STRENGTHENING RETENTION THROUGH MODERN ONBOARDING



RAY GORDON, WWTF ADMINISTRATOR

NHDES WINNIPESAUKEE RIVER BASIN PROGRAM

30+ YEARS




NHDES

NEW REALITY- POST-COVID

HIGHER MOBILITY

FASTER PROMOTIONS

LEAVING JUST AS THEY REACH FULL PRODUCTIVITY



SHRINKING WORKFORCE PIPELINE



- 30–50% OF OPERATORS NEARING RETIREMENT
- SEVERE SHORTAGES + WEAK TALENT PIPELINE
- RETENTION & RECRUITMENT = TOP UTILITY CHALLENGES
- FASTER PROMOTIONS + SHORTER TRAINING CYCLES

WRBP ONBOARING



OPERATIONAL IMPACT: WORK CONTINUES, RISKS REMAIN



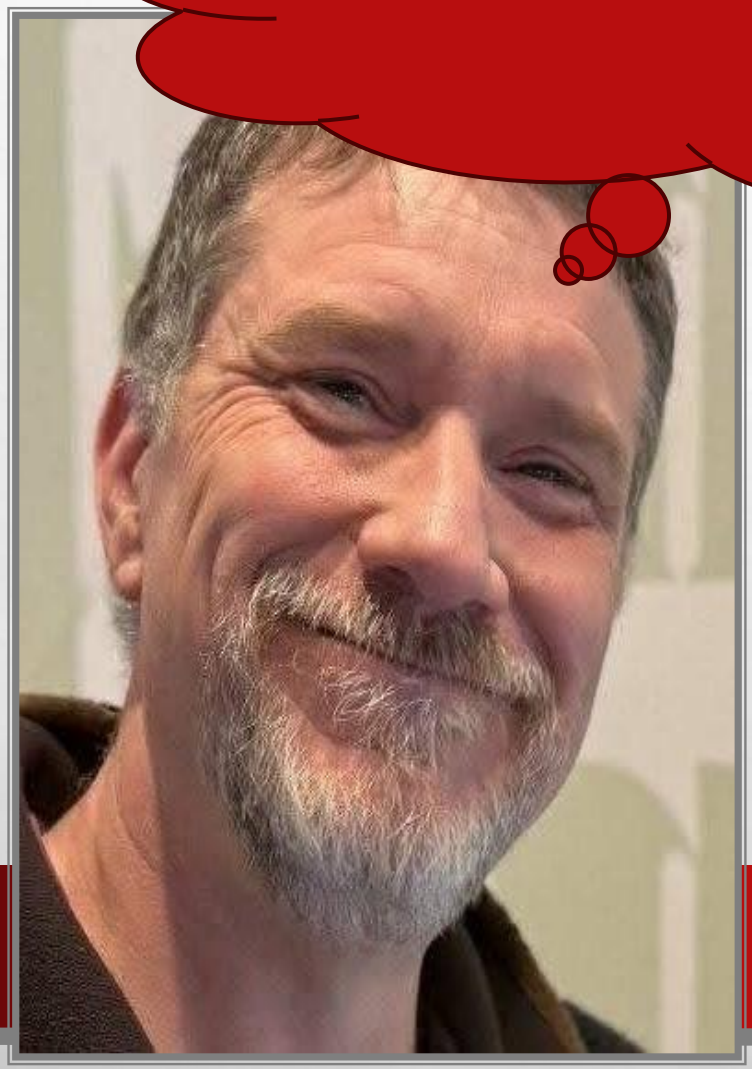


ONE IN THREE EMPLOYEES STARTS A NEW JOB WITH NO ONBOARDING AT ALL



SOURCE: AIHR'S "27+ EMPLOYEE ONBOARDING STATISTICS YOU MUST KNOW IN 2026

How do we keep people longer?



