

A Brief Introduction to:
Organizational Learning, Performance, & Change

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Overview

- Background
- Research report



Background

Russ Korte

Assistant Professor, ***Organization Learning, Performance, and Change***, Colorado State University (present)

President, ***Strategic Training and Performance Improvement***, Korte & Company (present)

VP, Account Mgmt., ***Advertising and Marketing Strategy***, Kauffman-Stewart Advertising (past)

Background

OLPC Program

Organization Learning, Performance, and Change

- Develop the skills and competencies to better understand and improve the learning and performance of people and organizations
- Master's Degree online
- Doctoral Degree (executive ed/cohort model)

Research Report

Getting on board:

Successfully getting new hires up to speed.



The Problem

Despite a rigorous selection process

- Need to get up to speed faster
- Poor satisfaction of new hires
- High turnover (20-50%) at 24 months

Orientation vs. onboarding

Most believe that new hires must learn to fit in

The context

Four large corporations: manufacturing, transportation, food, computer hardware

In-depth interviews of new hires (engineers) and managers (~150 people)

Focused on **human capital** *and* **social capital**

“They sink or swim.”

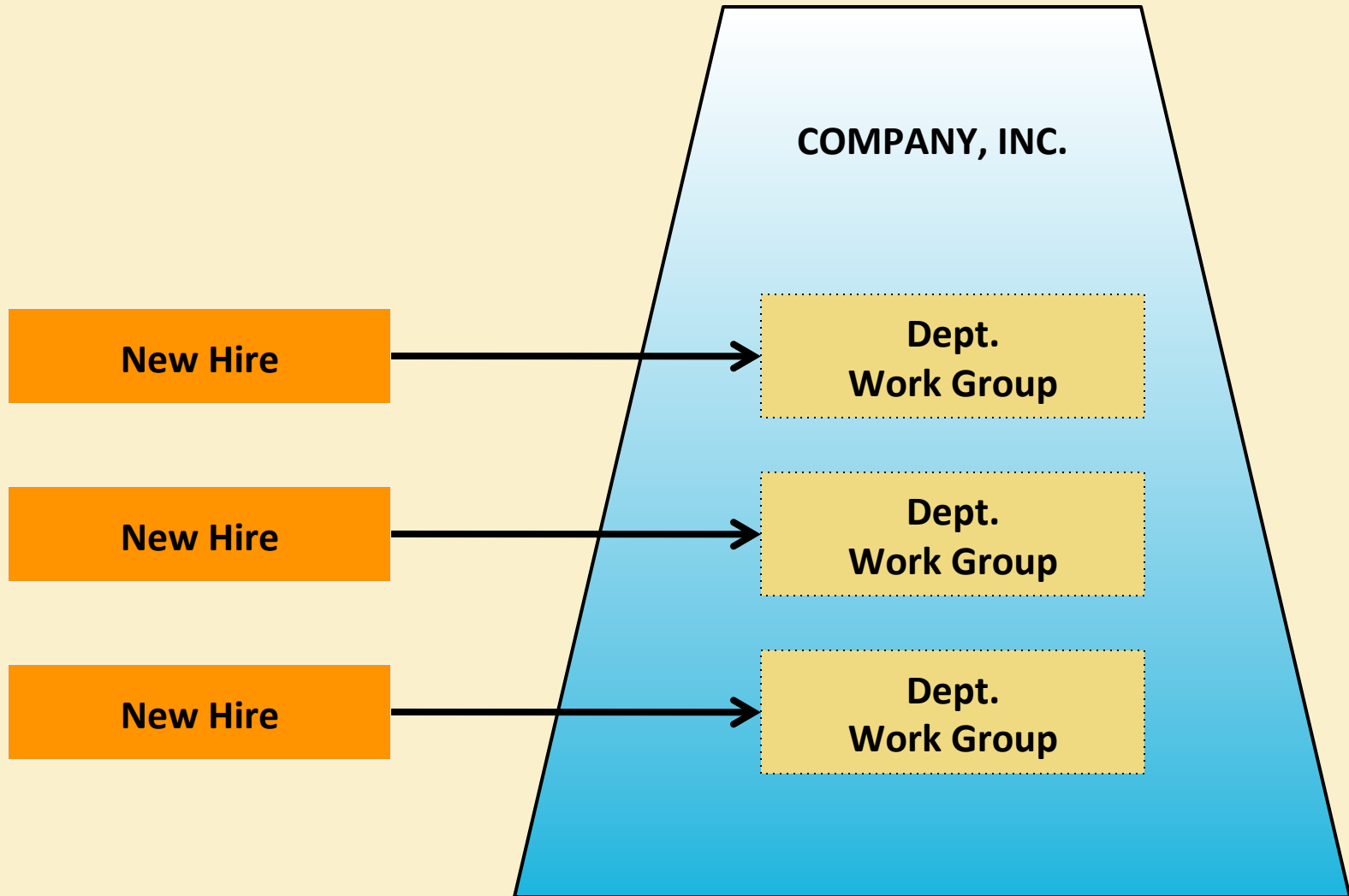
HR Executives

“most people want to do a good job.

*However, if you pit a good performer against a bad system,
the system will win almost every time.”*

Rummler & Brache, 1995

Onboarding model #1

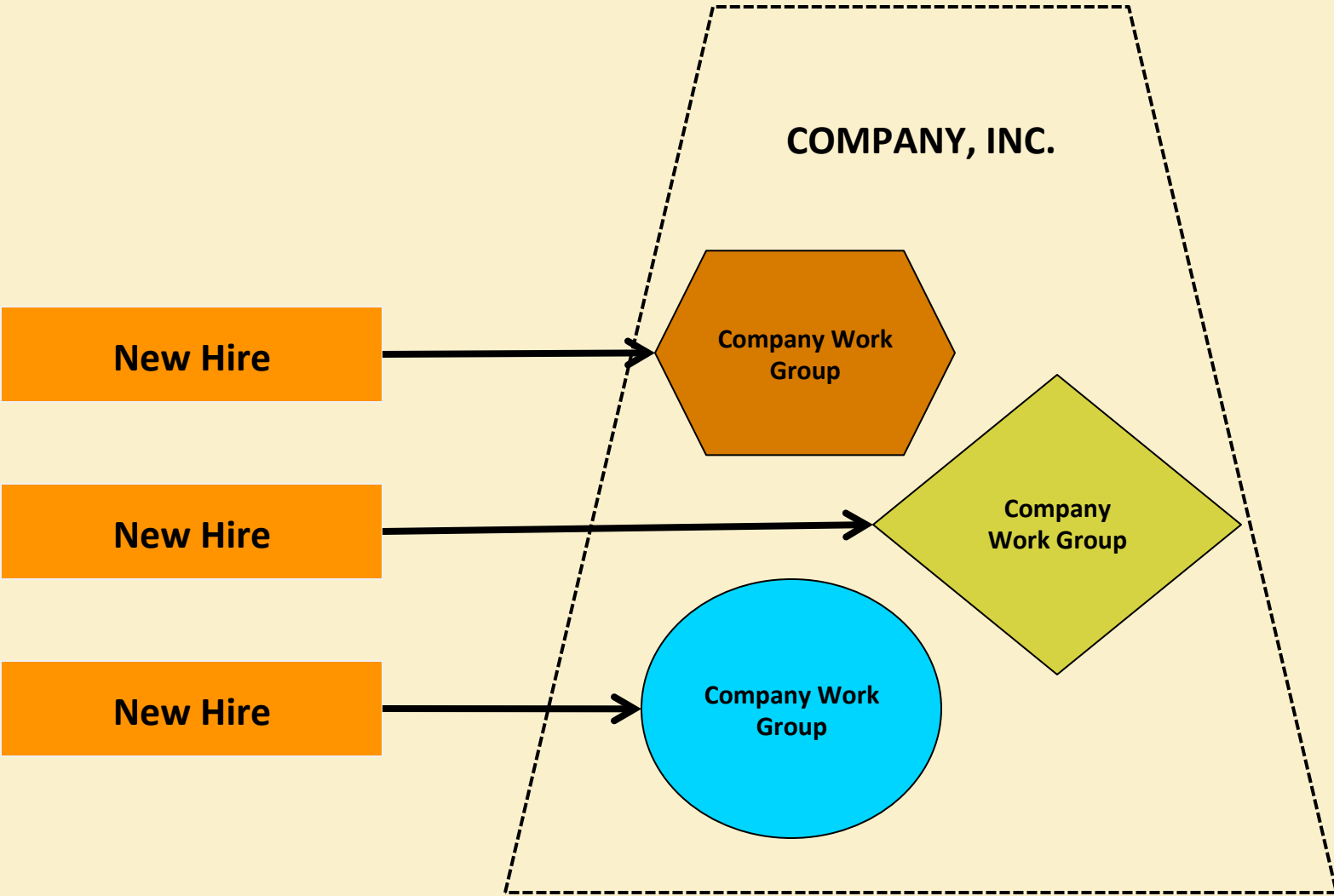


Primary Findings

Relationship building was a primary driver of the on-boarding process.

