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Module Five:
Practical CSM Framework Phase 3: Onboarding
Workbook One

Welcome to Module Five of the PracticalCSM.com Certified Customer Success Management Professional training course. I'm Rick Adams and I am the senior consultant here at Practicalcsm.com, and as you know by now, I'm your instructor for this course.

Before watching the Module Five videos, make sure you have read Chapter Six: Practical CSM Framework Phase 3: Onboarding from the Book *Practical Customer Success Management*. Just to mention that it is important that you read the chapters of the book that you are directed to, since the book provides the basic knowledge and understanding which we then build upon in the modules. If you do not read the relevant chapter or chapters of the book then not everything that we discuss in the videos will make as much sense to you or will be so meaningful to you as it would be if you did read the chapter or chapters, and important knowledge, skills and contextual information contained within the book will be missed.

So far in this course we have focused on the preparatory work needed to ensure both the CSM themselves and their customer's lead stakeholders are fully prepared and ready to begin. In this module we look at the first task that the CSM will typically be involved in, which is the task of successfully onboarding the customer. The onboarding process is contained within Phase 3 of the Practical CSM Framework.

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Practical CSM Framework Phase 3: Onboarding – Agenda

➢ What is "Onboarding"?

➢ Why is Onboarding Important?

➢ Onboarding versus Adoption versus Value Realization

➢ Selecting an Onboarding Service Model

➢ Using a Generic Onboarding Service Model

➢ Using a Customized Onboarding Service Model

➢ Onboarding Services at Your Company

Workbook One will focus on the following topics:

What we mean by the term "onboarding" and why onboarding is important to both customers and to the CSM's own company, including a discussion on the financial benefits of reducing customer TtV or time-to-value, defining the differences between onboarding, adoption and value realization, selecting the right onboarding service model, what generic onboarding services typically contain and the way in which they are used, the types of needs that exist for customized or bespoke onboarding services and the role of the CSM in determining and delivering those services and finally the onboarding services at your company and how to make sure what your company provides as an onboarding experience is useful and relevant to your customers.

What is "Onboarding"?

➢ Originated from the experience of boarding an aircraft
➢ Subsequently used to describe the process of getting a new employee started in their new role
➢ More recently has grown to include the idea of "customer onboarding"

The word "onboarding" is not one that is universally loved, being an instance of that type of word that could be described as "corporate speak" which a lot of people find annoying. Presumably it comes from the experience of boarding an aircraft, where there is a need to get passengers on board, seated and comfortable, with their luggage stowed, their seats upright, their phones switched to flight mode and their seatbelts fastened as quickly and with as minimum fuss as possible in order to get the aircraft ready for take-off. It was first used in the business world to describe the process of getting a new employee started in their new role in order to help them become productive as quickly as possible, and has subsequently grown to include the idea of "customer onboarding" which of course is the way in which the term is applied within customer success management.

What is "Onboarding"?

"The process of getting the customer started with a new product, service or solution, with the idea being to help customers start attaining measurable value from their purchase as soon as is practical (as quickly as possible, but always based upon the customer's own timeline) and to reduce customer frustration around lack of information and/or support in those early stages."

You will recall from Chapters Three and Six of my book *Practical Customer Success Management* that the book defines "onboarding" as: "The process of getting the customer started with a new product, service or solution, with the idea being to help customers start attaining measurable value from their purchase as soon as is practical (as quickly as possible, but always based upon the customer's own timeline) and to reduce customer frustration around lack of information and/or support in those early stages.".

What is "Onboarding"?

➢ The process of helping the customer make sense of what they have purchased and get going with using those purchases

➢ The complexity of onboarding requirements varies considerably with the complexity of deploying and using the products and services being onboarded, and of the tasks they will be used for

The process of onboarding is therefore the process of helping the customer make sense of what they have purchased and get going with using those purchases. Depending upon the complexity of what has been purchased this "get going" might mean starting to use the products and services to generate value, but it might also mean the commencement of research and planning for a full-on adoption cycle that involves multiple change management activities relating to the preparation of managers and workers across multiple business functions, departments and geographical locations for changes to one or more of the businesses capabilities (you may recall that a business capability being a particular task or activity that the business needs to perform, as we discussed in Module Two of this course).

Why is Onboarding Important?

➢ Customers who are unclear about what they have purchased, why they have done so, and how to deploy and use it are far more likely to struggle to generate value than will customers who are clear about what they've bought, why they bought it and how to deploy and use it.

➢ Providing this basic information is exactly what onboarding is all about

Whether or not the customer can immediately start using their purchases or has more work that needs doing first, one thing is certain, which is that customers who are unclear about what they have purchased and/or why they have made those purchases and/or how to deploy and use these purchases are customers who are far more likely to struggle to generate value from those purchases than will customers who are clear about what they've bought, why they bought it and how to deploy and use it.

Providing this basic "what have I bought, why did I buy it, and what do I do now?" information is exactly what onboarding is all about.

Why is Onboarding Important?

➢ Onboarding can:

  ➢ increase value generation

  ➢ shorten the time for value to be generated

  ➢ increase customer satisfaction levels

  ➢ reduce customer frustration

  ➢ simplify preparatory tasks

By providing the right type of onboarding service, the CSM's company will potentially be able to increase value generation and shorten the time to getting that value generated, as well as increasing customer satisfaction levels by reducing frustration through explaining and simplifying the preparatory tasks that need to be done. All in all then, when performed to a high standard, onboarding can be a very beneficial and fruitful activity that generates a lot of value for both the CSM's company and the customer alike.

