

Improving Onboarding with Employee Experience Journey Mapping: A Fresh Take on a Traditional UX Technique

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Abstract

We present a creative method for applying the UX technique of journey mapping to improve the onboarding experience of new employees in any organization. Journey mapping is a well-known design research tool used to gain insight into how a user experiences a service, process, or product, with the goal of making informed improvements to deliver a better experience for future users. We argue that journey mapping can also be used to improve the internal process of onboarding new employees and improve the experience for future new hires, which is important because positive onboarding experiences are linked to increased productivity and greater employee retention. We share how other organizations can use journey mapping to improve the onboarding process utilizing our [employee experience journey mapping project toolkit](#) (Frank & McKelvey, 2017) designed to help guide similar projects, complete with shareable templates. In addition, we share the methods used at our library, as well as our findings, recommendations, and lessons learned.

This paper was refereed by Weave's peer reviewers.

Improving Onboarding with Employee Experience Journey Mapping

A number of libraries use methods to better understand user experience, and make decisions based on that insight to guide their futures. Journey mapping is one such method that can be used to document and communicate a user's experience of a product, service, or process from beginning to end, by comparing an expected journey to the actual journey experienced by the user. Kaplan (2016) defines it as "a visualization of the process that a person goes through in order to accomplish a goal. It's used for understanding and addressing customer needs and pain points." Journey maps usually have three parts; the first section is "a lens that provides focus and context for the journey being mapped, [the second is] an area depicting the user's experience, and a third zone [is] for insights derived from analyzing the journey" (Williamson, 2016). Journey mapping allows organizations to gather information that will help them better understand "the frustrations and experiences of [their] customers" (Boag, 2015). Once the user's feelings regarding their interaction with a product or service has been captured (Schmidt & Etches, 2014, p. 1), pain points and happy moments are organized into a visual journey map (Williamson, 2016). Visualizing a user's feelings allows frustrations to be identified and addressed by creating solutions that will accommodate the preferences of many users (Marquez, Downey & Clement, 2015). Happy moments or positive experiences can also be identified and amplified with the goal of improving the experience for future users. See an example of a journey map below (fig. 1).

Journey Map of Scenario to Send a Chat Query to the Library

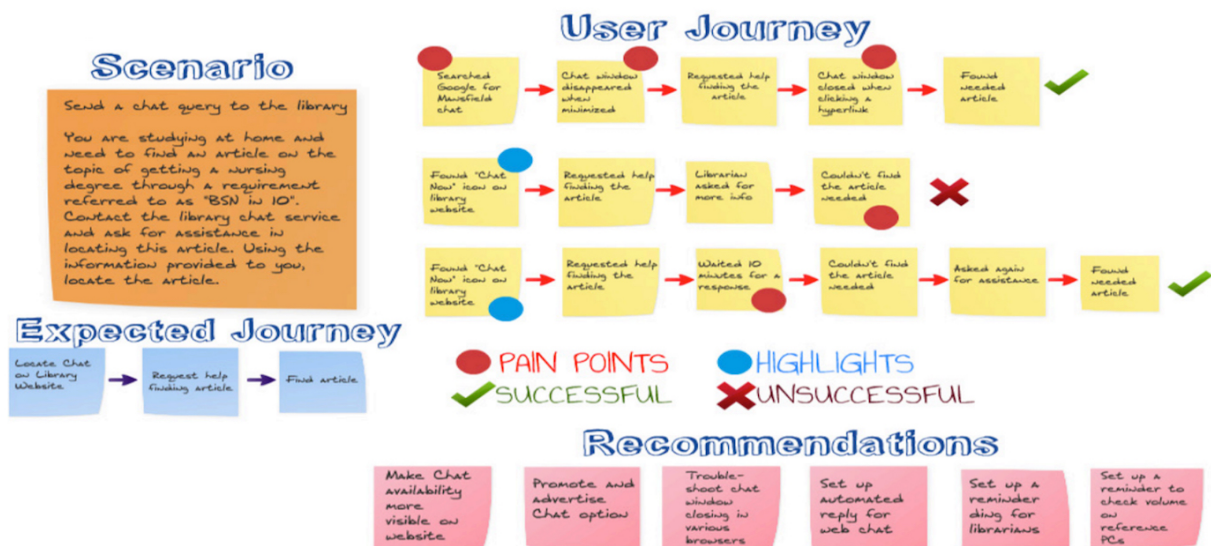


Figure 1. Example of a traditional journey map of a chat reference transaction (Samson, Granath, & Alger, 2017); this work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.

