

SkyWest Airlines New Hire Welcome Page: Reducing New Hire Uncertainty through Strategic  
Disclosure

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By

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We certify that we have read this thesis and that, in our opinion, it is satisfactory in scope and quality as a thesis for the degree of Master of Professional Communications.

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Finding an employee can be an involved process which includes sorting through applications and selecting those candidates best qualified for the job for what is often a grueling interview process. The interview process is just the beginning of a relationship between an organization and its new hire. Uncertainty is often part of that initial process. When deciding on accepting a position with a new company, initially the relationship is fragile and the future is uncertain. Organizations in today's employment economy often find it difficult to find qualified talent. Employers are challenged not only by the focus required to attract a top recruit to join their organization, but also the effort it takes to keep new associates engaged. Dorna (2004) made the observation that both Gen X and Gen Y employees recognize the realities of corporate scandals and corporate restructuring, and are aware that companies are often not loyal to their employees, like in the days of their parents.

This knowledge encourages these employees to view skills as transferable from one company to another. Also, seeking employment is a very competitive process, which is compounded by academic institutions producing fresh graduates; organizations have to sort through thousands of applications just to find one golden new hire. Lipka (2008), in his research, found that student loan debt has risen to record levels while the economy has slowed and, as a result, having a college degree is no longer the golden ticket to a professional career. This makes for a very competitive job market.

This graduate project is designed to streamline the SkyWest Airlines onboarding process and help transition new hires into the company intranet where they can engage with the organization through SkyWest Online. The overall objective of this graduate project is to make the onboarding process more seamless and attempt to address some of the challenges faced by new hires when joining a large organization, such as SkyWest Airlines. This task was

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accomplished through the development of a New Hire Welcome Page that now serves as the new hire's first introduction to being a SkyWest Airlines employee. This page also serves a dual purpose of uncertainty reduction in the days leading up to the employment center orientation.

An organization's hiring process has become a vital component in the long-term growth and success of both the company and its employees. Bauer and Erdogan (2011) defined onboarding as a method by which organizations socialize their new employees and qualify them as institutional insiders. This is how an organization ensures new hires acquire the necessary knowledge, skills and behaviors to become effective organizational members. Steer (2013) points out that a quality onboarding program obtains new hires in a productive and safe way, while reaffirming the employee's choice of employer. He suggests that organizations accomplish this task by eliminating traditional presentations and replacing them with a strategic and interactive employee engagement experience. Steer goes on to say that the number one goal for onboarding is employee retention and reduction of future recruitment costs. Ferri-Reed (2013) said that orienting employees and getting them in a productive onboarding orientation now requires nontraditional approaches and insightful new strategies.

The process of bringing a new hire onboard can be a daunting one for both the organization and the new-hire employee. It's the beginning of what will hopefully be a fruitful working relationship. Getting an employee up to speed on job responsibilities, organizational culture, benefits, and other various aspects of being part of a new team is a slow process, but, if done well, can impact the employee's productivity and overall level of emotional investment in the organization.

## **Organizational Challenges**

I reviewing the onboarding process at SkyWest Airlines we identified some unique opportunities for improvement to ensure that the introduction of the company brand to a new hire is a positive affirmation experience and reassures the new hire that they made a great decision in joining the organization.

SkyWest benefits and performance expectations are often communicated through most organization's Human Resources departments. The HR and Communications Departments at SkyWest airlines work closely to ensure that new hires receive consistent messaging regarding the SkyWest brand. Both departments noticed a disturbing trend while onboarding new employees: HR documentation was often gathered in a disorganized manner during orientation, and employees did not seem to understand what exactly was expected of them in regards to how they can best contribute and assimilate into SkyWest's organizational culture and values of the company. Management meetings discussing the issue indicated that improving our onboarding strategy and overall new hire experience would greatly reduce inconsistency in messaging and streamline the document collection process.

In order to reduce employee uncertainty and improve the onboarding experience for new-hire employees, I proposed the construction of a New Hire Welcome Page as a joint initiative with HR available through our internal intranet, SkyWest Online. This online platform is an employees' first introduction to SkyWest, and is the one place where new hires can go to receive information regarding values and company culture, as well as fill out HR forms and return them online in an orderly manner. This page is an evidence-based tool used to reduce employee uncertainty and improve the onboarding experience. This tool has been functional for a year

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since May 2014 and analytics (see Appendix 4) demonstrate its function as a critical tool in the administration of new hire employees. In the long run we anticipate an overall increase in employees' identification with company values, and improve employee retention.