Why is Onboarding Important?

> ➤ Any activity which helps to reduce the time it takes to start generating value from an initiative is likely to generate a greater ROI (return on investment) from that initiative
> ➤ Relatively minor changes to TtV (Time to Value) can sometimes make significant changes to the overall ROI

Looked at from a financial ROI (return on investment) perspective, any activity which helps to reduce the time it takes to start generating value from an initiative is considered a good thing, since faster generation of returns generally leads to less expenditure on borrowing (for example loans can be paid back more quickly), greater cash flows within the company's bank accounts (reducing the amount needed to be borrowed in the first place) and money coming back in earlier can then be turned around and used again either to fund additional phases of this initiative or to help fund other initiatives, which means that overall the company's money ends up working harder for the business by generating more value within a shorter time period.

This difference in TtV (Time to Value) could be relatively minor, but could also be important – indeed it could even be critical for the success or failure of the entire initiative.

	Initiative A			Initiative B		
	Expenditure	Income	Cum Net Value	Expenditure	Income	Cum Net Value
Month 1	- 250,000	-	- 250,000	- 250,000		- 250,000
Month 2	- 25,000	-	- 275,000	- 25,000		- 275,000
Month 3	- 25,000	-	- 300,000	- 25,000	10,000	- 290,000
Month 4	- 25,000	-	- 325,000	- 25,000	10,000	- 305,000
Month 5	- 25,000	10,000	- 340,000	- 25,000	10,000	- 320,000
Month 6	- 25,000	10,000	- 355,000	- 25,000	20,000	- 325,000
Month 7	- 25,000	10,000	- 370,000	- 25,000	20,000	- 330,000
Month 8	- 25,000	20,000	- 375,000	- 25,000	20,000	- 335,000
Month 9	- 25,000	20,000	- 380,000	- 25,000	30,000	- 330,000
Month 10	- 25,000	20,000	- 385,000	- 25,000	30,000	- 325,000
Month 11	- 25,000	30,000	- 380,000	- 25,000	30,000	- 320,000
Month 12	- 25,000	30,000	- 375,000	- 25,000	40,000	- 305,000
Month 13	- 25,000	30,000	- 370,000	- 25,000	40,000	- 290,000
Month 14	- 25,000	40,000	- 355,000	- 25,000	40,000	- 275,000
Month 15	- 25,000	40,000	- 340,000	- 25,000	50,000	- 250,000
Month 16	- 25,000	40,000	- 325,000	- 25,000	50,000	- 225,000
Month 17	- 25,000	50,000	- 300,000	- 25,000	50,000	- 200,000
Month 18	- 25,000	50,000	- 275,000	- 25,000	60,000	- 165,000
Month 19	- 25,000	50,000	- 250,000	- 25,000	60,000	- 130,000
Month 20	- 25,000	60,000	- 215,000	- 25,000	60,000	- 95,000
Month 21	- 25,000	60,000	- 180,000	- 25,000	60,000	- 60,000
Month 22	- 25,000	60,000	- 145,000	- 25,000	60,000	- 25,000
Month 23	- 25,000	60,000	- 110,000	- 25,000	60,000	10,000
Month 24	- 25,000	60,000	- 75,000	- 25,000	60,000	45,000
	- 825,000	750,000		- 825,000	870,000	

Take a look at the financial summaries shown for Initiatives A and B. Both initiatives are identical in terms of how much they cost both in initial, up front capital expenditure and ongoing monthly management and maintenance costs, and both projects generate the same amount of income (which might be in the form of additional revenues, increased profit margins, reduced costs or some combination of these things). This income is relatively small at first in comparison to the monthly expenditures for the initiative, but it gradually rises at the same rate for both initiatives to a maximum ceiling of 60,000. The only difference between the two initiatives is the time it takes for them to start this income generation.

	Initiative A			Initiative B		
	Expenditure	**Income**	**Cum Net Value**	**Expenditure**	**Income**	**Cum Net Value**
Month 1	- 250,000	-	- 250,000	- 250,000		- 250,000
Month 2	- 25,000	-	- 275,000	- 25,000		- 275,000
Month 3	- 25,000	-	- 300,000	- 25,000	10,000	- 290,000
Month 4	- 25,000	-	- 325,000	- 25,000	10,000	- 305,000
Month 5	- 25,000	10,000	- 340,000	- 25,000	10,000	- 320,000
Month 6	- 25,000	10,000	- 355,000	- 25,000	20,000	- 325,000
Month 7	- 25,000	10,000	- 370,000	- 25,000	20,000	- 330,000
Month 8	- 25,000	20,000	- 375,000	- 25,000	20,000	- 335,000
Month 9	- 25,000	20,000	- 380,000	- 25,000	30,000	- 330,000
Month 10	- 25,000	20,000	- 385,000	- 25,000	30,000	- 325,000
Month 11	- 25,000	30,000	- 380,000	- 25,000	30,000	- 320,000
Month 12	- 25,000	30,000	- 375,000	- 25,000	40,000	- 305,000
Month 13	- 25,000	30,000	- 370,000	- 25,000	40,000	- 290,000
Month 14	- 25,000	40,000	- 355,000	- 25,000	40,000	- 275,000
Month 15	- 25,000	40,000	- 340,000	- 25,000	50,000	- 250,000
Month 16	- 25,000	40,000	- 325,000	- 25,000	50,000	- 225,000
Month 17	- 25,000	50,000	- 300,000	- 25,000	50,000	- 200,000
Month 18	- 25,000	50,000	- 275,000	- 25,000	60,000	- 165,000
Month 19	- 25,000	50,000	- 250,000	- 25,000	60,000	- 130,000
Month 20	- 25,000	60,000	- 215,000	- 25,000	60,000	- 95,000
Month 21	- 25,000	60,000	- 180,000	- 25,000	60,000	- 60,000
Month 22	- 25,000	60,000	- 145,000	- 25,000	60,000	- 25,000
Month 23	- 25,000	60,000	- 110,000	- 25,000	60,000	10,000
Month 24	- 25,000	60,000	- 75,000	- 25,000	60,000	45,000
	- 825,000	750,000		- 825,000	870,000	