Work groups were the primary contexts for on-boarding—*not the organization*.

Onboarding model #2



Primary Findings

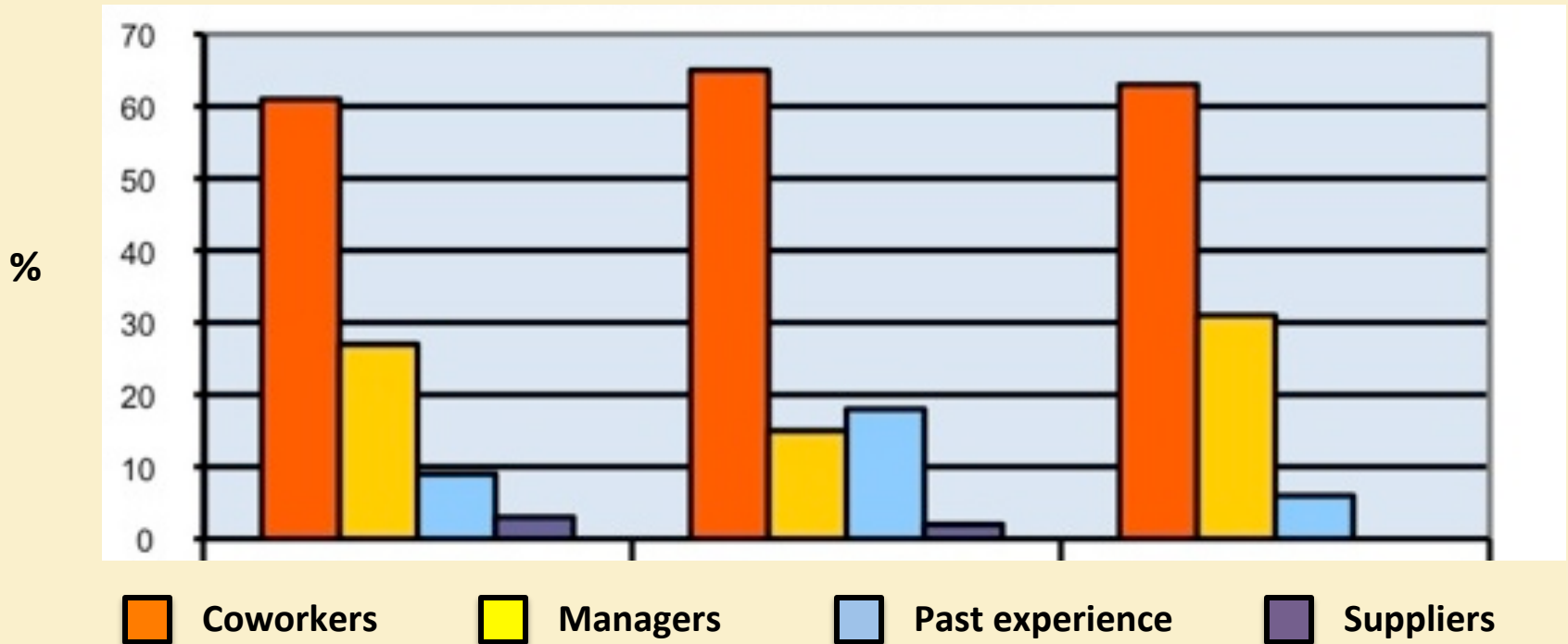
Relationship building is a primary driver of onboarding.

- **Working** productively
- **Learning** about company
- **Integrating** and engaging

Work groups (esp. coworkers) are the primary source of:

- **Instruction** for using tools and procedures
- **Insights** into how things really work
- **Membership** into the group

Sources of new engineers' learning



Percent of learning linked to sources in three companies.