The conditional-offer-of-employment phase is where hiring managers have the opportunity to offer a position to a new employee. This phase can also be viewed as an element of disclosure, because the company expresses a desire to develop a long-term relationship with the potential employee. Providing the new hire with the Welcome Page as an additional resource for learning more about the company can help further the new relationship. High levels of uncertainty produce high rates of reciprocity; when individuals are uncertain about each other, they are more likely to reciprocate uncertainty reducing behaviors. Therefore, when new employees have questions about their new position or organization, they are more likely to engage the company in a dialogue to get answers they need.

The New Hire Welcome Page anticipates the needs of a new hire and offers those answers much earlier in the hiring process. The page is designed with uncertainty reduction in mind, which means communicating information that reflects disclosure from the company to the new employee. This can include disclosure about the organization's financial performance, employee benefit package, advancement opportunities, and so on. Disclosure leads to a more intimate relationship, which is essential for laying the groundwork that helps employees develop the cultural elements, behaviors, and displays of citizenship encouraged at SkyWest Airlines.

Creating a platform for new hires to learn more about the company can help reduce uncertainty and prepare them for a more pleasant experience at SkyWest's employment centers,

rather than having employees frantically asking questions. When information is obtained, uncertainty is reduced and the employee can start to look for similarities in values and ideals.

Establishing early CMC interaction with SkyWest new hires can result in positive impressions well before a new hire's first day on the job. Making CMC part of the onboarding process is essential to the organization's impression management, which may ultimately contribute to whether or not an employee remains with the company long term.

SkyWest's onboarding process begins with a conditional offer of employment which is contingent on drug testing, DOT clearance, and Employment Center (EC) attendance, to name a few. While the first two requirements are standard, the EC is designed to introduce and welcome the new hire to the company. In most cases the classes are filled with new trainee flight attendants, pilots, customer service agents, maintenance hires, and various support personnel. In the EC, new hires learn about the company's leadership, benefits, recognition programs, values, and history.

## **Literature Review**

### **Uncertainty Reduction Theory (URT)**

New hires are often very uncertain about an organization's expectations. To help reduce uncertainty, the organization shares as much information as they can to help acclimate the new employee to the company's expectations. The assumptions of Uncertainty Reduction Theory (URT) provides a unique framework for studying the new employer environment. The basic assumption of URT is that humans have an innate drive to reduce uncertainty about themselves and others in initial interactions, which then leads them to demonstrate information seeking

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behaviors in order to reconcile the uncomfortable feeling of uncertainty (Berger & Calabrese, 1975). This research project explores and addresses some of the axioms found in URT, and proposes that organizations can reduce new-hire employee uncertainty by providing high levels of relevant information. This research supports the premise that developing a platform where an organization can have structured interaction with its new employees during a phase of high employee uncertainty can increase the amount of communication while decreasing the amount of uncertainty new hires have about the organization.

Ayres (1979) found that uncertainty levels are directly related to information levels. This means that the more uncertain individuals are, the more questions they ask. Also, the more company values and employee values match up, the more uncertainty is reduced (Berger & Calabrese, 1975). Employee intranets, sponsored events, organizational paraphernalia, and recognition tools are just a few tactics that organizations use to promote a cohesive organizational team. Each organization and employee group faces unique challenges and some organizations struggle with employee engagement.

## **Onboarding**

According to research done by McCauley and Wakefield (2006), new employees decide whether or not to stay at a company within their first six months of employment. Employees who are passionate about their work and understand their role and impact are engaged and know where the company is going and how they can contribute. Employees who are motivated and engaged on their first day and take an interest in how they can do their job well will have greater incentive to stay. Employee engagement requires companies to produce information that employees want to consume so they can be informed on the organization's objectives and goals.

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With that said, the company creates a very crucial first impression with its new hire through onboarding. Creating a positive experience can help reassure a new hire in an uncertain environment (McCauley & Wakefield, 2006). Developing a Computer Mediated Communication (CMC) that shares more details about an organization can work to develop the relationship between an organization and its new employee. Westerman and Tamborini (2008) found that although CMC has deficiencies related to the absence of nonverbal cues, individuals can overcome this deficiency over time. The impressions they form over CMC can be equivalent to those formed in Face-to-Face Communication (FTF).

According to Patricia Aurizio (2007), employers who embrace the idea of onboarding create first-class organizations who understand that a new hire is still fair game to the organization's competitors.

Laurie Friedman (2006) has learned through research that onboarding is effective in impacting employee retention and recruiting younger employees as baby boomers begin to retire, and thus should be part of every organization's strategic objective. She found that some organizations choose to welcome their employees through ceremonies, similar to weddings, with a complete orientation and organizational experience. Friedman (2006) also noted that the key to proper orientation and onboarding is presenting a clear line of sight that shows how the new employee's work contributes to the overall success of the company. Such insight contributes toward employees becoming more engaged, which then reflects in their performance and positive long term results.