Journey mapping has been used in libraries to understand how students, faculty, and staff use library services with the intent of improving the overall experience of the user. One journey mapping pilot study conducted by a library with first through third year college students, resulted in an increase in usage of their chat platform (Samson, Granath, & Alger, 2017). Journey mapping also helps libraries to create consistent experiences for their users. In a study conducted by the Birmingham City University Library, journey mapping improved the experience of first year students by “provid[ing] a fresh perspective, increas[ing] librarians’ understanding of the student experience when using library services... [and] gave ideas for larger changes for future services developments” (Fichter & Wisniewski, 2015). Other organizations have utilized journey mapping in similar ways. A study in Ireland focused on how journey mapping can be used to improve the patient experience within the healthcare system by using a human-centric design tool to better understand how patients navigate such a complex system (McCarthy et al., 2016). Additionally, large companies such as Amazon and Google, now have customer experience officers on staff, and compare the importance of understanding the customer experience to journey mapping (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016).

While the most common type of journey mapping focuses on external customers, there is also a less common application of the technique that DesigningCX (n.d.) refers to as employee experience journey mapping. DesigningCX (2015) defines this as “a people-centric discovery process” that considers the employee, rather than the customer, as the user in an organization. They describe journey mapping as a way to quickly determine challenges employees are facing, and offer solutions in innovative ways to eliminate, fix, or help solve those challenges, with the goal of improving performance and engagement of employees. One such application is teasing out individual organizational onboarding experiences and improving that experience for new employees. Journey mapping is a helpful design research tool to determine satisfaction of a user, changes in their needs, and other details in each phase of their experience (Howard, 2014). Therefore, journey mapping can be an effective method of assessing an onboarding program from the perspective of the new employee. It can help libraries gain valuable insight into the experience of new hires in the organization, with the goal of improving the onboarding process to boost productivity and retention.

Improving the onboarding experience of new employees is important for the wellbeing of any organization. Research shows that onboarding programs that are viewed positively by employees lead to increased retention, increased employee satisfaction and engagement, and a reduction in the time it takes new employees to become productive in the organization (Hall-Ellis, 2014; Snell, 2006). Snell (2006) suggests that organizations lacking a comprehensive onboarding process risk losing productivity and the interest of their employees. An engaged workforce leads to better services for patrons, and can also lead to a more positive work environment for both staff and library patrons alike. It can also help generate positive perceptions of the library within the community.

We improved onboarding at our own institution by deploying employee experience journey mapping and focusing the lens inward on the Learning and Research Services department at Montana State University Library and its internal onboarding practices. Using employee experience journey mapping, we gained a clear understanding of existing assumptions and the current onboarding culture at MSU Library, which we found to be sporadic and inconsistent. We identified key challenges and areas of improvement, including lack of documentation, outdated procedures, and inconsistency in

the way new employees were oriented to their job. Once we identified the challenges, we were able to implement solutions to improve the onboarding for future employees.

Project Overview

In April 2016, two new hires began their employment in the Learning and Research Services department at MSU Library, presenting an opportunity to learn from new employees and improve our onboarding processes. We suspected our onboarding process could be improved if we just understood our current situation a little better. Utilizing journey mapping as a tool, we captured the experience of both new employees over the course of six months, gathering data we then turned into journey maps. We then used that data to make significant improvements to our new employee onboarding process. As Graybill et al. (2013) writes, “by evaluating and making adjustments to both individual performance and the onboarding process itself, organizations can continually improve getting new employees up to speed, retention rates, job satisfaction levels, and performance results” (p. 203).

At a high level, the project goals were to learn about the current onboarding experience, learn about journey mapping as a design research tool for gathering information, and to identify improvement opportunities within MSU Library. The goal of using journey mapping as a specific tool was to highlight those areas of improvement that would enhance employee onboarding experiences from the user perspective, and challenge assumptions about overall hiring practices. Feedback from participants about the project was also solicited and is discussed in a later section.

In addition to these project goals, an unexpected outcome was the creation of an [employee experience journey mapping project toolkit](#) (Frank & McKelvey, 2017). We did not have a toolkit for our project and felt it would have been helpful, so we created the toolkit to help guide other organizations through their own journey mapping projects. The project toolkit contains necessary documents needed to recreate this project, or variations of it, designed to help improve onboarding at other organizations using journey

mapping as a tool. We encourage others to borrow and adapt what we have done for their own use.

