

# Executive Search

**Joining a  
Storm-hit Crew**  
Tips For Managing  
the Executive's  
Onboarding Journey

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**Amrop**

Leaders For What's Next

# Joining a Storm-hit Crew

Tips for managing the executive's onboarding journey

Surprising though it may seem at the current time, senior executives are continuing to accept job offers and the new challenges these bring, and are getting to sit in their new chairs for the first time.

Although, to get the picture right, they're more likely to be occupying their old chairs at home. All while preparing meals, coaching the kids with their online school platforms, vacuuming the living room and walking the dog. Not in their fresh new offices with a proper onboarding process and a warm welcome at the coffee machine. So, what is going on? How does onboarding take place in these circumstances? How are we managing it?

There is a quote often attributed to Immanuel Kant: "Someone's intelligence can be measured by the quantity of uncertainties that he can bear". And let's be frank, the intelligence levels of onboarding executives must be peaking as uncertainties pile up on top of the already-challenging new job jitters. These uncertainties take many forms.

They start with the executive's new environment: a new culture, team, colleagues and leadership, the need to identify the stakeholders and understand the challenges. Then the strategies must come: figuring out the way to add value quickly and win early victories, establishing and managing short, medium and long term goals, all while getting to grips with a host of other variables too numerous to name here.

If you're an executive you must now add to all of this your personal Covid-19 emotional curve and compound it with those of your close entourage, plus those of your (new and virtual) working team. Stress and anxiety do not even begin to describe it.

So, if you are a senior executive stepping into your new organization, or if a senior executive is joining your crew right now, how can the journey be managed given these turbulent circumstances?

Based on our conversations since the breakout of COVID-19, here are our 4 tips for onboarding a storm-hit ship, for both organizations and onboarders.



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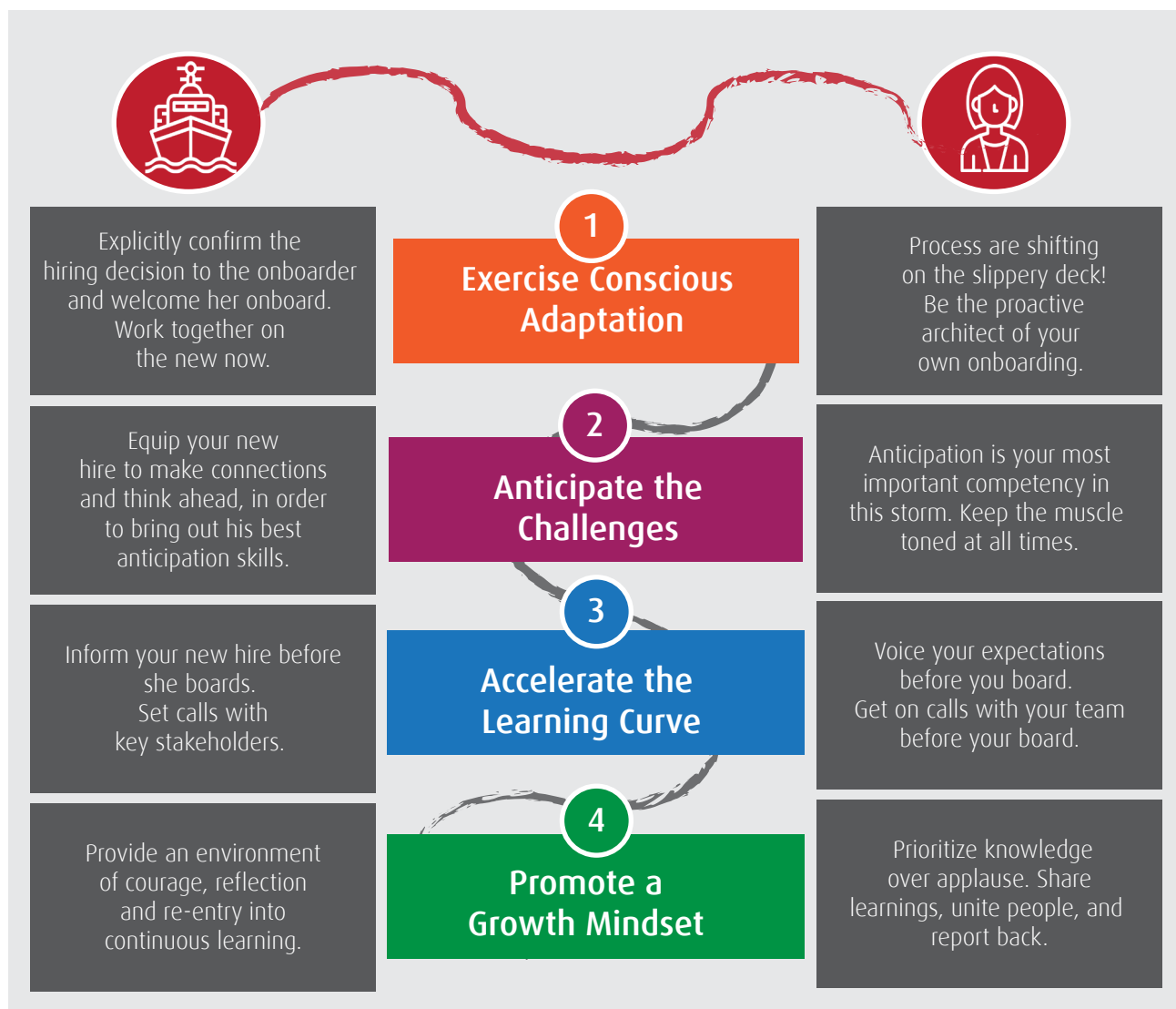
Clarisa has a degree in Law from Buenos Aires University Law School, and a Masters Degree in Non Governmental Organization Management from San Andrés University. She completed further law and negotiation programs at Harvard University in the USA.