Initiative A takes two months longer to get off the ground and up and running compared to Initiative B – perhaps due to a carefully thought out and successfully implemented onboarding process for Initiative B. It's only two months different at the start of the project, when in any case the revenues coming in are relatively low – so in terms of cash flow the difference in the first couple of months is fairly negligible – just 20,000 difference by the end of Month 5.

	Initiative A			Initiative B		
	Expenditure	**Income**	**Cum Net Value**	**Expenditure**	**Income**	**Cum Net Value**
Month 1	- 250,000	-	- 250,000	- 250,000		- 250,000
Month 2	- 25,000	-	- 275,000	- 25,000		- 275,000
Month 3	- 25,000	-	- 300,000	- 25,000	10,000	- 290,000
Month 4	- 25,000	-	- 325,000	- 25,000	10,000	- 305,000
Month 5	- 25,000	10,000	- 340,000	- 25,000	10,000	- 320,000
Month 6	- 25,000	10,000	- 355,000	- 25,000	20,000	- 325,000
Month 7	- 25,000	10,000	- 370,000	- 25,000	20,000	- 330,000
Month 8	- 25,000	20,000	- 375,000	- 25,000	20,000	- **335,000**
Month 9	- 25,000	20,000	- 380,000	- 25,000	30,000	- 330,000
Month 10	- 25,000	20,000	- **385,000**	- 25,000	30,000	- 325,000
Month 11	- 25,000	30,000	- 380,000	- 25,000	30,000	- 320,000
Month 12	- 25,000	30,000	- 375,000	- 25,000	40,000	- 305,000
Month 13	- 25,000	30,000	- 370,000	- 25,000	40,000	- 290,000
Month 14	- 25,000	40,000	- 355,000	- 25,000	40,000	- 275,000
Month 15	- 25,000	40,000	- 340,000	- 25,000	50,000	- 250,000
Month 16	- 25,000	40,000	- 325,000	- 25,000	50,000	- 225,000
Month 17	- 25,000	50,000	- 300,000	- 25,000	50,000	- 200,000
Month 18	- 25,000	50,000	- 275,000	- 25,000	60,000	- 165,000
Month 19	- 25,000	50,000	- 250,000	- 25,000	60,000	- 130,000
Month 20	- 25,000	60,000	- 215,000	- 25,000	60,000	- 95,000
Month 21	- 25,000	60,000	- 180,000	- 25,000	60,000	- 60,000
Month 22	- 25,000	60,000	- 145,000	- 25,000	60,000	- 25,000
Month 23	- 25,000	60,000	- 110,000	- 25,000	60,000	10,000
Month 24	- 25,000	60,000	- 75,000	- 25,000	60,000	45,000
	- **825,000**	**750,000**		- **825,000**	**870,000**	

However, look at the difference after two years. By Month 24, the net cash flow for Initiative A is minus 75,000 (ie the initiative has cost 75,000 more in expenditure than what it has returned within this period). For Initiative B the situation is entirely different. For this initiative the net cash flow for the same period is plus 45,000 – which means that the initiative has now paid for itself and is making money not costing money, and in fact has returned 120,000 more by this stage than Initiative A.

	Initiative A			Initiative B		
	Expenditure	**Income**	**Cum Net Value**	**Expenditure**	**Income**	**Cum Net Value**
Month 1	- 250,000	-	- 250,000	- 250,000		- 250,000
Month 2	- 25,000	-	- 275,000	- 25,000		- 275,000
Month 3	- 25,000	-	- 300,000	- 25,000	10,000	- 290,000
Month 4	- 25,000	-	- 325,000	- 25,000	10,000	- 305,000
Month 5	- 25,000	10,000	- 340,000	- 25,000	10,000	- 320,000
Month 6	- 25,000	10,000	- 355,000	- 25,000	20,000	- 325,000
Month 7	- 25,000	10,000	- 370,000	- 25,000	20,000	- 330,000
Month 8	- 25,000	20,000	- 375,000	- 25,000	20,000	- 335,000
Month 9	- 25,000	20,000	- 380,000	- 25,000	30,000	- 330,000
Month 10	- 25,000	20,000	- 385,000	- 25,000	30,000	- 325,000
Month 11	- 25,000	30,000	- 380,000	- 25,000	30,000	- 320,000
Month 12	- 25,000	30,000	- 375,000	- 25,000	40,000	- 305,000
Month 13	- 25,000	30,000	- 370,000	- 25,000	40,000	- 290,000
Month 14	- 25,000	40,000	- 355,000	- 25,000	40,000	- 275,000
Month 15	- 25,000	40,000	- 340,000	- 25,000	50,000	- 250,000
Month 16	- 25,000	40,000	- 325,000	- 25,000	50,000	- 225,000
Month 17	- 25,000	50,000	- 300,000	- 25,000	50,000	- 200,000
Month 18	- 25,000	50,000	- 275,000	- 25,000	60,000	- 165,000
Month 19	- 25,000	50,000	- 250,000	- 25,000	60,000	- 130,000
Month 20	- 25,000	60,000	- 215,000	- 25,000	60,000	- 95,000
Month 21	- 25,000	60,000	- 180,000	- 25,000	60,000	- 60,000
Month 22	- 25,000	60,000	- 145,000	- 25,000	60,000	- 25,000
Month 23	- 25,000	60,000	- 110,000	- 25,000	60,000	10,000
Month 24	- 25,000	60,000	- 75,000	- 25,000	60,000	45,000
	- 825,000	750,000		- 825,000	870,000	