The toolkit contains:

- [Table of Contents](#) – Includes links to each section with editable files explained in more detail below, along with a link to a full PDF version of the toolkit.
- [Project Introduction and Outline](#) – This explains the project in more detail and includes brief information about journey mapping, an overview of the project and goals, and a summary of the project timeline. Use this to help introduce the project to the new employee(s).
- [Timeline and Scheduling Tracker](#) – Use this to help stay on track while conducting this project. There are a lot of meetings that occur between the project facilitator(s) and new employee(s) and tasks that should be completed in between meetings. This timeline will serve as a reminder for when to schedule meetings and identify what should be completed before each meeting.
- [New Employee First Week Agenda Template](#) – This template can be used to help define a schedule for a new employee during their first week(s) on the job.
- [Written Reflection Template](#) – This template of questions can be given to a new employee to help guide them during written reflection exercises. Written reflections are a helpful way to capture the experience of the new employee(s) from their perspective. The questions act as prompts that will hopefully inspire ideas or experiences that they can reflect upon.
- Employee Experience Journey Maps – We have included templates for all three employee experience journey maps ([day one](#), [week one](#), and the [first six months](#)). The files can be downloaded, opened in Google Draw, and modified to fit the scope of your own project.
- [Project Report Template](#) – This is a final project report template that you can use to record all of your findings. The final report can be shared within your own organization and beyond.

Applying the Toolkit

The Timeline

We chose to map the first six months of each new employee onboarding experience, not knowing how time intensive it would be. We started by meeting with participants on their very first day on the job, and worked with their supervisor to arrange an hour meeting as the last activity of their first day. Following this, we met once a week during the first four weeks, and once a month for the following five months. During the first month of the project, each meeting lasted for one-hour and included both new employees.

After receiving feedback from the participants at the end of month one that they would prefer to meet individually, we rescheduled all subsequent meetings and shortened them to 30 minutes for each participant rather than an hour for both (further discussion of participant feedback is included in subsequent section). In addition to meeting with participants, we held separate meetings to review the data being collected and to generate the final journey maps.

Over the course of the six months, we made a number of adjustments to the project, one of them being our projected timeline. We realized the six-month timeframe was too long, making the project very time-consuming. If this project was conducted using a one–three month timeline, even richer information could have been gathered and more focus given to areas needing the most improvement. A shorter timeframe would also narrow the scope of journey mapping; given that a lot happens within an employee's first six months, at times the scope of this particular project felt too broad, leading to an overwhelming amount of information to distill.

We have put together a [Timeline and Scheduling Tracker](#) to help others stay on track while conducting this project. While the tracker covers up to six months, we recommend you adapt it for a shorter timeframe of one–three months. Many meetings occur between the project facilitator and new employees, with several tasks to complete in between meetings. This timeline will serve as a reminder for when to schedule meetings and identify what should be completed before each meeting.

The Importance of the First Meeting

During the first meeting, we gave the employee a printout of the [Project Introduction and Outline](#), which explains the project in more detail and includes brief information about journey mapping, an overview of the project and goals, and a summary of the project timeline. After they were introduced to the project, they were given time to write a reflection about their first day on the job. We have included a [Written Reflection Template](#) that can be given to a new employee to help guide them during written reflection exercises. The questions act as prompts that will hopefully inspire ideas or experiences that participants can reflect upon.

When presenting a project of this nature, it is important to be clear that it is a fact-finding session. At times, our particular project felt like a mentoring session and not always having set, focused questions allowed the new employees to discuss their emotions beyond the scope of the project. The participants occasionally wanted advice for how to navigate particular situations or discuss an interaction with another colleague, thus straying from the specific onboarding task being discussed. Having predetermined, set questions to refer back to helps focus the conversation in this situation as well as reiterating your role in the project.

When conducting this type of project, it is important to be mindful of whether you are conducting the project as a researcher or as a colleague, and understand what lens you are applying. When you present the project to participants, being very clear about your role in the project at the very first meeting will help guide future meetings. Occasionally, in meetings, details were exchanged that were sometimes awkward because employees felt comfortable sharing more information than was initially asked for. To remedy this, we recommend you use an agenda along with the set questions to guide meetings throughout the entirety of the project and keep conversations on track. This will also help in addressing the clarity issue noted above. We have included a [New Employee First Week Agenda Template](#) to help get you started. Together with the questions in the [Written Reflection Template](#), it can be used as a starting place to compile the questions used in the meetings and can be revised with your specific project goals in mind. This technique will also keep responses from the project facilitator neutral and objective. Finally, the agendas serve an important role in creating the “expected journey” section of the final journey map, as we’ll see in the next section.