- REDESIGN ONBOARDING AT WRBP
- WROTE A 6 PAGE PAPER
- ARTICLE IN “THE COLLECTOR”

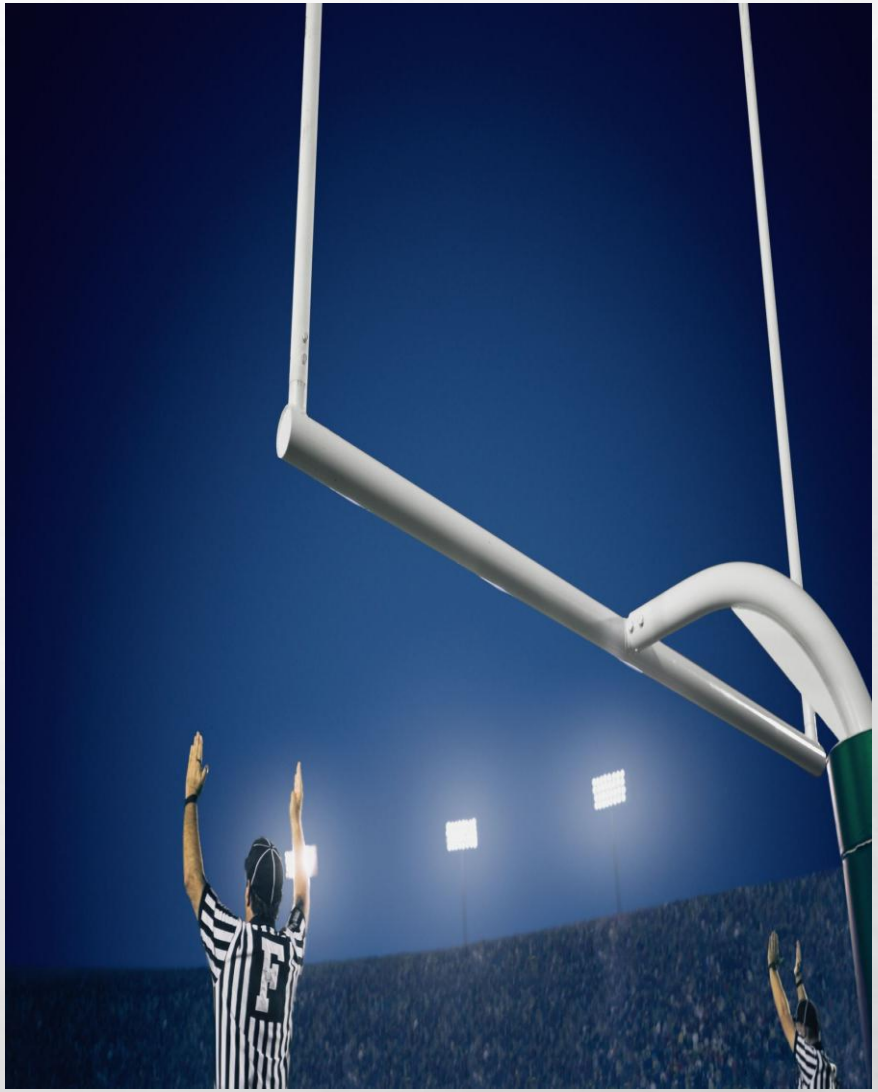
WHAT IS ONBOARDING?



Operations – Culture – Expectations

GOAL

- SAFE,
- CONFIDENT, AND
- PRODUCTIVE



As quickly as possible.