Gudykunst and Nishida (1984) discuss in their research that uncertainty reduction also requires disclosure. Kramer (1993) found that individuals experiencing uncertainty are often

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motivated to seek information to help reduce uncertainty. An organization can self-disclose by being transparent about their business model and how employees can contribute positively to the bottom line and the organization's overall financial goals.

### **Sharing Values and Culture**

Sharing values and beliefs is another element of disclosure that organizations can use to further reassure a new hire and start developing a relationship based on shared interests, principles, and values. According to Alston and Tippet (2009), an organization's culture is related to the level of trust found within that organization. Although organizational culture can sometimes be ambiguous, its main concepts are related to the values, attitudes, and beliefs common to members of any one organization (Prenestini & Lega, 2013). Some organizations have mission statements which function the same way. Sharing values helps mold an organizational culture where employees are clear about the standards that the organization adheres to, even just in principle.

Gilmore and Turner (2010) found that poor cultural fit is one of the main culprits in the derailment of a new leader in a new organization. This makes choosing the right characteristics even more crucial for hiring managers. Organizations should not only extend an offer of employment, but invest dollars in training and cultural assimilation. Reflecting back at her advanced HR career, Friedman (2006) disagrees with the status quo and says that organizations should devote a significant amount of resources to support the process by which new hires become integrated and adopted into the workforce. Reflecting on her many years of experience, she has become surprised at the number of organizations who spend more time celebrating retirees than they did new hires. She recognizes this as a misplacement of valuable resources and

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effort because typical retirees have a solid organizational foundation and the resources that are being used in celebrating them do not offer any measurable return (Friedman, 2006).

Sharing values also helps build an organization's reputation, which ultimately becomes the organization's reputation capital. Reputation capital can come into play when an organization is experiencing workforce related crises or any crisis that calls into question the reputation of the organization. Coombs (2012) conducted research which shows that organizations with reputation capital will recover from crises much faster than organizations without it. Additionally, organizations with significant reputation capital have a more favorable post-crisis reputation. An organization that has a work force who believes in company values has reputation capital that can be utilized to repair reputation and regain lost trust. This trust can be regained by crafting communication between the company and its employees that maximizes the benefits of the relationship through previously established shared values.

## **Branding Identity**

Creating a brand identity allows for effective relationship building between the brand and its consumers. Fraser and Doorley (2013) found that complete brand identity can include slogans, unique forms of packaging, brand hues, and a quality that can be expected by the consumer. Employing these forms of branding, organizations build a relationship of trust between the brand and the customer as customers come to expect a certain quality from the product. New hires most likely know basic information about the organization, however, soon after hire the task begins of developing their brand loyalty. Kim, Han, and Park (2001) also state that the higher the self-expressive value of the brand personality and the higher its distinctiveness, the more favorably consumers will evaluate the attractiveness of the brand

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personality. This serves to deepen the relationship between the customer and the brand. In his research, Aydin (2014) found that the existence of a positive emotional background associated with a brand or an advertisement recall stimulates more positive feelings. That means that a new hire's positive brand association can reaffirm the quality of an organization, thus creating a loyalty and trust between the employees and their company.

Don and Heidi Schultz (2003) found that strong integrated brand management, over time, can be more than just a financial asset; it can increase the organization's value to its employees. This can be done by producing company paraphernalia such as shirts, pens, cup holders, calendars, pins, key chains, and other materials that are inserted into an employee's experience and help foster a relationship of trust and the development of loyalty over time. A strong brand also allows for exploration into new markets because consumers can recognize the symbol of the brand, which, in recruiting, can be a major influence in a prospect's decision to join a new organization. Liu-Thompkins and Tam (2013) in their research found that cross-selling was not effective for all repeat consumers of any one brand, but was more successful for highly-loyal consumers with positive effect toward the brand. Employees not only can start to develop a positive outlook when faced with advancement opportunities, organizational changes, or the need to tackle any challenges that the organization undergoes; they can associate those experiences with the quality they have come to expect from the organization.

Organizations can continuously look for ways to maintain their current workforce while seeking new ways of attracting the best qualified people in their industry and grow their organizational influence. This approach ultimately impacts revenue and can help introduce current employees and new hires to additional resources and benefits offered by the organization.

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By so doing, organizations can have an emotionally-invested employee base that allows for reputation building which expands well beyond their product. An organization's ability to introduce resources can have a direct influence on an employee's behavior, which then impacts the organization's bottom line.

