Recreating UNT System's Employee Onboarding

UNT System IT collaborates with UNT System Human Resources to build an entirely new Employee Onboarding experience.

It was 2012 when Human Resources first went to IT Shared Services wanting an electronic employee onboarding system. Their idea was to have new hires complete the required forms and read UNT policies online in their own departments instead of going to HR. Seven months after the project began, ITSS delivered the first online employee onboarding.

IT Shared Services maintained the employee onboarding, but the application interface was not intuitive and looked dated. New hires found it impossible to complete their onboarding without contacting HR's Talent Acquisition for help. It was when UNT System's new chancellor wasn't able to navigate the onboarding application without assistance, she agreed with the vice chancellors: HR's first order of business was to fix employee onboarding.

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> **Donna Asher**
> Deputy Chief Human Capital Officer
> UNT System Human Resources

In the fall of 2019 stakeholders from Human Resources met with UNT System IT leadership and developers. Together, Donna Asher, Deputy Chief Human Capital Officer, Jane Gray, Director of Talent Acquisition, and Jim Buchanan, ERP Application Development Director, gathered to list problems with the current onboarding and outlined the requirements for a new online application.

"The needs of an onboarding system evolved to a point where we became more functional with our smart devices. So we needed to have more mobile capabilities," Donna began, describing a problem as mobile technologies had advanced.

"We had a lot of people who had trouble getting through it. My team would spend a lot of time with them during the process. It was hard to see where people were or if they'd started onboarding," Jane added, as it is her team that provides support to those having issues.

During that fall 2019 requirements gathering session with HR, Jim Buchanan presented UNT System IT's solution: Use PeopleSoft's delivered activity guide, components, and fluid pages as the foundation for an entirely new employee onboarding system. Doing so would mean faster development, no problems with integrating a third-party application, and minimal issues following PeopleSoft upgrades.

"UNT System IT came with a plan of how they believed they could execute this. We also saw the benefit of whenever we use systems that are already connected, we eliminate integration issues. It just made sense for us to go down this path." Donna explained.

On February 26, 2020, with little more than sixty days to complete the project, UNT System IT leadership and developers began work. Collaborating with HR stakeholders and users, they started by listing which objects must stay in the onboarding application and what had to go. Together they created a list of items and assigned them to developers. That same week the Centers for Disease Control confirmed the first possible case of community-spread COVID-19 in the United States. No one anticipated how this would impact the UNT System.

"On the functional side, we had to re-evaluate what critically had to be inside an onboarding system. The ultimate goal is the end-user having the best experience ever. We wanted the new employee to have the absolute best initial

experience because we know what first impressions do. It's very difficult to change your first impression. So we had to make some decisions on what are the things that critically needed to be in onboarding." Donna described the goal of improving the onboarding application as an introduction to the UNT System for new employees.

"We took all of the things that we're currently doing in onboarding, we evaluated, and we took the opportunity to assess the business process as well. We were able to develop some brand-new fluid pages for the custom pieces that we didn't have before, and that weren't in PeopleSoft delivered onboarding," Jim added.

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Once HR determined what would be inside the new onboarding application, the plan was to take the delivered PeopleSoft activity guide, add any additional pages, and make everything fluid while integrating existing PeopleAdmin data. Developers worked fast, completing tasks on the list, and communicated frequently with functional users to get approval on the pages and content. Daily technical meetings and twice-weekly functional meetings checked the progress of development and addressed any problems.

Then on March 19, 2020, the UNT System closed all campuses due to COVID-19. Everyone began working remotely but continued close communication to maintain the best internal and external collaboration. Human Resources user involvement remained high, with over 15 HR functional users and nearly 150 testers helping to assess and test completed pages and functions. Everybody stayed engaged through emails, and daily video conferencing assisted developers in finishing the project before the April 30, 2020 deadline.

"It was such a pleasure how the project was managed from the onset. When I saw the capabilities there, and everyone was very upfront as we were going through it. The response time, the design, the ease of use, and the ability to manipulate the technology behind it. I can't say enough good things about how the process worked, the product itself, and how we worked together to make it happen." Jane said about her team's experience with the project.

"I will tell you mine," Donna began. "What ended up being so fantastic about this, and I echo Jane, is this approach was so different. In the way it was executed with more and focused meetings, it allowed the project to stay on the front burner for both the technical and the functional. So this particular methodology allowed it to be a priority for both parties and to execute this during COVID-19 issues."

"Having that engagement and that accountability really does lead towards a much better user experience," Jim agreed about the project's success.