This is not the only difference however. Take a look at the "Cumulative Net Value" column for each initiative. Note that the maximum amount that the business is down by for Initiative B is 335,000 (in Month 8), whereas the maximum amount that the business is down by for Initiative A is 385,000 (in Month 10). This means that for Initiative A the business must accept a greater maximum shortfall in any one month than for Initiative B, and that shortfall will have to be covered somehow – either by cash which could have been invested elsewhere to perform useful work for the company, or by additional borrowing (for example on overdraft) which of course will cost the company in interest payable on the loan.

	Initiative A			Initiative B		
	Expenditure	Income	Cum Net Value	Expenditure	Income	Cum Net Value
Month 1	- 250,000	-	- 250,000	- 250,000		- 250,000
Month 2	- 25,000	-	- 275,000	- 25,000		- 275,000
Month 3	- 25,000	-	- 300,000	- 25,000	10,000	- 290,000
Month 4	- 25,000	-	- 325,000	- 25,000	10,000	- 305,000
Month 5	- 25,000	10,000	- 340,000	- 25,000	10,000	- 320,000
Month 6	- 25,000	10,000	- 355,000	- 25,000	20,000	- 325,000
Month 7	- 25,000	10,000	- 370,000	- 25,000	20,000	- 330,000
Month 8	- 25,000	20,000	- 375,000	- 25,000	20,000	- 335,000
Month 9	- 25,000	20,000	- 380,000	- 25,000	30,000	- 330,000
Month 10	- 25,000	20,000	- 385,000	- 25,000	30,000	- 325,000
Month 11	- 25,000	30,000	- 380,000	- 25,000	30,000	- 320,000
Month 12	- 25,000	30,000	- 375,000	- 25,000	40,000	- 305,000
Month 13	- 25,000	30,000	- 370,000	- 25,000	40,000	- 290,000
Month 14	- 25,000	40,000	- 355,000	- 25,000	40,000	- 275,000
Month 15	- 25,000	40,000	- 340,000	- 25,000	50,000	- 250,000
Month 16	- 25,000	40,000	- 325,000	- 25,000	50,000	- 225,000
Month 17	- 25,000	50,000	- 300,000	- 25,000	50,000	- 200,000
Month 18	- 25,000	50,000	- 275,000	- 25,000	60,000	- 165,000
Month 19	- 25,000	50,000	- 250,000	- 25,000	60,000	- 130,000
Month 20	- 25,000	60,000	- 215,000	- 25,000	60,000	- 95,000
Month 21	- 25,000	60,000	- 180,000	- 25,000	60,000	- 60,000
Month 22	- 25,000	60,000	- 145,000	- 25,000	60,000	- 25,000
Month 23	- 25,000	60,000	- 110,000	- 25,000	60,000	10,000
Month 24	- 25,000	60,000	- 75,000	- 25,000	60,000	45,000
	- 825,000	750,000		- 825,000	870,000	

From both a financial ROI perspective and indeed from a risk management perspective (since after all who can say what will happen in three years' time or more and therefore how can we know how well these initiatives will perform in the longer term past the 24 months that have been calculated?), Initiative B is a considerably more attractive prospect for investment than initiative A.

Perhaps this company can only invest in one or the other initiative since they do not have the funds and/or other resources to do both. Which one would you choose if you were a member of the Investment Committee and you were comparing the business cases for Initiatives A and B that had been submitted to you – all other things being equal?

Hopefully you can see from this example that a company that can offer a faster TtV to their customers through the provision of a high quality onboarding service can not only generate better returns for their customers but can actually use this service as part of the business case in sales proposals, which will enable that company to win more business from customers than it might otherwise be able to do.

Why is Onboarding Important?

➢ Senior decision makers need to be able to predict, calculate and measure value to a sufficient level of accuracy to be able to approve the initiative

➢ CSMs who expect to meet senior decision makers are advised to familiarize themselves with basic business finance concepts and terminology

Hopefully you have also seen how important it is to understand "value" and to be able to predict, calculate and measure value to a sufficient level of accuracy, since doing so provides both the justification to senior decision makers that enables them to approve the initiative (and therefore the purchase of the products and services) in the first place and the ability to subsequently confirm the results and prove the amount of value returned from the initiative over however many months and years the initiative remains active for.

Any customer success manager who expects to attend meetings and hold conversations with senior business decision makers is therefore strongly advised to familiarize themselves with basic business finance concepts and terminology. They do not need to be financial experts, but if the CSM plans to spend time talking to senior business decision makers, they should at least be comfortable with the basics, and as a general rule, the more comfortable you are with financial decision making, the better you can advise and assist senior decision makers and the more valuable you will become to them and ultimately therefore to your own company.