Fraser and Doorley (2013) have simplified the organizational relationship between a customer and an organization. They advocate that customers are the reason why organizations continue to exist. Similarly, employees are crucial to the survival of any successful organization, so companies who focus on developing employee-centered programs, policies, and procedures know their most important customer. A company that is focused on employee satisfaction can expect to see long-term employee retention and success (Fraser & Doorley, 2013). Investing in the employee allows for additional opportunities for communication, influence campaigns, and the implementation of benefits and resources that anticipate employee needs. When organizations devote resources towards these pursuits, they will see a return on their investment.

### **Generation Y Employee Engagement**

It is undeniable that the nature of work has changed and organizations need to execute employee retention strategies to keep up with an ever changing workforce. Many scholars, including Paul Korzynski (2013), have underlined the notion that Generation Y, also referred to as the Millennials—children born between 1976 and 1994—are driven by their technology communication expectations. They expect connectivity amongst their peers and the organizations with whom they are affiliated. They also expect all organizations to function both online and offline, which underscores the importance of virtual presence in a new technology-driven society. Virtual presence is more important now that it's ever been before.

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Using flexible communication technologies and innovative engagement tools that transcend time zones, locations, and even organizational roles is just one way a company can begin building a virtual program that meets this new generation's technology needs. These technology and connection demands require each organization to have a strong virtual presence in order to retain current employees and compete for talent in a dynamic recruiting industry. Along the same lines, Vargas (2013) gives caution to organizations that fail to recognize the needs of a new workforce and view onboarding as a single event: He also advocates that onboarding fails when it's viewed as an event instead of a process. He found that often times, agencies fail to see that many of their new Gen Y employees need to be "onboarded" to, not only their jobs, but the world of work. Developing an onboarding process that spans well beyond the first few days on the job has been proven to be the most effective way of helping new hires align with organizational goals (Vargas, 2013).

Oftentimes, no matter how great the culture, benefits, or opportunities in any one organization, employees still decide to leave the organization to seek employment elsewhere. Hart (2009) noted that women often leave to have families while some employees decide to pursue educational goals or move on to other organizations where they think the grass is greener. Hart (2009) is adamant that companies should not write their former employee investment off, but should follow up and keep open lines of communication. Part of a great onboarding program is the development of a long-term relationship with the employee that can be useful even after the employee has moved on to a different organization. She introduces the concept of "boomerang employees", which are individuals who leave the company and, when their circumstances change, are invited back. By doing this, organizations continue to retain their initial investment on the employee.

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Keeping former employees engaged and updated on what the organization is doing is just one of many ways the depth of a relationship can be maintained over time. Boomerang employees will often return to the company much more committed and enthusiastic about the organization and its goals. The investment on a well-developed onboarding process can pay dividends well beyond the walls of the organization and into the future (Hart, 2007).

The sooner organization executives realize that orientation meetings barely scratch the surface of what the new landscape requires, the better. In the past, employees were left to their own devices when it came to learning the ropes. Ferri-Reed (2013) says that organizations should evolve and introduce a program that caters to a new kind of employee; one that is technologically savvy, has a work-to-live mentality, is hungry for feedback, and is collaborative, extremely self-confident, and philanthropic. The landscape has changed and what organizations use to attract talent needs to be custom built to compete in the workforce pool.

### **Strategic Web Design**

A Web site is “a collection of Web pages, images, videos and other digital assets and hosted on a particular domain or sub domain on the World Wide Web” (Guild, 2007, p. 31). Würtz (2006) emphasizes the importance of developing culturally appealing websites. She argues that the localization of an organization’s web site should go beyond the translation of verbal messages. Developing websites that offer users a custom, yet familiar and strategic user experience is one of many technology demands of this new information age. De Castro, Genero, Marcos, and Piattni (2011) say that web users demand the ability to use websites on the basis of Web conventions they already know and have acquired through their experience from using other websites.

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Dochterman and Stamp (2010) discuss the importance of website credibility and have found that their research participants identified page layout as a source of page credibility. If a page is poorly laid-out, then the content is seen as less believable. Having content that enables employees to do their job effectively and is presented in an effective layout, which allows it to be believable, is essential to a mobilized and informed workforce.

One of the main visual elements of a web page is the standards of the layout. Zaner and Wilson (2005) argue that an effective web layout includes clear standards of text style and text properties, common elements like font sizes and colors, and a series of consistent features that remain consistent throughout the user interface. Sutcliffe and Namoun (2012) found that effective web pages have deliberate components that are designed to attract the user's visual attention. A layout structure that has the most pertinent information and user-engaging elements in the upper parts of the page allows users to gain the most interaction with the landing page without having to use scroll features.