Documenting the Journey

The first step in documenting an experience journey is to document the expected journey—that is, what the journey would or should look like at the outset. We used agendas to do this. Our agendas were drafted by the Learning and Research Services department head for each employee to follow closely on their first day and first week, which outlined the expected onboarding journey. Our agendas extended no farther than this because there was no real expectation about what onboarding looked like beyond that period. The agendas provided very detailed and focused accounts of the new hires expected encounters, experiences, and tasks. It also guided much of the conversation that took place during the meetings, as we would ask for details about each item on the agenda. Using the structure of the agendas, it was easy to identify trainings, meetings, and other experiences that went well or could be improved, allowing outcomes and recommendations to easily be identified.

As mentioned before, we met once a week with participants during the first four weeks, and once a month for the following five months. The new employees were asked to write self-reflections in preparation for each meeting, although these were not mandatory. We provided a simple question template to prompt ideas or experiences the employees might consider reflecting on. They were asked questions such as:

- What have been some significant job-related accomplishments?
- What have you been trained to do?
- What do you really like or would really like to change?

These questions were intentionally broad, given our high-level project goals to learn about the current onboarding process and identify areas of improvement, and could be customized based on the goals of another institution. The written reflections form half of the data we analyzed to create the visualization of the actual journey as experienced by the new hires.

Finally, much of the data was gathered during the meetings, where we took many notes while asking questions to learn more about the employee journey. We did not identify specific questions for each meeting, rather, we

asked the employees about items on their agendas, what new training they had received, what else they had learned, and how that went from their perspective. Again, our questions were general in nature given the high-level goals and broad scope of our project. If the new employees indicated something went well or did not go well, we asked them why in attempt to identify the underlying reason. This would serve as the other half of the data we mined to form the experience journey visualization.

Making Sense of the Data

This technique generates data in several formats, including the agendas of the new employees, written reflections from participants, and meeting notes in order to visualize the journeys and collect the richest information about the current onboarding experience possible. All this data is eventually synthesized into a visual employee experience journey map. However, the raw data requires some review and preparation. The written reflections and meeting notes, in particular, have to be reviewed to compile information for visualizing the actual employee experience journey, including pain points and positive points.

During review, we highlighted parts of the self-reflections where the employee talked about positive experiences in green, negative experiences in orange, and suggestions for improvements in blue. This identified pain points and good experiences to be included later in the final, visual journey map, as well as opportunities and recommendations for improvements that were noted by each new employee (fig. 2).

CM

Day 1 / Week 1

Journey Mapping Assignment April 13-15 2016

By: Christa M.

4/13/16

Day 1: Settling in, HR paperwork, and computer set-up all went well and was very efficient as was the outlook calendar and L drive access. The sequencing of these agenda items was appropriate and effective. I do feel that I should have received the formal offer letter (via e-mail to be signed electronically) before my first day.

rec: send offer letter before 1st day

As a first day employee not having worked in the library before, I thought the student meetings were a little over-whelming – especially by the second one in the afternoon. I felt bad I didn't know names and couldn't remember names as the meeting went on. I realize these were the last meetings of the semester and it was nice to see how they are run and what kind of topics are discussed.

I really enjoyed the meeting with Kris and thought this was a great agenda item for the first day. I had my "burning" questions answered and felt very comfortable sharing ideas and concerns with my supervisor.

Best Practice: schedule supervisor meeting 2nd end day

The software studio meeting was definitely a little too much for the first day, and not relative to the whole "getting started" process of a new employee. This time would have been better spent at my desk getting organized and having some "quiet time" and time to ask questions of my colleagues.

Outcome: schedule quiet time Day 1

The journey mapping meeting was a great idea and very appropriate for the first day. It is a good way to put new employees at ease and give them a simple, introspective task to work on for the first few days.

Outcome: schedule indiv. task for Week 1

Other issues:

(These ideas and thoughts are from how things were done at my previous academic library jobs).