Onboarding versus Adoption versus Value Realization

➢ Within the CS profession there are different definitions for the terms "onboarding", "adoption" and "value creation"

➢ In this course, "*onboarding*" refers to initial familiarization with the solution, "*adoption*" refers to all other preparations needed to be fully productive, and ongoing value creation is referred to as "*value realization*"

Some people within the customer success profession use the term "onboarding" to include everything the customer needs to be fully productive in its use of the solution it has purchased. They then use the term "adoption" to refer to the process of using the solution. Others use the term "onboarding" to just refer to getting the customer familiarized with the solution and "adoption" to refer to the longer and more complex process of preparing the customer to be fully productive, with ongoing value creation being called just that, or (as with me) "value realization". This latter terminology makes most sense to me – especially when you think about the route meaning of each word – and this is the way in which the terms are used within my book *Practical Customer Success Management* and this training course.

	Awareness (A)	Understanding (U)	Readiness (R)
Key Stakeholders	Aware of what that the initiative is and its approximate start date. Aware that they will be involved in the decision making and/or management of the initiative	Fully understands what the initiative is including what is happening, why it is happening and how it will happen. Fully understands their role in the decision making and/or management of the initiative	Is prepared and ready to play their part in initiative-focused decision making and management activities including end user communications, training, testing and ongoing emotional and practical support, as well as any ongoing ivolvement in measurement, reporting and change management decision making
End Users	Aware of what the initiative is and its approximate start date. Aware that they will be involved in performing activities relating to the initiative	Fully understands (as much as necessary for their role) what the initiative is including what is happening, why it is happening and how it will happen. Fully understands their involvement in performing activities relating to the initiative	Is prepared and ready to play their part in performing initiative-focused activities to generate and realize value, including having undergone any needed training and/or testing, and with ongoing emotional and practical support and with output measurement and reporting systems in place

Generic Onboarding

Custom Onboarding

Adoption

This table specifies what might be included within each of the following services – generic onboarding, customized onboarding and full adoption – using these same definitions for onboarding and adoption that are provided within the book and training course:

Generic Onboarding

For Key Stakeholders the generic onboarding service will provide them with awareness of what the initiative is, why it exists and key milestone dates – at least in terms of approximate dates if the final ones have not yet been agreed. In additional, key stakeholders will gain a partial understanding of what their own specific role will be in researching, planning, decision making, training and supporting users, taking measurements and so on.

For End Users, the generic onboarding service will provide them with awareness of what the initiative is, why it exists and the fact that they will have some involvement in performing activities related to it – most likely including a general description of what those activities will be.

Custom Onboarding

For Key Stakeholders the custom onboarding service will provide them with a complete understanding of what their own specific role will be in researching, planning, decision making, training and supporting users, taking measurements and so on, plus it will begin to ready them for whatever role or roles they will be playing in terms of project management, decision making, end user training and support, ongoing measurement and reporting and so on.

For End Users the custom onboarding service will ensure they have an in depth understanding of what the initiative is, why it exists and what their own specific role will be in terms of the initiative-related activities they will be performing, plus an understanding of what further communications, training, support and (if relevant) rewards will be provided to them, together with either a detailed timeline or at least an understanding of key milestones to achieving full readiness.
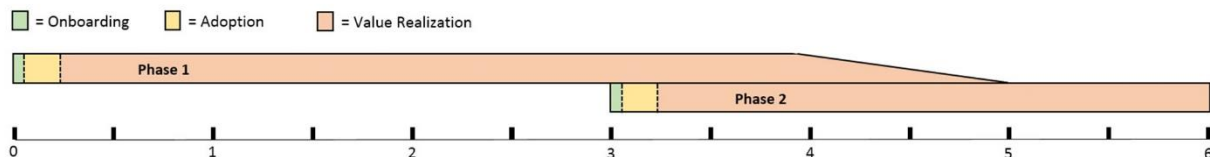
Adoption

For Key Stakeholders the adoption service will ensure their complete readiness for playing their part in the planning and implementation of end user adoption, preparatory to going live with the initiative, which part they will in fact begin to play.

For End Users, the adoption service will provide them with all of the communication, training, testing, ongoing support and any other resources and/or assets they need as well (of course) as access to the new products and services themselves to allow them to commence utilization of those products and services to perform their activities and generate the desired outputs.

Value Realization

Value realization (which is not shown in the table) is able to commence just as soon as the end users are able to start generating outputs from using the new products and services – in other words as soon as Adoption has been completed. The point of onboarding and adoption then is to get to this "value realization" stage as swiftly and efficiently as possible so that value can start to get realized.

Now let's put the whole thing together in the context of the entire timeline of an initiative. Using these same definitions for onboarding (whether provided as a generic or custom service), adoption and finally for value realization itself, this illustration provides an example of how these three stages might fit together within a multi-phase customer initiative. The illustration covers the first six years of a customer initiative. We see that Phase 1 commences on Day 1 of Year 1 and the first stage is for it to undergo Onboarding, which takes perhaps two or three weeks to complete, and is followed by the Adoption stage which takes a little longer – perhaps two or three months to complete. After this, Phase 1 moves into its ongoing Value Realization stage which is continued until the end of Year 5, with the amount of value being realized gradually reducing over the course of that year. Meantime, Phase 2 commences at the end of Year 3 and start of Year 4, and again there is new Onboarding to complete in the first week or so, followed by further Adoption that takes place over the first two or three months. After this, we see Phase 2 also moving into its Value Realization stage, which it continues through to at least Year 6 and presumably beyond.