### **SkyWest Discussion**

In an attempt to make onboarding a seamless process, this project is focused on building a new-hire section for SkyWest Online. The New Hire Welcome Page of SkyWest Online is designed to localize all information that new hires need access to within their first 90 days of hire at SkyWest Airlines. This includes required documentation from the Human Resources Department as well as Federal Aviation Association (FAA) and Department of Transportation (DOT) clearances that are required for working in the aviation industry. Along with these crucial objectives, the New Hire Welcome Page will welcome new hires to SkyWest Airlines and educate them on the culture of the company in order to prepare them to join a new working

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environment. Providing an interactive shared network will allow the company to share information that can further reinforce an employee's decision to accept the job offer. This can help establish long-term communication satisfaction, which can further develop the budding relationship between both parties. The similarities that new employees identify between SkyWest and their own personal goals can further reinforce reciprocity and shared values, which then further reinforces and supports relational development.

The New Hire Page attempts to balance both the HR requirements and the cultural introduction orientation that is required for a successful career with the company. SkyWest understands the need to not only recruit the best people in the aviation industry, but also present them with a competitive organizational culture that other organizations fail to provide.

The page helps reduce uncertainty about the hiring process and encourage anticipation and enthusiasm for the first day of training and familiarization to SkyWest. Extending the onboarding process past the EC and first few weeks of employment is just one of the objectives that the New Hire Page addresses in continuing the development and growth of a new hire to better integrate them into the company.

This also provides another component of the new-hire familiarization and mentoring program and is essential to uncertainty reduction and the professional development of new hires. The end result should be an engaged employee that recognizes his/her role and direct impact in the company's success, which then motivates them to contribute in a meaningful way to their team, department, and organization.

This is another tool that SkyWest can use to initiate an early trust relationship with the new employee. SkyWest Airlines, like any large organization, is governed by a set of values that are part of the company's core principles.

Establishing a connection with the new employee and the SkyWest brand means that communicating the company's unique culture, values, aviation perks, and other benefits that are associated with being a SkyWest employee can create a strong SkyWest brand personality, further developing a positive relationship with new employees. Unfortunately, core branding principles are elements that are not legally protected, which means any outside organization can

### **Hire Welcome Page Objectives**

My main role with the New Hire Welcome Page was mapping out the fundamental framework, user interface, functions and strategic narrative of the tool while balancing HR requirements and the implementation of SkyWest's new-hire cultural initiatives. I worked closely with the SkyWest software development team in the Information Technology (IT) Department and served as the main project manager. The HR and cultural challenges already outlined in previous chapters show that these challenges are not unique to SkyWest. Research has shown that successful organizations embrace using Web-based tools to help in workforce development initiatives. Petten (2001) found that organizations in Australia who fall under the Employment Equity Act often struggle with finding qualified Aboriginal people to work, train, and retain. That prompted the development of a Web-based service established in 1999, as part of the Federal Government's response to this issue. Organizations like SkyWest Airlines can also find practical solutions to human resource challenges through Web-based programs.

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Maintaining a clear focus on the overall high level and cross departmental objectives was an arduous task and an incredible learning experience. The objectives outlined below, were the primary outline that guided the development of this project.

SkyWest's New Hire Web Page will complete the following objectives:

(1) **Welcome new employees to SkyWest Airlines.** After doing research on the elements that should be part of a Computer Mediated Communication (CMC) onboarding experience, I worked closely with the SkyWest Software Development team, Leadership Development team, and HR team to develop a website that is part of SkyWest's intranet and operates as training wheels for new hires at SkyWest Airlines. This website packaged information in a one-stop location (see Method section) where new hires can go to consume and digest information before attending the Employment Center (EC). This website aims to reduce uncertainty levels about the organization, allowing new hires a more relaxed experience during orientation. According to Brumfield (2014), uncertainty has been linked to information-seeking behavior in face-to-face interaction, however, online tutorials have been found helpful in establishing a connection and engaging the sensory mechanics by which we learn.

(2) **Introduce the SkyWest culture and business model.** At SkyWest it is important for all employees to understand how they contribute to the company's overall business goals and business model. This new webpage helps employees identify the elements that they have influence over and recognize how they connect to the overall model, no matter the position.