ONBOARDING SYSTEM

PREPARE GUIDE SUPPORT



ONBOARDING SYSTEM

PREPARE

- TOOLS
- ACCESS
- PPE
- RADIOS / COMMS GEAR
- SOPS
- OPERATIONS MANUAL
- FACILITY TOUR

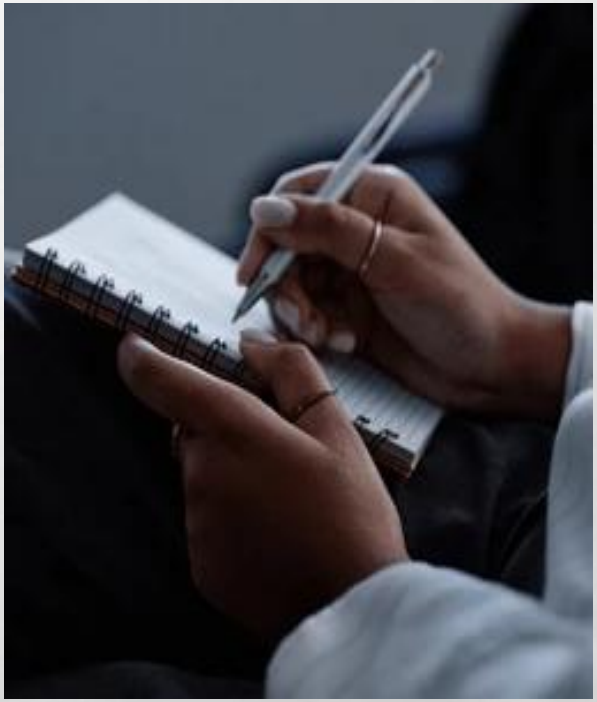


ONBOARDING SYSTEM

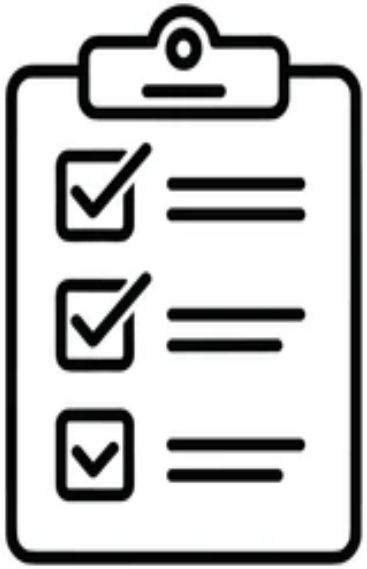


GUIDE

- STRUCTURED TRAINING
- CONFERENCES
- OPERATOR-TO-OPERATOR TRAINING
- SOP WALK-THROUGHS



ONBOARDING SYSTEM





SUPPORT

- CHECK-INS
- INTEGRATION
- MENTORS / PEER PARTNER
- FEEDBACK LOOP

ONBOARDING SYSTEM

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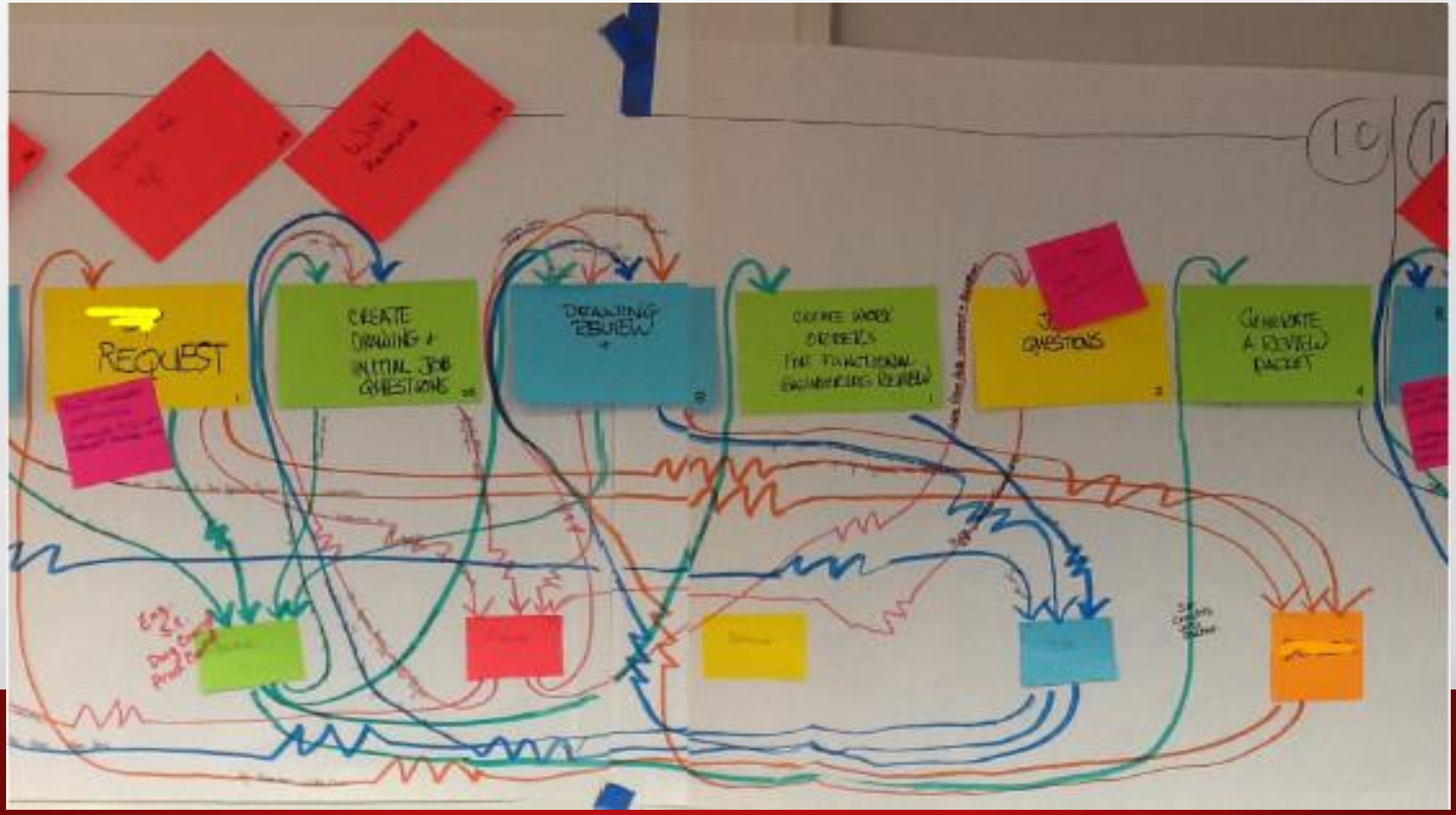
OPERATIONAL PRIORITY