In terms of time then, most of the initiative's time is spent in Value Realization. Onboarding and Adoption take relatively short time frames to complete and are themselves of course sources of cost rather than sources of value, but are necessary in order to get everything and everyone ready for the value to get generated as soon as possible and to the maximum amount possible.

In this example of course, this customer's customer success manager will be most active immediately before and during the first part of Years 1 and 4 when there is onboarding and adoption work to be determined, agreed, planned, implemented and measured. During the remaining time, the CSM will still be involved in routine and regular measuring and reporting of value, plus of course in ensuring any

service renewals take place without any hitches, and finally they will probably also be involved in general planning for each phase before they occur, particularly for Phase 2 onwards, since by this time they have built up several years' worth of knowledge and experience of the customer and have formed strong relationships with key stakeholders, making them a valuable contributor to any planning meetings.

Selecting an Onboarding Service Model

➢ Deciding what onboarding services to offer is a decision for senior business leaders

➢ The same type and level of onboarding service does not necessarily fit all circumstances, even within one company, or even within one product or service

➢ Variation occurs due to complexity of solution, maturity of the customer, and complexity of utilization

Deciding on exactly what you will offer to your customers as an onboarding experience is of course very important. This is a decision for senior business leaders to make, since it will affect both the costs of providing the service to customers and the level of outcomes that customers (and therefore the company itself) could expect to obtain from it. This course is aimed at customer success managers themselves rather than at senior business leaders, so we will focus on the role of CSMs once this decision has been made rather than spending time thinking about and discussing how to calculate the the pros and cons of different onboarding models and what criteria to use to determine what is best for your company's products and services.

It is worthwhile our noting however that when it comes to onboarding one size does not necessarily fit all even within one company, or sometimes even within one product or service. It may make sense to offer different levels of onboarding service for different products and services – for example because some products and services are more complicated or expensive or time consuming to understand and/or to get up and running and generating value than others. It may also make sense to offer different levels of onboarding service for different customers, since some customers may not require so much onboarding help and assistance as others – perhaps due to a less sophisticated or complicated way in which they will be utilizing the products and services they have purchased, or due to their existing experience of and understanding of how to generate value from those products and services, or simply because of the size and financial value of the deal that makes more in depth onboarding too expensive to provide for smaller customer purchases. CSMs might therefore encounter a range of different onboarding service models and levels even within the one company that they work for.

Using a Generic Onboarding Service Model

> A generic onboarding service is one in which all customers get the same service, and the process followed (together with any resources used and assets provided) is not modified or customized to suit specific customers

> The CSM provides each customer with a generic "Welcome Kit" which is reviewed with stakeholders to ensure they understand its contents

A generic onboarding service is one in which all customers get the same service and the process followed together with any resources used and assets provided are not modified or customized in any way to suit the specific needs of each customer – except perhaps to replace a small amount of very basic contextual information – things like the stakeholders' names, quantities purchased, start dates, log in names and passwords, etc that will of course be different for each customer.

For a generic onboarding service, the CSM's job is to provide the customer with (or if already provided by someone else then to ensure they have – and know that they have) the "Onboarding Kit" or "Welcome Pack" or whatever other name is given to the basic set of information that customers are provided with after purchasing the solution they have purchased, and to make sure that the customer understands what the information contained within this welcome kit is, why it is important, who should have access to it and what they need to do next to get themselves started.

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Using a Generic Onboarding Service Model

Particularly in the case of generic onboarding I see the CSM's role as akin to being the host at a party or other event – welcoming in the new guest, handing them there preferred drink, showing them where all the facilities are, explaining what will be happening later, introducing them to a few of the other guests and generally spending time making sure they are comfortable and happy. Perhaps you have been to a an event before where the host has done a fantastic job of ensuring you feel welcome and wanted, that you know what the rules and expectations are, that you know where everything is and that you know what to expect from this point forwards. If so then *that* is what you want to try to capture and emulate as a customer success manager during the customer onboarding process.

Perhaps also you have been to an event before where this didn't happen. Perhaps instead you had to ring the bell and knock at the door for a long time before it eventually got opened by someone who gives the appearance of not fully expecting you, but then grudgingly ushers you in, tells you where to go to help yourself to a drink (which perhaps turns out to have omitted key information such as which cupboard the glasses are kept in) and then rushes off to do something important, leaving you standing there feeling rather awkward, unsure of your surroundings and unclear as to what you should do next. If so then *this* is an example of what you want to try to *avoid at all costs* in terms of the onboarding experience you offer your customers.

Using a Generic Onboarding Service Model

CSMs must make sure they are familiar with three key information areas:

1. The customer – who they are and what they do, what their initiative is, what outcomes they are looking to achieve, who the key stakeholders are and which users (in general terms) will be impacted by the implementation of the solution

The secret to hosting a great event (I am told) is in the preparation. As for party hosts, so for customer success managers. If you want to provide a great onboarding experience for your customers you are unlikely to be successful if you just show up to do the onboarding without having prepared the way first.