Learning from coworkers

[I asked him] who do I talk to? Then he'd kind of be like -- okay, I think it's this person. And then he'll just look up the name for me real quick and he'll let me know. **And sometimes he'd just come with me and see if whatever information they're giving me is accurate or not**, because he's been on this project for a while.

[My coworkers are] ***approachable, but you kind of get the feeling like--don't bother me.*** You can go ask them questions and stuff like that, but then their cell phone rings or something comes up and then it's kind of like--I have to take this call or I have to do something else. So you kind of, there's this feeling of--ask questions but don't take too much of my time.

I was basically thrown into it and told, you know, figure it out. And there are a few other guys that have been here a few months more than I have and they might be able to help on some stuff, **but most of 'em don't know what they're doing any more than I do.**

Learning from supervisors

for that one week that manager gave me really good time, like on the first day, **he gave me one or two hours explaining the whole process.**

I was more or less at [*location*] because my boss didn't know what to have me do. And so he basically said, **go find something and make yourself busy.**

Learning about work groups

but some of the other guys that I work with that have been on other teams say even the culture of who does what and how things are done is **very different from team to team**, even within [*company*].

And **people from other teams were less helpful** than I would have liked. Didn't always have kind of a same team attitude. People would jump on you or not be willing to help if it didn't directly affect their group.

New Hire Success Factors

Non-work relationships: Does the newcomer share non-work information and try to know others beyond work situations?

Collaboration: Does the newcomer regularly consult/ collaborate with others about work tasks/projects?

Beyond the 'call of duty': Does the new hire contribute effort beyond expected job responsibilities?

Work Group Success Factors

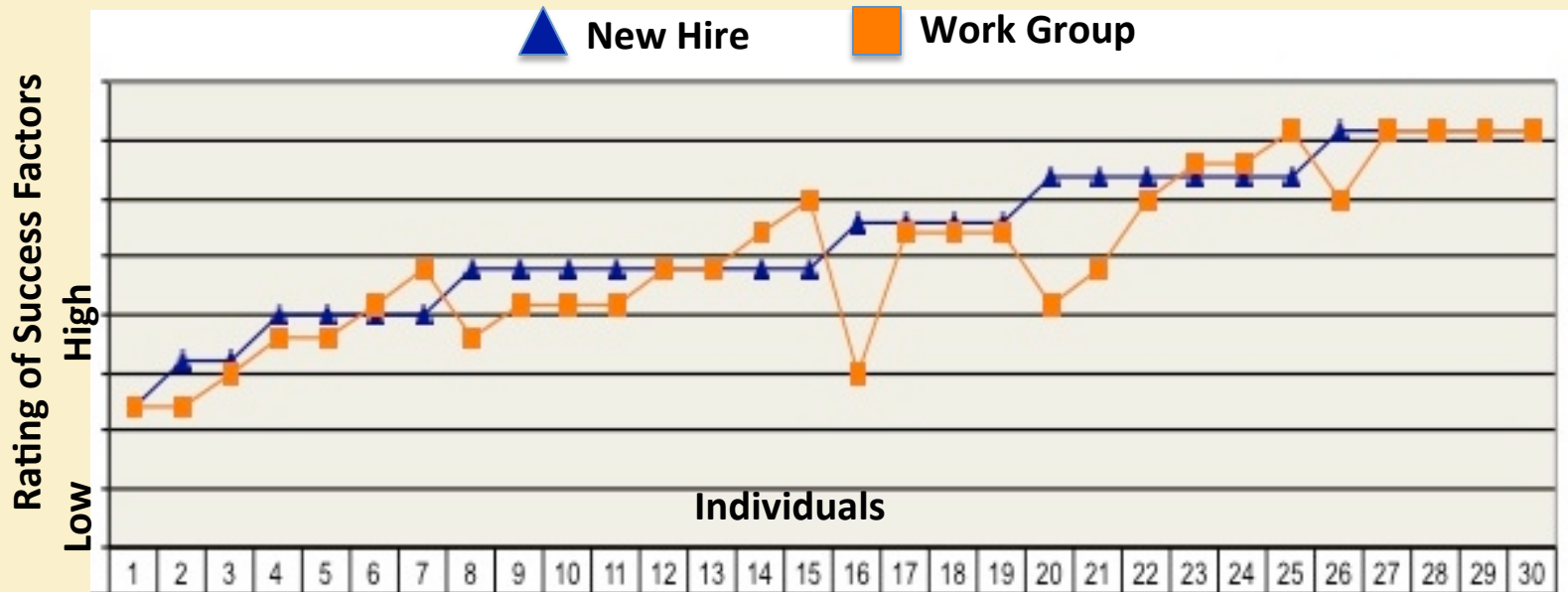
Local mentoring: Does someone in the group provide regular, ongoing direction and instruction to the new hire?