BENEFITS

- FASTER WORKFLOW INTEGRATION
- EARLIER CONTRIBUTION TO PLANT PERFORMANCE
- FEWER SAFETY RISKS
- LESS SUPERVISOR TROUBLESHOOTING TIME

FIXING THE PROCESS: A LEAN APPROACH



WHAT DOES GOOD ONBOARDING LOOK LIKE AT WRBP?



WRBP – ONBOARDING

- PREPARATION TEAM
  - IT
  - ADMINISTRATION
  - SAFETY
  - SUPERVISOR
- CHECKLIST
  - RESPONSIBILITIES
  - CONTACTS
  - ACCOUNTABILITY



WRBP – ONBOARDING

NICK AND BRANDON

IPP



WRBP – ONBOARDING

NICK AND BRANDON



HIRED AND OPERATOR

- ALREADY TRAINED IN LAB
- WASTEWATER LICENSE
- FAMILIAR WITH WWTF
- KNEW DES CULTURE



JOB ROTATIONS!

WRBP – ONBOARDING

NICK AND BRANDON



BALANCE INTERNAL WITH EXTERNAL TRAINING TO GET OWN IDEAS – MAKE DECISIONS ON HIS OWN.

- PRETREATMENT CONF
- PFAS COURSE
- SACRAMENTO – PRETREATMENT INSPECTION COURSE
- VISIT OTHER PROGRAMS

WRBP – ONBOARDING

NICK AND BRANDON

- **FOUND 1 ON 1 TRAINING THE BEST**
- **FOLLOWS UP WITH AN SOP**
- **COMPARES AND IMPROVES**



WRBP – ONBOARDING

NICK AND BRANDON



- ALLOW HIM TO TAKE CONTROL OF PROGRAM AND GIVE STAFF MEMBER OWNERSHIP.
- PERMITS ISSUES IN LESS THAN 30 DAYS
- IDP INSPECTIONS – WITH SUPERVISOR
- SOP EDITED FOR CLARITY – SOP IMPROVEMENT

WRBP – ONBOARDING

NICK AND BRANDON

- SAW THAT PROCESSES AT ONE COMMERCIAL ENTITY MAY NEED AN INDUSTRIAL DISCHARGE PERMIT (IDP).
- ON HIS OWN FOR COMMERCIAL
- FAMILIAR ENOUGH TO COVER IDP INSPECTIONS TO FILL IN.
- HELPS IDENTIFY SAFETY HAZARDS AND IMPROVEMENTS – SAVES TIME BECAUSE HE WAS AN OPERATOR