## What is the purpose of onboarding?

In good weather, onboarding is focused on facilitating and promoting a mindful process. One in which stress and anxiety are reduced, allowing the full potential of the new executive to emerge sooner and better. We contribute to this goal in 4 ways.



## The new normal | Our top tips for onboarding in a storm





## Tips for Hiring Organizations

The onboarding process is always a critical and highly sensitive phase. It is well known that when conducted successfully it serves as a gateway to a series of core benefits: better employer branding and employee engagement, a good cultural fit and healthy team dynamics (to name but a few). Moreover, given a smooth onboarding process, the investment made by your organization in identifying and attracting a key talent has a much higher chance of showing early returns. So how will the waves of COVID-19 hit your new executive in her first long weeks, and how can you help? Based on our interactions with hiring organizations and our onboarding practice, here are our tips.

1

### Install a Conscious Adaptation Process to the New Context

Onboarding during a storm is a particularly disruptive process. Not only is this a new environment for the executive, but the ship is rocking mercilessly. Processes, policies and tools will be shifting around on a slippery deck.

So our first tip for organizations is to fully acknowledge this new context. We recommend that you reach a common understanding with your new executive that these are exceptional times. They must expect the weather to be turbulent and that the course of your ship will probably change rapidly in your hunt for clearer skies. Resilience, constant communication and adjustment will be essential both sides. Voice the situation, be transparent and highly conscious. Be prepared for surprises, and to constantly adapt.

When possible, provide the executive with confirmation that she is very welcome on board and that, although the ship is rocking, it will not capsize, and that her role and contribution continue to be both essential and valuable. Both during the storm, and when those clearer skies are reached.

2

### Anticipate the Challenges

In normal times, we work hand-in-hand with the executive through anticipating challenges. During the Covid-19 storm, your organization has to take an even more active role in this. It starts with connectivity; making sure your new executive has all the tools he needs to work from home. Next, and on an almost daily basis, the best organizations and their new executives are thinking together.

How will the pre-existing challenges of the position be permeated by this exceptional context? This complex exercise is running at breakneck speed. So, anticipation (the ability to identify future trends before they happen and act on them before the competition does) is too valuable a competency not to nourish in all your executives — especially now, and especially for new hires.



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# Tips for Hiring Organizations

3

## Accelerate the executive's learning curve.

This curve always needs to be a steep one, but we're now observing an unprecedented "hit the ground running" energy. Cultivating it means strongly emphasizing and making available to the executive all the key information and company tools she needs to read and analyze before her first day on board. Plan and organize telephone or video calls with key team members (360°). Again, ensure these take place prior to effectively onboarding. Then work together with your new executive, assessing and prioritizing what he needs to learn. And again, all content will be liberally drenched by the new storm we are living in.

4

## Promote the growth mindset

This is a cornerstone of our advice in normal times, and still more essential now. Rather than a fixed mindset, organizations need leaders who have a growth mindset. They will view difficulties as an opportunity to evolve, in contrast to counterparts who do not fundamentally want to be challenged. Either because they have difficulty handling feedback or because they believe they are already fully equipped with knowledge, experience and tools. So our suggestion is for you to promote an environment of courage, one that stimulates reflection, review and re-entry into a continuous learning process.