(3) **Provide a portal for new hires to confidently navigate their first 90 days of employment.** The New Hire Page trains new employees on how to use the company intranet and ensures that employees remain engaged and connected to the company's main portal for

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dispersing information, skywestonline.com. Skywestonline.com is a valuable resource that enables employees to stay connected to what's going on in all the locations where SkyWest has personnel. Keeping all 10,500 employees on one page is an enormous task; that connectivity can now begin with proficiency on the New Hire Page, well before employees start their first day.

**(4) Provide required prerequisites and documents all in one place.** Along with creating a cohesive company culture message, many of the tasks that new hire employees need to complete before attending EC are HR-based documents that will also be available on the New Hire Page. There the new hire is able to sign electronic documents, participate in computer-based training, and read up on various SkyWest policies and acknowledgements.

## **Method**

My main role as project communication manager was focused on mapping out the visual communication of the site, which included overseeing the development, functionality, narrative of the company message and ensuring the consistency of company culture. It was important to maintain an overall positive and strategic disclosure experience for SkyWest, while allowing new hires the opportunity to interact with the company in a controlled environment.

After extensive research on the new hire experiences, which included visiting our employment centers located in Salt Lake City, Utah and Denver, Colorado and sitting in and observing the presentation and overall experience, I was able to identify some of the inconsistencies found in the information shared by the various departments at SkyWest. I then mapped out and presented an approach that would help align the various objectives from HR, Leadership Development and Corporate Communications.

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While software developers were the key component to building the website, I was instrumental in guiding their focus and ensured that the platform was built with the new hire user in mind. This required mapping out the function of every component on the site, from audiovisual, text, photos and every user interaction.

The New Hire Welcome Page for SkyWest Online was developed to fulfill both SkyWest culture and HR onboarding requirements. This page serves as the first introduction new hires have to SkyWest Airlines before attending Employment Center orientation. The page includes the components laid out in the “Page Components” section. Content was strategically developed to reduce uncertainty for the new hire about being a SkyWest employee. Integrating video features and digital tutorials allows for dynamic content that can be consumed by employees of all levels of employment at SkyWest. Video integration can also enhance storytelling. According to Katzeff and Ware (2007), video makes for easier knowledge transfer and adds more personal undertones to a story. Part of the new-hire onboarding experience is sharing the story of SkyWest and how our values are part of everything we do. These values inform how we treat our customers, our planes, and each other. The Welcome Page includes a personal message from the company president welcoming new employees and encouraging them to take ownership of the brand and their journey with the company.

### **Timeline.**

- Attending SkyWest Employment Centers to identify and study the issues
- Outlining key objectives by meeting with the various department stakeholders
- Developing key project objectives
- Mapping out the website structure and grid

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- IT approval for project development and assigning a developer
- Developing website mockup and structure
- Provide content and oversee the development of the webpage and project
- Website testing and tool functionality
- New Hire page Rollout/ launch

### **Page Components.**

The webpage was successfully launched May 2014. New hires began using it and HR saw the immediate benefits of upgrading from a paper train to an electronic document system. The analytics (see Appendix 4&5) show the page use has been growing substantially and users visit the page frequently to complete their paperwork and read the information available there.

The following are components of the New Hire Welcome Page for SkyWest Online:

Chip Welcome Video\* (what you do absolutely matters)

- Guiding Principles

Required Documents and Training:

- HR Requirements
- Non-disclosure Agreement
- Criminal Background Acknowledgement
- PRIA Documents
- Travel Request to Employment Center

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\*Required eCampus (progress bar tracks completion):

- Employee Handbook
- Productive Work Environment
- SkyWest’s Safety Management System (SMS)
- Fit for Duty
- Airline Industry Basics
- Travel Code of Conduct Acknowledgment

\*Travel:

- Travel Code of Conduct Acknowledgement
- Travel Basics:
  - Creating and Managing your Travel Profile
  - Adding Dependents
  - Uploading Supporting Documents
  - Resources (Travel page link)

\*Benefits:

- Preliminary Medical, Dental, and Vision Insurance Information

\*Features:

- Get to Know Your VP/Team—Dynamic Department Information
- SkyWest History
- SkyWest Today

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- SkyWest Online Tutorials:
  - Using SkyWest Online – PDF's that outline the page
  - My Stuff – Using this personalize portal with payroll, tax documents ect.
  - My Deck & Digest – Tools with preferences for displaying internal content
  - Forums- Internal discussion board
  - RAVE – Employee recognition tool
  - Carry-On – Employee Recognition tool
- Two-year SkyWest Employment Milestone Timeline:
  - 30 days
  - 90 days
  - 6 months
  - 1 year
  - 2 years

### **Measures of Success.**

The success of this new platform is demonstrated by the ability new hires have to submit all necessary hiring paperwork, receive and understand preliminary information about their new company, position and their department leader. This consistent approach, overtime and through hiring peaks, can assist not only HR but new hires as they navigate their first 90 days at SkyWest.