WRBP – ONBOARDING

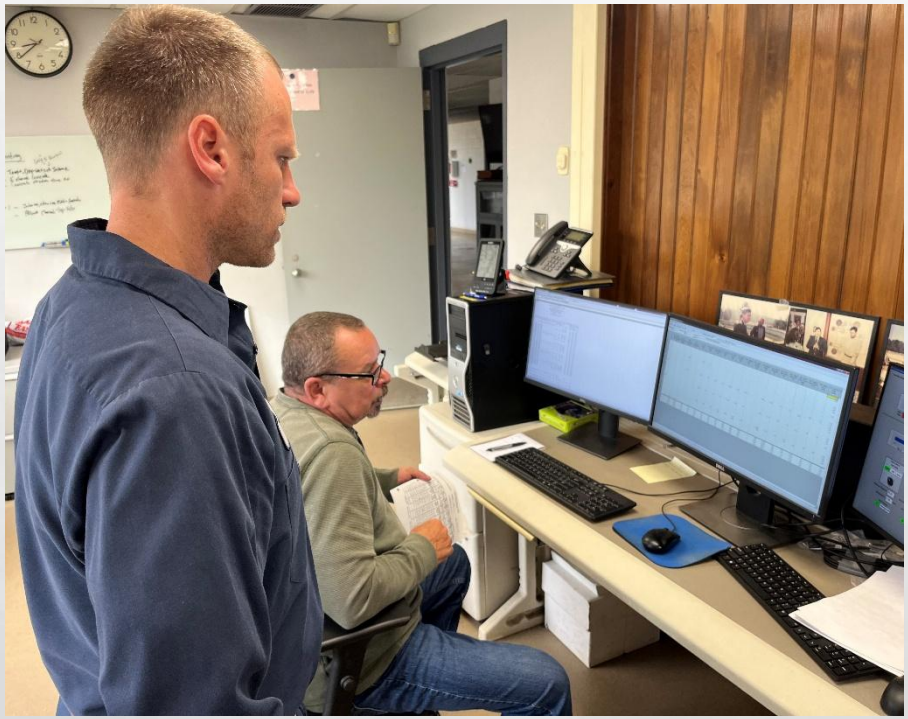
COLLECTION SYSTEM



- BEST ONBOARDING EXPERIENCE AT ANY EMPLOYER

Offered $8.00/hr

WHY RETENTION STARTS AT ONBOARDING

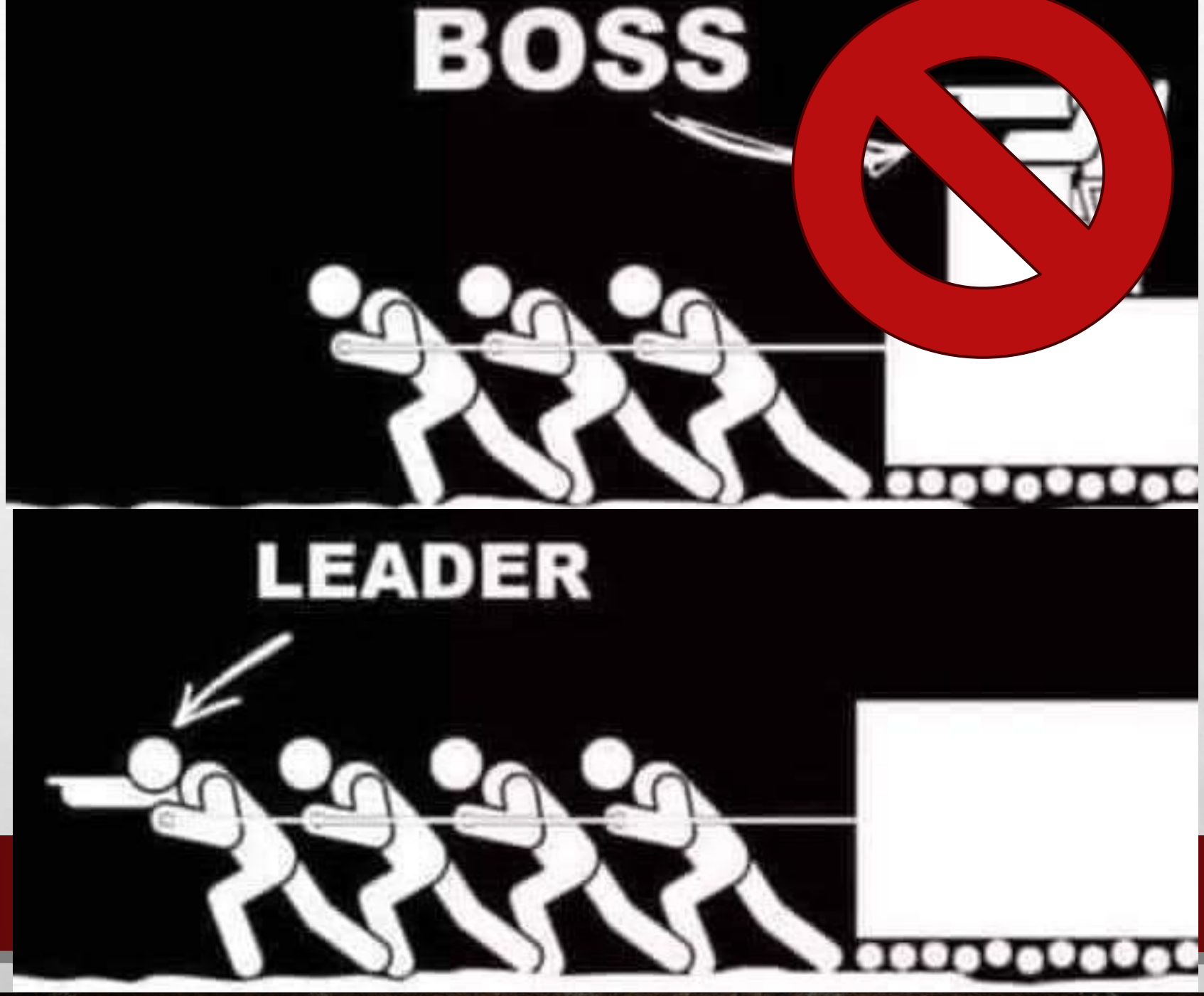


- EARLY EXPERIENCES SHAPE LONG-TERM COMMITMENT
- CONFIDENCE GROWS WHEN EXPECTATIONS ARE CLEAR
- SUPPORT BUILDS TRUST AND REDUCES TURNOVER
- EMPLOYEES STAY WHERE THEY FEEL PREPARED AND VALUED

SUPERVISOR RESPONSIBILITIES



- OPERATIONAL READINESS ON DAY ONE (PPE, RADIOS, LOGINS, SOPS)
- STRUCTURED TRAINING SEQUENCE
- CULTURE & COMMUNICATION
- CLEAR ROLE EXPECTATIONS
- REGULAR CHECK-INS
- DEVELOPMENT PATHWAY - IDP