Acceptance: Does the group invite new hire to lunch/after work social activities?
Does the new hire have a "buddy" in the group?

Interaction with manager: Does the new hire have frequent and regular contact/interaction with manager?

Assignment: Does the new hire have an important project/assignment from the start?

Success of new hire closely related to activity of work group.



The quality of relationships affected the:

- Quality of **learning & performance**
- Level of **satisfaction** → **engagement** → **commitment** → **retention**

Onboarding research & practice

Most common beliefs

New hire needs to:

- Confront reality of new job
- Clarify role in organization
- Learn to fit in
- Monitor their success

This research indicates

New hire needs to:

- Develop relationships
(membership)
- Learn norms, tasks, & tools
- Develop expertise
- Engage and develop career

Work group needs to:

- Develop relationships
(membership)
- Provide local mentoring
- Provide meaningful work
- Provide for growth

Relationships drive onboarding



Best practices

Begin onboarding during recruitment

Ask newcomers how they prefer to be managed

Get new hires connected early and often

Provide resources to help new hires get connected

6 dimensions of onboarding

Six areas of a job new hires must master with help from group:

- People (establishing relationships)
- Performance proficiency (learning tasks)
- Politics (understanding power system)
- Language (learning the language)
- Organizational goals and values
- History

Onboarding well done

“I am extraordinarily happy to be working here. This is exactly what I was hoping that I’d be doing. . . . So that’s where I am right now. **I love what I’m doing**; I wouldn’t trade this job for anything right now.”

“But it only took minutes before people would stop over and introduce themselves and say hi and ask -- do you want to go out to lunch? You want to go to volleyball after work? Very friendly people. **I was just like instantly accepted** as one of the group and that was that, and unexpected to me.”

'Real Engineering Work'

Task categories	Work experiences
Problem-Solving Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪Organize, define, & understand the problem.▪Gather, analyze, & interpret data.▪Document and present results.▪Manage the overall problem-solving process.
Working within the Group (social system)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪Develop relationships with others.▪Learn from others.▪Collaborate with others.▪Influence others.
Working within the Organizational System	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪Understand the “big picture.”▪Understand non-engineering priorities and decisions.▪Work through/around cultural and systems procedures.
Managing Individual Effort	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪Gain experience to increase expertise.▪Become intimately familiar with job and data.▪Effectively manage efforts to exceed objectives.▪Contribute value to the organization.

'Real Engineering Work'

Not doing “real engineering” work. *“I don't feel like I've had to actually do engineering.”*

Problems highly uncertain, ambiguous, complex. *“in the real world, it's a lot more difficult to model things. It's just there's a lot more variables involved and there's the unsurety too of whether or not you're modeling it right.”*

More practical, hands-on work. *“there's no mathematical formula you could use like you would in school to solve this kind of problem.”*

Work is socially and culturally embedded. *“It's a huge difference in how people perceive your data depending on how much they know.”*

'Real Engineering Work'

I mean in school it's very textbook. They always try and model everything in a mathematical sense in school. And in the real world, it's a lot more difficult to model things. It's just there's a lot **more variables involved and there's the unsurety too of whether or not you're modeling it right.** Are you following the right procedures and principles? And stuff like that.

you have to be very quick . . . and defend the changes you want to make. I mean if you're adding cost to the [*product*], you're making a lot of people mad or something's been designed and you're going back to the engineers over there and saying -- I'm sorry, this isn't going to cut it. **You're ruffling a lot of feathers.**

Key Take-aways

Work is embedded in a social, political, and informal contexts.

The social, political, and informal contexts are primary drivers of learning and performance.

Organizations have a major responsibility to help newcomers succeed.

A culture that supports onboarding is a best practice.

Effective onboarding helps develop engaged, top performers.

What are you wondering about?