## Tips for Executives

Welcome on board! So, here you are. You have accepted a new challenge — probably before knowing just how stormy the waters you were sailing into would be. In normal times, you would be excited to start this journey. You would feel ready to tackle and add value to each step. The purpose of a normal onboarding process is to reduce your stress and anxiety and guarantee that your competencies and potential emerge in the fastest and best possible way. You are onboarding during a storm, so how can you gear up in this unexpected scenario?



1

### Embark on a Conscious Adaptation Process to Your New Context

Your new organization is doing its best to rapidly adapt to the storm, but we are seeing that in most cases there has been no time to properly review the onboarding process and welcome you accordingly. So, it might be up to you to be the architect of such changes, building consensus with the organization in a conscious and explicit manner.

First and foremost, we recommend you courageously ask for confirmation that your role is needed — even during this storm - and what adaptations are required. It is best to bring this out into the open and not to silently feel that the timing of your onboarding is not right.

We recommend taking your time to mindfully analyze the situation, sharing your understanding and findings with the head of the hiring process, or your new boss. Keep proactively connected, and even make suggestions on how to engineer the necessary communication and decisions.

2

### Anticipate the Challenges

You need to plan the 'how' of onboarding as far ahead as time allows. We suggest drawing a rough map for the first 3 months and to be prepared to re-engineer the course according to the movement of the storm, focusing on anticipation. This competency will be highly valued, so keep the muscle toned. Think ahead, review all aspects of the business and people you are responsible for, and look at the situation through the 'storm lens'. What might occur in the near future? And in the longer run? How could all these short term adaptations impact on your first year goals? Make sure you exercise this ability and share your findings with your boss and other key stakeholders, while listening to and learning from your team. Again, your ability to anticipate is one of the key competencies the organization needs now - most probably even more than the original reasons for which you were hired.



# Tips for Executives



3

## Accelerate your learning curve

We hope your new organization provides you with the material and connections to be ready for your first day. But if these are not offered, don't hesitate to ask for everything you might need. Again, make sure to talk about expectations — on both sides - with your boss. The more you learn before you board ship, the more you'll be able to adapt when the ship starts rocking. Also, as far ahead as possible, schedule individual calls with each member of your team. We suggest you ask the same questions to each one of them and thoroughly listen to their answers. This way you get a general and individual overview at the same time. Make sure that you include questions about content, as well as how people are emotionally coping with this new scenario. Present yourself, be readily available to all key stakeholders, and first and foremost, for your team.

4

## Finally, promote a growth mindset at all times

Prioritize learning and contributing over approval-seeking. Be curious, be courageous, think innovatively, exercise a continuous learning approach. You will inevitably make mistakes and there will be valuable lessons. The only fixed formula is to find the way to report effectively during these new times. Not forgetting the vulnerability that will push you to seek the right advice, share difficult decisions and work on your team's cohesiveness.

# Last Drops | The Way Ahead



Globally, we're all in the same boat. That is why we must keep in mind the Covid-19 emotional journey — one that is affecting all of us to a greater or lesser extent.

This piece is being written from Buenos Aires, Argentina, but I am sure we can all identify with the emotional roller coaster we're on.

Many of us will have experienced some (or all) of the following feelings; disbelief, sadness, anger, a sense of vulnerability. At the same time we are adapting to a fast-moving situation that brings unprecedented demands, rules, and recommendations. The wave has gathered speed exponentially, hitting all of us suddenly and hard.

In this article we've presented four facets of onboarding: **adaptation**, **anticipation**, an **accelerated learning curve** and a **growth mindset**. More than in the onboarding context, these are currently relevant in a general sense.

When we integrate courage and resilience, empathy and solidarity, we truly set the sails for What's Next and, let's hope, a new level of leadership wisdom. A leadership that is ethical, sustainable and responsible.

Let's make sure we acknowledge this journey in ourselves and our teams. Together, we'll reach clearer skies and calmer waters.

Let's be prepared for that.



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## About Amrop

With over 70 offices in all world regions, Amrop is a trusted advisor in Executive Search, Board and Leadership Services. Amrop advises the world's most dynamic organizations on finding and positioning Leaders For What's Next: top talent, adept at working across borders in markets around the world.

Amrop's mission: shaping sustainable success through inspiring leaders.

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**This article has been prepared with the support of Amrop Argentina's Onboarding Team, led by Lucía Moreno and Ignacio Guerrico. It draws on a new onboarding framework developed by the team, an innovation in the domain.**