CSMs must make sure they are familiar with three key information areas:

The customer – ie who they are and what they do, what their initiative is, what outcomes they are looking to achieve, who the key stakeholders are and which users (in general terms) will be impacted by the implementation of the solution they have purchased from you

Using a Generic Onboarding Service Model

CSMs must make sure they are familiar with three key information areas:

2. The solution – what products and services they have purchased, the core features and functions, quantities purchased, and additional services such as customization, installation, configuration, management, maintenance, support etc

The solution – ie what products and services they have purchased, the core features and functions of each component, what quantities have been purchased, and what additional services such as customization, installation, configuration, management, maintenance, support etc have been purchased

Using a Generic Onboarding Service Model

CSMs must make sure they are familiar with three key information areas:

3. Adoption requirements– what the customer needs to do to access the solution, what (if any) steps need to be take to prepare it for users, the training and certification requirements, the communication of change to end users, and options for end user support

Adoption requirements – ie what the customer needs to do in order to get up and running and ultimately to fully adopt and generate value from the solution in terms of how to access and use the solution, what (if any) steps need to be take to get the solution ready for users to start using it, the training and certification requirements, the communication of change to end users needs and what the options are for providing end user training and support (for example online learning verses classroom courses)

Using a Generic Onboarding Service Model

CSMs must make sure they are familiar with three key information areas:

1. The customer
2. The solution
3. Adoption requirements

Armed with the relevant information for these three key areas and having of course familiarized themselves with the contents of the welcome kit itself, the CSM should be ready to contact the customer, introduce themselves (if necessary) and make an appointment (either online or face to face) with the relevant key stakeholders to provide them with the welcome kit if they do not already have it and to review its contents with them, answer any questions and make sure the stakeholders understand what now needs to be done to get their initiative underway.

Using a Customized Onboarding Service Model

➤ A customized onboarding service is one in which each customer receives a bespoke service, custom-designed to meet their specific needs and requirements

➤ Customized onboarding services are considerably more time consuming and expensive, involving in-depth customer-facing conversations to determine requirements followed by bespoke development work

Let's turn our attention now to the other option – that being to provide customers with a customized or bespoke onboarding service. In this model, rather than providing identical content to customers using an identical process to do so, both content and process are custom-designed to suit the specific requirements of each individual customer.

Note that in the generic onboarding service model, the customer success manager should still have researched background information about the specific customer and their requirements so that they can provide contextually relevant best practice advice to them. The difference with a customized onboarding service is not so much that the CSM has bothered to perform any research about the customer and get up to speed on the customer's initiative and outcome requirements. Rather it is about how much time and effort is spent up front in catering to that customer's needs.

Using a Customized Onboarding Service Model

➢ In the generic onboarding model:

  ➢ the CSM delivers basic, generic information to the customer and provides some basic onboarding and adoption advice to key stakeholders

  ➢ the customer's key stakeholders make sense of this information and disseminate it throughout the rest of their organization

Onboarding could be viewed as a process which is performed in partnership between the solution provider (ie the CSM's company) and the customer.

In the generic onboarding model, the CSM delivers basic, generic information to the customer and provides some basic onboarding and adoption advice to key stakeholders and of course makes themselves available to answer any specific questions and follows up any specific queries and deals with any specific problems that might arise. Meantime the customer's key stakeholders are responsible for making sense of the information and advice they have been given and to work out how best to disseminate that information throughout the rest of their organization.

Using a Customized Onboarding Service Model

➤ This "one size fits all" approach may not work for larger, more complex initiatives:
  ➤ mid level managers might need information about the initiative and how it will impact their department or function and may require time to prepare for changes
  ➤ team leaders might need more detail about how their team will be impacted in terms of changes to tools and processes, training, testing and support

For larger companies and more complex initiatives, one size will most definitely not fit all in terms of what people need to know and how (and indeed when) the information they need should be presented to them. For example, mid level managers such as heads of department might need a lot more information about the initiative and how it will impact their department or function than a junior manager such as a team leader might need, and they may also require a lot more time in which to prepare for any upcoming changes. On the other hand, team leaders might need a lot more detail about exactly how their team will be impacted by the initiative and what it will mean in terms of changes to tools used and processes followed, including training requirements to familiarize their team members with those changes to tools and processes, testing to ensure team members are capable of fulfilling any new duties, monitoring and recording of activity to ensure quality, efficiency and productivity levels are maintained, support options for team members to use if they experience problems, and so on. In effect, a lot of the stuff that team leaders need to know will need to be determined by the department head, so of course until department heads have been consulted, onboarding for team leaders cannot occur.

Using a Customized Onboarding Service Model

➤ With a generic onboarding service, the customer will deal with communicating change to the wider organization

➤ With a customized onboarding service, the communication of change to the wider organization is shared, with the CSM's company helping the customer organization to determine its end user communication requirements and develop the relevant content

With a generic onboarding service, these types of considerations are not relevant to the CSM, since the customer will deal with that side of things themselves.

With a customized onboarding service, the communication of change to the wider organization is shared, with the CSM's company helping the customer organization to determine its end user communication requirements and develop the relevant content.

The Customized Onboarding Process

➢ The CSM meets with the SPL and other customer stakeholders to discuss their onboarding needs and agree the work

➢ Information about which users will be impacted, in what way they will be impacted and what onboarding requirements these users have must be carefully documented

In a customized onboarding engagement, the CSM (and other colleagues as necessary) first meets with the SPL and other customer stakeholders to discuss these onboarding needs and agree what work must be done. This would include a potentially wide ranging conversation about the initiative as a whole and might involve documenting information about all the people who will be impacted by that initiative, in what way they will be impacted and what onboarding requirements these people will need to have met. The CSM and/or their colleagues can contribute to this conversation with best practice ideas and suggestions based upon their experience of similar onboarding processes with previous customers, and may even have a pre-designed and templated best practice workshop process that can be followed to ensure that everything that needs to be thought of, discussed and agreed happens and takes place in the right order.