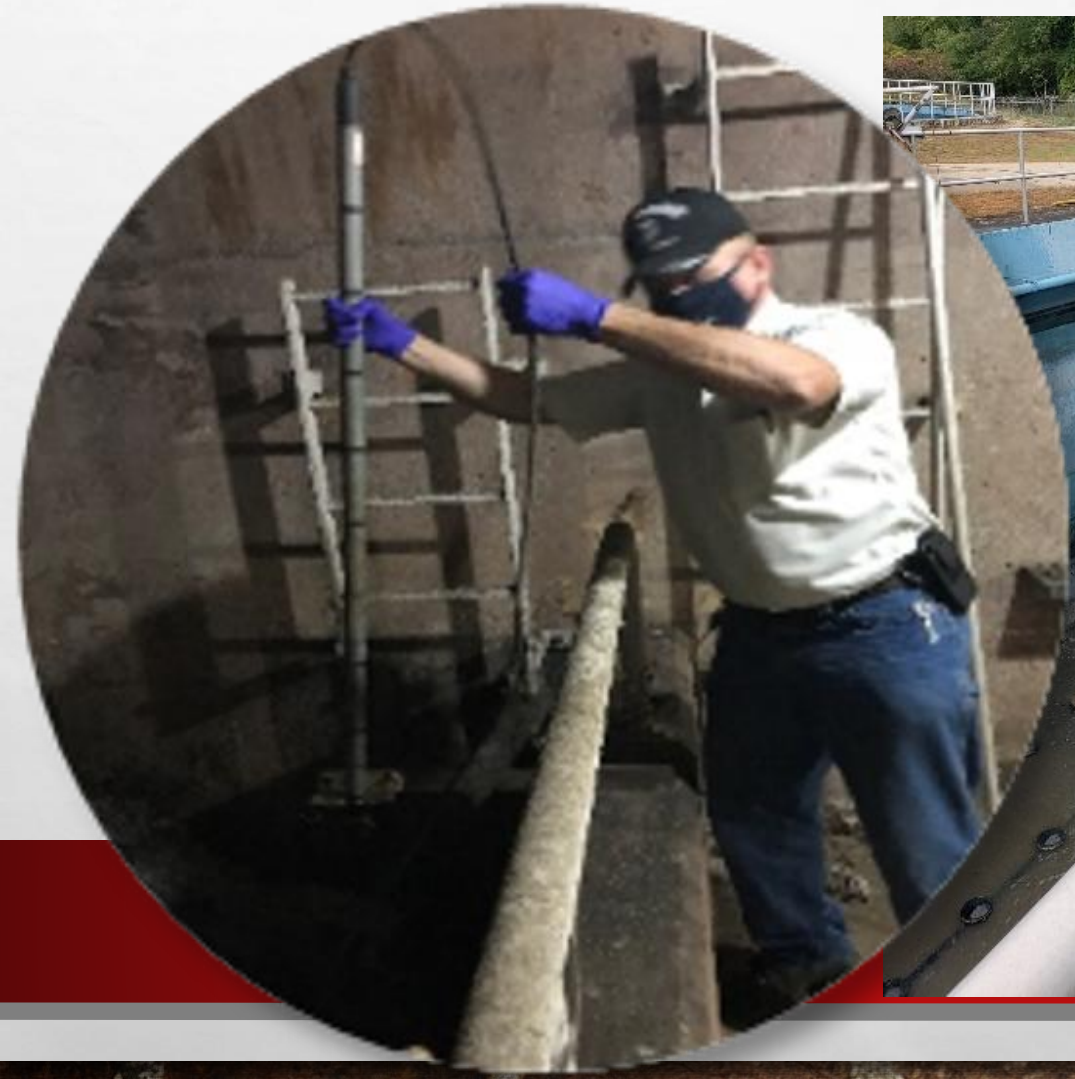

BOSS
LEADER

30-DAY RAMP UP PLAN

- FIRST 30 DAYS: ALIGNMENT + BASIC COMPETENCE
- 30–60 DAYS: GROWING INDEPENDENCE
- 90 DAYS: FULL INTEGRATION
- IDP – FUTURE LOOKING SUCCESSION PLANNING



PREPAREDNESS = FASTER OPERATOR INDEPENDENCE





MEASURING SUCCESS

- FEELING VALUED
- FEELING SUPPORTED
- FEELING PREPARED



CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT



- CONDUCT REGULAR REVIEWS
- UPDATE SOPS, MANUALS, AND ONBOARDING PROCESS
- ADJUST ONBOARDING TO MATCH WORKFORCE CHANGES
- ONBOARDING EVOLVES AS OPERATIONS EVOLVE



ONBOARDING = RETENTION



STRONG ONBOARDING = STRONG RETENTION

GALLUP, REPORTED IN *TEAMBUILDING.COM*'S "30 EMPLOYEE ONBOARDING STATISTICS YOU MUST KNOW IN 2025."

- **ONLY 12% OF EMPLOYEES SAY THEIR ORGANIZATION DELIVERS EFFECTIVE ONBOARDING.**
- **STRONG ONBOARDING PROGRAMS CAN IMPROVE NEW-HIRE RETENTION BY 82%.**
- **EFFECTIVE ONBOARDING CAN INCREASE PRODUCTIVITY BY OVER 70%.**
- **EMPLOYEES WHO EXPERIENCE EXCELLENT ONBOARDING ARE 2.6× MORE LIKELY TO BE EXTREMELY SATISFIED AT WORK.**





RAY GORDON, WASTEWATER

TREATMENT FACILITIES ADMINISTRATOR

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