcome videos from our CEO, Chief Talent Officer, CIO, CFO, and several other executives. They can also contact their hiring manager or assigned recruiting coordinator directly from the portal, either by email or phone.

Along with welcome videos and contacts, the portal also introduces each new hire to life at ServiceNow. This includes providing information about our culture, the benefits ServiceNow gives our customers, and workplace information. They can view a New Hire Orientation (NHO) guide that gives them an overall roadmap to the organization. We also promote a culture of diversity, inclusion, and belonging through videos and training during the onboarding and ramp up processes. The out-of-the-box configuration allows us to keep new hires abreast on updates in real time on the devices they use around the clock—a crucial function in unpredictable times as offices close and reopen.
When a new hire signs their offer letter, the onboarding solution creates a case and assigns it to one of our recruiting coordinators. This contains all of the tasks needed to onboard the employee—not just tasks for the new hire, but also tasks for the recruiting coordinator, hiring manager, and other groups such as IT and facilities. For example, the hiring manager may need to choose a workspace if the new employee is based in an office. Once the manager makes their selection, the onboarding solution then routes the request to facilities.

Many of our onboarding tasks are completely automated. For example, when a new employee signs a document, ServiceNow automatically attaches it to the employee’s profile in our Human Resource Information System. Similarly, when an employee completes a benefits form, ServiceNow automatically sends this to the local country benefits provider for enrollment. This automation has allowed us to reduce our number of manual onboarding steps by 70%, resulting in significant time savings.

The recruiting coordinator has complete visibility of overall onboarding progress as well as the status of individual tasks. They can also manage their own workload using ServiceNow’s Visual Task Boards, making it easy for them to schedule and prioritize their onboarding work.
Dashboards provide visibility and create focus

Our solution also includes a number of dashboards that show onboarding status at a glance. For instance, the dashboard here shows new hires that are joining within a week, along with their number of outstanding tasks. This allows our recruiting coordinators to instantly see which new hires are on track and which are lagging behind. This visibility is critical, since it allows our coordinators to easily identify potential issues and proactively take steps to address them.

One of our onboarding dashboards
What benefits have we seen?

Our global onboarding initiative has been a great success, delivering significant business benefits. By creating a consumerized onboarding experience and automating our backend fulfillment processes, we’ve made our new hires happy and significantly increased our productivity. We’ve also increased visibility, allowing us to measure and improve our onboarding processes.

Here are just some of our results.

**New hire satisfaction**
Our surveys show that new hires are highly satisfied with their onboarding experience. We’ve consistently had positive one-on-one feedback from many of our new recruits. We’ve also seen great participation by new hires—99% of policy tasks are completed before orientation, which means they’re ready to hit the ground running on day one. Even with the unforeseen events in the first half of 2020, we were able to maintain a new hire satisfaction rating of 88%.

**Faster time to productivity**
Onboarding isn’t just more enjoyable—it’s also faster. For instance, we’ve cut the time it takes to provision IT resources from three days to a few hours. New employees now have their computer and accounts right away, making their day one experience smooth and enjoyable. This also means that they come up to speed more quickly, rather than wasting time waiting for equipment and access.
More efficient and fulfilling work

Our recruiting team has also seen major benefits. Our global onboarding solution has helped them to dramatically increase their efficiency, saving 4,000 hours of work every year. Those savings have come from process simplification and automation. We’ve reduced the number of onboarding process steps by 19%, and we’ve reduced manual steps by 70%. The onboarding solution also increased team morale—instead of being bogged down in mundane administrative work, coordinators can now focus on bringing on board the best talent.

Respond in real time

By transforming our global enterprise onboarding processes, we were well prepared to adapt quickly when the COVID-19 pandemic gripped the world. When physical offices closed, we implemented an entirely virtual onboarding process in a matter of a few hours. As a result, we successfully welcomed new team members and helped them seamlessly transition into our distributed work environment during these unpredictable times.

4,000 hours
hours saved annually by automating onboarding activities

100%
new hires onboarded virtually during the COVID-19 workplace closure
In the past, onboarding was done manually. I’d email forms to new hires, who would fill them out and send them back. If anything was missing, I’d have to follow up. With the ServiceNow Mobile Onboarding app, the process is astronomically better. Everything’s in one place, and forms are completed online. Our Virtual Agent can answer basic onboarding questions, which frees me to spend more quality time with new hires.