One thing that was never discussed (I had to figure it out after I received the job offer) prior to my first day was parking. It was a simple task to swing by parking services before my first day and get a permit, and fortunately they allowed me to buy one even though I was not in the system yet. It would be a better idea to give new employees a parking pass for their first day or two, and then escort them to parking services (by a co-worker) to get a permanent permit. Or, time should be allowed for this in the agenda. If that is not possible, the new employee should at least be provided with parking information at the time the job offer is made (phone numbers, map, etc. preferably in an e-mail).

An item that would be helpful to have is a small laminated wallet sized card of library and campus phone numbers to call as a quick reference (in case of emergency, etc.).

Recommendations w/in our control

*** Really loved the welcome bag and the gum especially! (I was just thinking "man, I should have brought gum", then looked in the bag, and there it was!)

My prevailing thought at the end of the day: "I'm glad it's already Wednesday and the week is almost over." (Just occurred to me that it is probably a good idea to start employees mid-week so the first work week is short and not too grueling).

Good
Bad
Outcome

Figure 2. Example of a written reflection after highlighting and review (used with permission).

We reviewed our meeting notes later in the same manner as the written reflections, highlighting pain points in orange, positive experiences in green, and recommendations in blue for easy identification when compiling the final visual journey map (fig. 3).

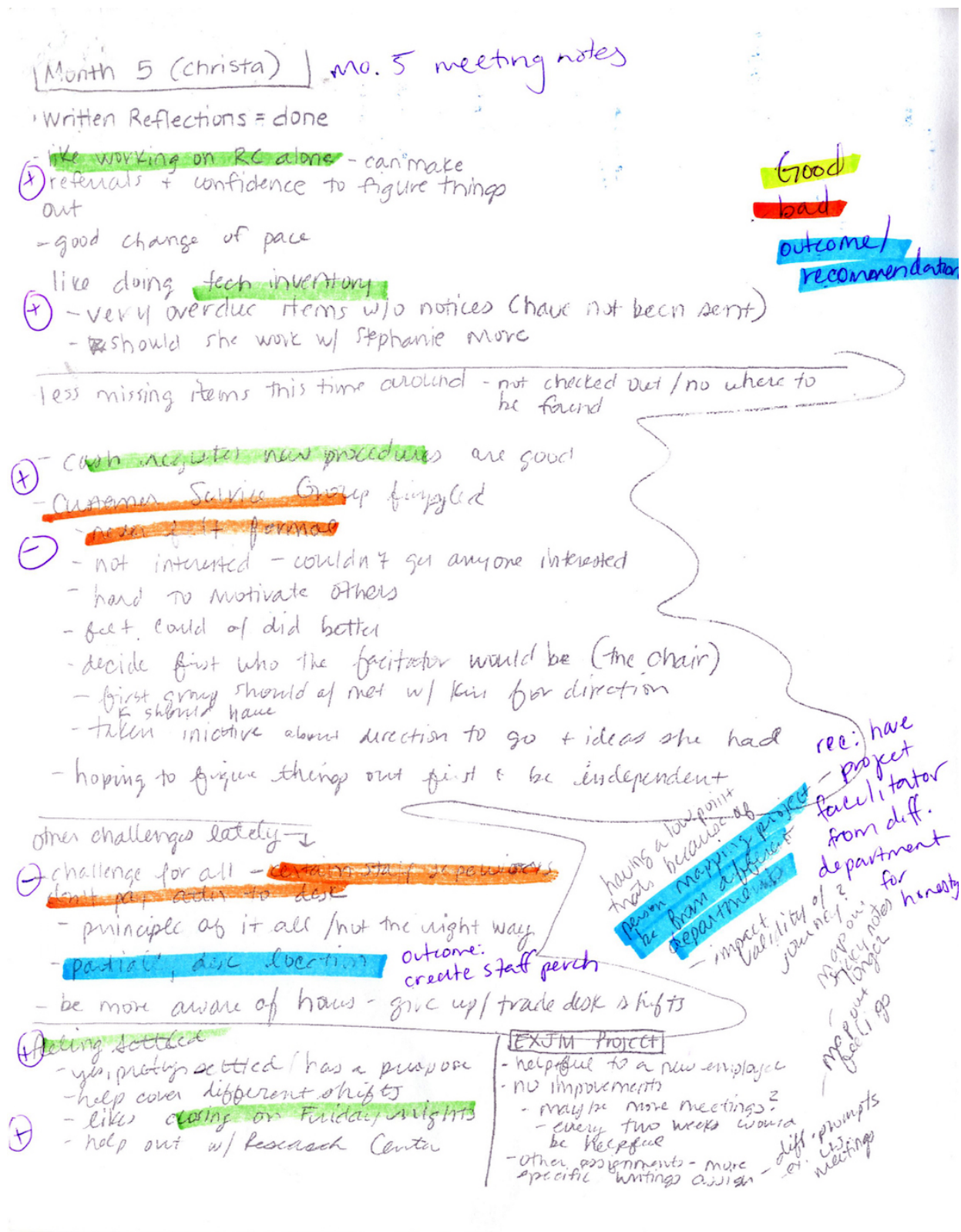


Figure 3. Examples of our meeting notes as project facilitators after highlighting and review (used with permission).

In the next section, we walk through how this data was synthesized into three visual journey maps for each employee according to three key durations of time: a map for the employee's first day, first week, and first six months.

Synthesizing the Employee Experience Journey Maps

We created the original templates for each map using Microsoft Publisher; these newly created templates for [day one](#), [week one](#), and the [first six months](#) have been converted to Google Draw, which is a free software. They are available for reuse, and can be found in the [EXJM project toolkit](#) (Frank & McKelvey, 2017) included with this article.

There are three main sections of journey maps: the expected journey which situates the context, the actual journey representing the steps a user goes through and how they feel along the way, and finally, the insights gained from the journey leading to potential outcomes and improvements. Each of the three sections can be seen in the templates and in our final journey maps (figs. 4–10). All journey maps can be ‘read’ horizontally through each of the three individual sections, which are laid out chronologically, and also vertically to connect each step of the expected journey with how the new employee actually felt about that experience. They are also linked to any specific outcomes or recommendations that resulted from that step in their journey.