The analytics in found on page 32 appendix 1 shows a yearlong track record of consistent use, with the majority of new hires being flight attendants and customer service agents. Most of those you visited the page, go back an average of 22 times which suggests that new hires find the

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information on the page valuable. This also suggests the necessity of information found through this resource. The analytics also show the growing trajectory of new hires at SkyWest and their ability to access the site and revisit the content before attending the Employment Center.

Below are some comments/ responses from a quasi-qualitative solicitation sent by email to a handful for recent new hires. These individual received the email outlined below and following are their responses. They sent in comments regarding their experience and suggestions for future opportunities for the site.

*<Name>*

*Welcome to SkyWest! Can you please take a and provide some feedback concerning your experience with the New Hire Welcome page and how it impacted you experience while you were in the hiring process and a newbie at SkyWest? Was this page a helpful tool and do you have any suggestions on how you experience could have been better?*

*Looking forward to hearing from you.*

*Thank You*

Responder #1:

*I really liked it! I thought it was really straightforward and easy to navigate. It was a good taste of the full site without feeling too overwhelmed. I don't recall exactly what I was able to access, but I remember when I first started I was interested most in finding out more about the health and travel benefits, so I remember I read through the travel manual as soon as I had access to it, and I did a lot of looking into the health benefits as well. But I liked that the trainings and EC travel info were right there up front, as well as any tasks/forms I needed to complete*

Responder #2:

*Overall, it was easy to access and looked official and functioned well as a whole. So a good first impression I'd say. I remember trying to find information about the times I was supposed to be at the*

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*employment center, but only being able to find directions and no other information about what the employment center required like dress code, times, if I needed to provide myself a lunch etc. Eventually an email came answering most of that, but that was the one thing I remember being frustrated with.*

*Beyond that, it was all nice and useful! Everything was helpful but very simple since it could have been easy to be overwhelmed. I particularly remember stumbling onto the “SkyWest History” and thinking that was cute and interesting. It gave me a really positive impression of the company.*

*Hmmm... other things I remember:*

*-I did not go through any of the Tutorials for the site. Since I generally don't on any site.*

*-The “Before your first day” category was really clear and user friendly for me. That was helpful.*

*- The “Travel Introduction” felt a little bit overwhelming in content and structure, but really there's just a lot to know so I'm not sure how/if anything would be changed*

**Responder #3:**

*I feel like I used it a TON before I started working. I was so excited to just dive in and know everything SkyWest. I think any extra aviation study materials or SkyWest info that a new hire might need to know (like airport codes) could be added. I was so excited to be working here that I probably would have spent hours studying anything I could get my hands on.*

*The welcome page helped me to find the EC in SLC. I really like that it includes our Guiding Principles because those are covered so thoroughly in the EC that I kept wanting to reference them and remember what we talked about. I think that it was pretty user friendly. Some of the tabs at the side were confusing because I didn't actually have access to them until after I went through the EC.*

The track record, found in the analytics of the New Hire Welcome page, clearly demonstrate its value to HR and new hires for all of SkyWest's work groups. Although there are components to the site that can be improved, from this foundation the company has outlined additional plans for further work group customization. The initial approach was successful in its execution and functionality. As the organization continues to grow, it's becoming more important to capture and engage employees at every level and this is one of many ways we continue to pursue that goal.

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## Conclusion

I can remember quite vividly how excited I was to receive a conditional job offer from SkyWest Airlines. However, after a few days my excitement was replaced by anxiety. I was most anxious about the orientation process and whether or not I would enjoy working with my coworkers and supervisors. A New Hire Page that provided in-depth content on the company, culture, department goals, executives, and their overall expectations would have been useful in reducing the unknown.

Through the development of this project I've been able to extend and challenge myself professionally and academically. One of the main and tangible benefits I received from spearheading this new approach was the promotion to Corporate Communications Internal Manager. I leveraged my performance on this project, to compete and ultimately acquire the promotion, outdoing more senior employee candidates.

No other platform at the time, could have given me the unique edge that the SkyWest Welcome page project did. From the ground up, I was able to demonstrate the amount of talent, creativity and project management skills that were required to spearhead a major corporate project. I also had the opportunity to work with various department leaders and build professional credibility, which takes most employees extended years' service at SkyWest. I credit my success to the fundamental concepts learned in my undergraduate degree at Dixie State University and the professional leadership, communication acumen and mentorship acquired through my courses as a graduate student at Southern Utah University. These core skills from my

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academic background have allowed me to keep up with more experienced leaders at SkyWest, who would have ultimately been first choice for a complex project such as this one.