The Customized Onboarding Process

➢ Once the customer's users' needs have been determined and documented:

  ➢ agreement can be reached on the specific types of customized onboarding help the CSM's company will provide

  ➢ a written proposal can be prepared

  ➢ additional professional services fees can be agreed

From this uncovering of specific customer onboarding needs, a further discussion can take place about the types of help and assistance that the CSM's company may be able to provide, both at no additional charge as part of the general customer success service provided for within the purchase price of the solution itself and as additional profession services that would therefore incur additional fees. Following these discussions, the CSM's company would be likely to follow up with a written proposal that would enable the customer's decision makers to consider their onboarding options and decide what (if any) types of onboarding help and assistance they want to ask the CSM's company to provide them with over and above the "standard generic onboarding service" that they would get anyway.

When is Customized Onboarding Required?

➢ Customized onboarding is required where:

> ➢ the solution is more complex in terms of the features and functions of the products and services it contains
>
> ➢ multiple teams are involved in performing capabilities that will experience changes in process, tools or both
>
> ➢ the customer organization doesn't have the skills, experience or time available to do it themselves

Hopefully what is clear to you then, is that customized onboarding is most likely to be required where the solution itself is more complex in terms of the features and functions of the products and services it contains, where multiple teams are involved in performing capabilities that will experience changes in process, tools or both, and where the customer organization has either not got the skills and experience or the time available to do the work themselves.

What Might Customized Onboarding Include?

➢ Communications to managers and end users, including videos, posters, email campaigns, letters and posts on intranet websites

➢ Notifications about upcoming changes, and dates for attending training and familiarization sessions

➢ Live meetings where employees can try out the new products and services and ask questions about upcoming changes

Customized onboarding is generally about customizing the messages that get communicated to different groups of interested parties within the customer's organization (and sometimes even beyond). These messages might be shared between user groups or might be crafted specifically for each group individually, depending upon these groups' needs

Customized onboarding might include: Communications to managers and end users, including videos, posters, email campaigns, letters and posts on intranet websites. Notifications about upcoming changes, and dates for attending training and familiarization sessions. Live meetings where employees can try out the new products and services and ask questions about upcoming changes

Customized Onboarding Advantages

➢ The customer benefits by using the pool of experience and existing assets/resources of the supplier to get a better quality onboarding result

➢ The suppler benefits by gaining a closer understanding of its customers' needs, by gaining additional revenues and by providing value-added services that differentiates it from competitors

From the customer's perspective it may make sense to get the CSM's company of the solution involved, since of course as the vendor or supplier of the solution, the CSM's company has (or should have) a vast amount of experience with the products and services contained within the solution being sold which the customer can leverage in order to reduce the risk of poor quality onboarding and maximize the value gained from the delivery of a high quality onboarding experience.

Several companies that I have worked with use customized onboarding in their sales and marketing processes as a significant key differentiator between their competitors' offerings and their own offerings, since it potentially enhances the ROI experienced by customers and reduces the risks that are inherent within adopting new products and services. Some of these companies and others too also view customized onboarding as a valuable revenue source, since professional services work tends to command respectable fees and provide generous profit margins that all feed through to the bottom line and (from the customer success team's perspective) can go a long way towards justifying the ongoing costs associated with running a CS team.

Onboarding Services at Your Company

➢ It is essential that CSMs are clear about the types of onboarding services they offer, and which services require additional professional services fees

➢ CSMs must know what onboarding-related assets and resources their company has, so that they can provide them (or provide access to them) to their customers during the onboarding process

What levels and types of onboarding services your own company offers is of course unknown to me. Of course I don't need to know what onboarding services your company provides its customers with but equally of course as a CSM working for that company you most definitely do need to know. If you are unclear as to what onboarding services your company offers, now would be a good time to find out, so that when you are called upon to discuss onboarding options and/or deliver onboarding services to your company's customers you will be better positioned to be able to do so with minimal problems.

It is important to make sure you are clear as to what onboarding-related assets and resources your company has, so that you can provide them (or provide access to them) to your customers during the onboarding process. For example your company may have a whole range of "quick start" guides, FAQ sheets, setup instructions, detailed user guides, technical installation manuals, generic end user training manuals, bite sized "How to…" YouTube video clips, "Ask the Expert" session recordings, and/or goodness knows what else – any and all of which might be of use to your customers as they go through onboarding.

Onboarding Services at Your Company

➢ Customers don't like and don't want:
  ➢ too much information that they cannot make sense of and which they have to digest before they can find the information that they really need
  ➢ missing information without which they are held up in the execution of their initiative, potentially costing them lost time and money

What customers don't like and don't want is a whole bunch of information that they cannot make sense of and which they are expected to sort through and digest before they can find the one or two vital pieces of information that they really do need right now. On the other hand what they also don't like and don't want is a lack of the vital information which they *do* need right now and without which they are held up in the execution of their initiative, potentially costing them lost time and (as we have seen already, lost time can equate to substantial amounts of lost money).

If either of the above situations are true for your organization, then it may be worthwhile for you to sit down as a CS team and discuss how you can make some simple but important improvements to your current onboarding assets and process that might make a big difference to the value your company delivers to the customer.

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