— Brittany Jolliff, recruiting coordinator

Now I can get details of all new hires with the click of a button instead of looking through spreadsheets. Because the local team was actively involved in the implementation, the platform supports India-specific documentations. This has been definitely a game changer.

— Tanusri Gurudant, HR business partner

Onboarding can be challenging, especially for a remote worker like me. My onboarding at ServiceNow was the best I’d ever experienced. The Mobile Onboarding app was easy to use and gave me complete visibility of all my tasks. My laptop, backpack, email account, and network access were all ready by day one, so I could hit the ground running.

— Tonya Allen, new hire

When new hires join ServiceNow, they’re investing themselves and their families in us, so it’s important to me to make their onboarding experience the best it can be. Our onboarding app automates the entire process—from the interview and offer to pre-hire activities and onboarding—ensuring everything’s ready on that first day. It leaves a lasting impression, and that gives me real peace of mind.

— Brittany Jolliff, recruiting coordinator

In Japan, like many other places, Day 1 is wasted on chores like social insurance registration and commuting allowance application. Because I finished the paperwork in one portal before I even began, I felt proud to be a productive member of my team on my first day at ServiceNow.

— Ryuichi Furuya, new hire
Our recommendations

What have we learned from our global enterprise onboarding journey? Based on our experience, here are six key recommendations.

1. **Be very clear about what you want to achieve and why**
   For example, we went with a deep initial implementation in the US because we needed to replace an existing custom solution and wanted to deliver the best possible new hire experience. However, you might decide that it’s more important to get an initial solution out as fast as possible, in which case a broader and shallower approach that targets multiple countries quickly might be more appropriate.

2. **Drive cross-functional alignment and participation**
   This was a key to our success. Cross functional alignment starts with joint executive sponsorship from HR and IT, and requires active participation from both teams, as well as from other organizations such as facilities and finance.

3. **Focus on the new hire experience, not just functionality**
   When you start out on your onboarding journey, it’s very easy to focus on functionality. That’s what happened to us initially. However, we quickly realized that we were missing something vitally important. What was the experience we wanted to give to our new hires? Once we started to think this way, things fell into place.
4. Create a close partnership with your regional HR teams
Regional HR teams are critical to success. Their local knowledge is indispensable, and local ownership is critical for solution acceptance and adoption. Identify a local HR champion who will help you to engage, navigate the local organization, and build enthusiasm.

5. Prioritize organizational change management
Communicate early and often, and make sure that the right training is in place for your regional stakeholders. When OCM goes smoothly, that’s where you see great results.

6. Stay ready to adapt
During the recent business disruptions, we configured Enterprise Onboarding and Transitions into an entirely virtual process for our HR partners, hiring managers, and new hires. As a result, we onboarded over 2,100 employees online in the first five months of office closures in 2020, expanding our global workforce by over 15%. Additionally, we pivoted our internship program to a digital experience, onboarding and training over 200 remote interns virtually. The unprecedented pandemic has cemented the agile, distributed, “anywhere, anytime” workplace to be the norm rather than the exception. To attract and retain excellent talent around the world, stay nimble and respond to changing work environments.
The bottom line

Our global enterprise onboarding program continues to deliver significant benefits. We’re giving our new hires an onboarding experience that’s engaging, informative, and easy to navigate. By consumerizing onboarding, we’re making a great first impression and strengthening our reputation as a preferred place to work.

We’ve also made life better for our recruiting team. By simplifying and automating our back-end onboarding fulfillment processes, we’ve reduced monotonous manual work, freeing up the team to focus on what they care about: bringing on board the best talent. This has bolstered morale and increased efficiency.

We hope that our story inspires you and gives you practical insights that you can use to make your own Enterprise Onboarding and Transitions rollout a resounding success for your new hires and your recruiting team.

“Consumerizing onboarding has completely transformed the experience for new hires, helping them quickly become acclimated and productive.”

Chris Bedi, Chief Information Officer, ServiceNow
About ServiceNow

ServiceNow (NYSE: NOW) is the fastest-growing enterprise cloud software company in the world above $1 billion. Founded in 2004 with the goal of making work easier for people, ServiceNow is making the world of work, work better for people. Our cloud-based platform and solutions deliver digital workflows that create great experiences and unlock productivity for more than 6,200 enterprise customers worldwide, including approximately 80% of the Fortune 500. For more information, visit www.servicenow.com.