Here below are specific take a-ways that I learned and skills that will serve me well beyond this project and SkyWest Airlines:

- Managing a project with various departments input and competing priorities.
- Managing expectations and communicating/ reiterating key objectives.
- Understanding the concepts of software development, its limitations and staying focused on a user centered experience.
- Coordinating groups to work together to accomplish tasks.
- Developing project timelines and being the master planner.
- Confidence to create and paint a visual picture to get buy-in and approval.
- Demonstrating the poise needed to interact and challenge the status quo.
- Fearless speech in standing by my ideas
- The ability to be proud to stand beside my work.

Since completing the New Hire Welcome page, I've work on a handful of similar projects. I've spearheaded a handful of HR automations that are user experience centered, such as a resource for employees interested in retirement, increasing engagement on the SkyWest Benefits page through modern content management and visual design, and automating the SkyWest Scholarship program to restore credibility and increase objectivity. Through this experience, I am now the main person, department leaders seek for professional advice on intranet employee engagement and product automation.

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My career has taken a more challenging and meaningful turn and I'm grateful for the skills and resources I gain as a graduate student at Southern Utah University. The professional development I've received has made a major impact in my life and career!

I aim high, the ultimate goal of this project is to have a room full of new hires who are informed about their new company and have little to no uncertainty about their future with SkyWest Airlines. Only then can the Employment Center experience be a red-carpet event that welcomes and onboards employees for life.

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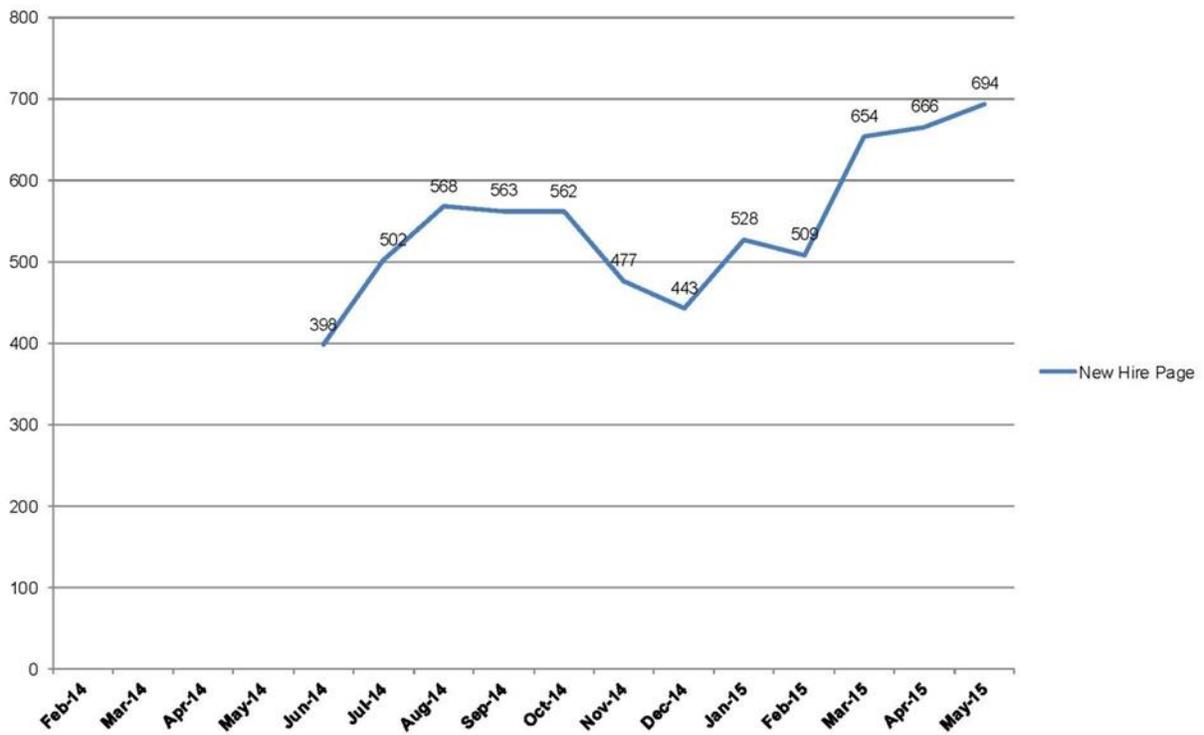
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Appendix 1:

### New Hire May 2015

• The majority of traffic is from new IF and CS employees.



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