Synthesizing the Expected Journey

The top section shows the employee’s expected journey in chronological order from left to right. We used the first day and first week agendas and laid out the agenda items from left to right in chronological order, showing the meetings, training, events, etc. that each new employee was scheduled for on their first day, and first week. This section does not appear on the six-month journey map, as, again, the expected journey for that period was not explicitly understood.

Synthesizing the Actual Journey

The middle section visualizes the actual journey experienced by the employee. We reviewed the highlighted written reflections and meeting notes again for the time period captured in each of the journey maps. For each employee, the most painful points, the most positive points, and the points with actionable recommendations or solutions were included first as elements of the actual journey. We summarized each experience in a text box within the middle section, and lined it up underneath the agenda item from the top section representing where in the journey that experience happened. Within this section, neutral experiences are shown in the middle with yellow boxes, positive points are elevated higher toward the upper section of the map in green, and pain points are lower toward the bottom in red. This helps to visualize the difficulties that an employee goes through during the onboarding process.

Synthesizing the Outcomes & Recommendations

Finally, the bottom section shows outcomes and recommendations, and connects our insights and suggested improvements to the point in the employee journey where that particular opportunity was identified. For this section, we reviewed the written reflections and meeting notes, and summarized the most important and/or actionable items in a text box. Again, recommendations were aligned vertically and placed under the agenda item where it came up in the user experience, showing the connection between what our new employees experienced and recommendations for the future.

Interpreting the Employee Experience Journey Maps to Improve Onboarding at MSU Library

Since the basis of our project centers around employee experience journey maps, it is important to understand how we interpreted the journey maps and made sense of the information in order to make improvements to the onboarding experience at MSU Library. In this section, we share examples and outcomes specific to MSU. We will walk you through the first day, first week, and six-month journey of Newbie Ruby and compare their journey to the second new employee, Rookie Cookie.

Newbie Ruby

Utilizing Newbie Ruby's first day agenda, we knew exactly what their expected journey should look like for day one (fig. 4).

Employee Experience Journey Map

Newbie Ruby: Day 1

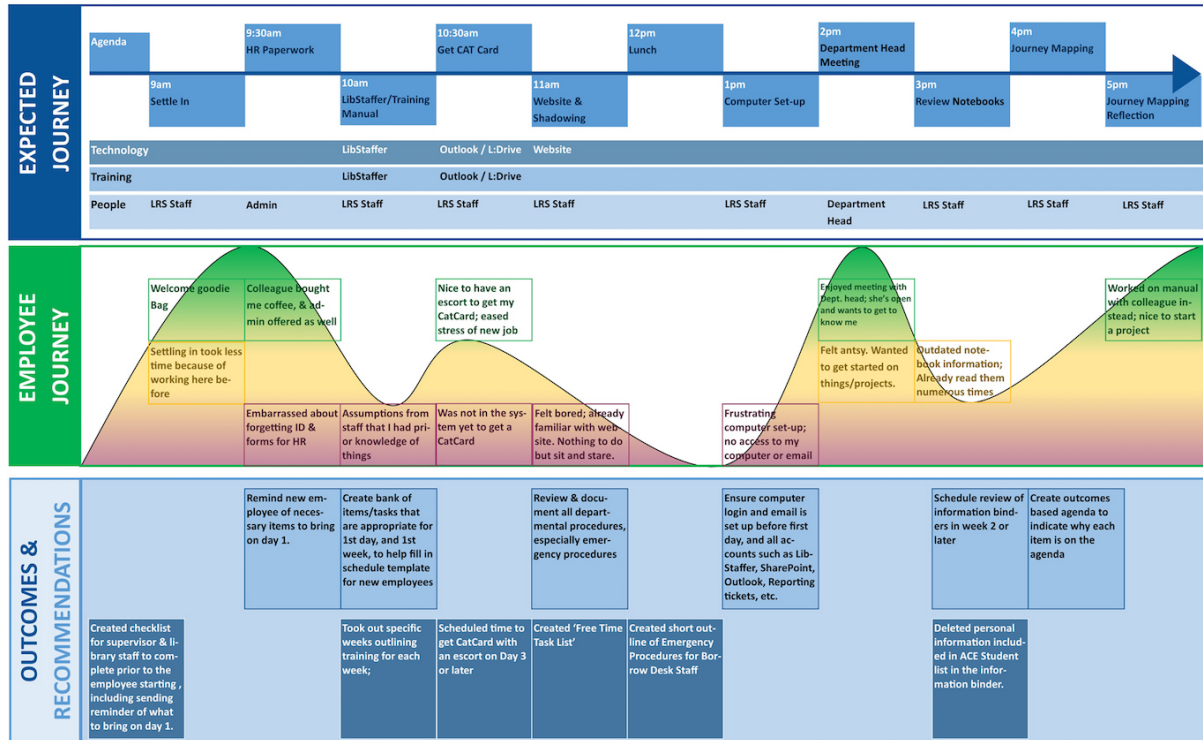


Figure 4. Employee experience journey map for Newbie Ruby's first day.

On the first day, Newbie Ruby noted both good and bad experiences. We expected Newbie Ruby to settle in smoothly with paperwork and computer setup, but instead, paperwork was a pain point because Newbie Ruby forgot some of her required documentation, and felt embarrassed (fig. 5).

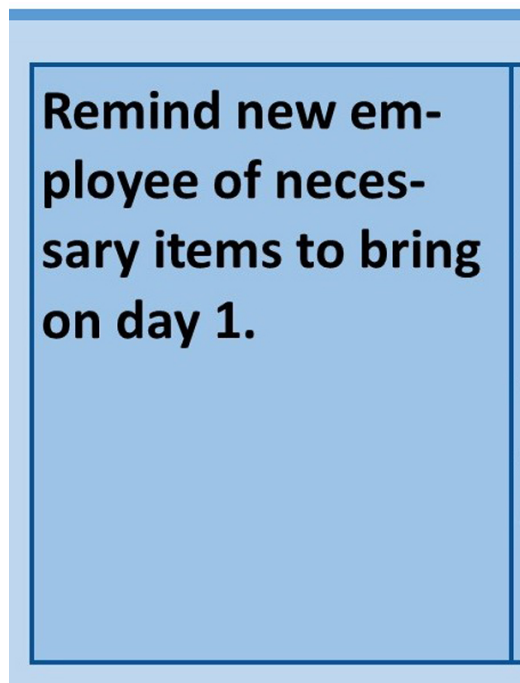


Figure 5. Smaller, zoomed in section of

Employee Experience Journey Map for Newbie Ruby's first day.

That experience led us to create a checklist for supervisors to use before the employee's first day, which includes sending important reminders and information to the employee on what to bring for their paperwork, where to park, and how to access the building. Luckily, the first day was not all bad for Newbie Ruby, who also expressed feeling welcomed by a friendly colleague offering coffee, which led to our recommendation to schedule someone to take new employees to coffee/tea on their first day. Newbie Ruby ended the day on a positive note by working on a specific project which made them feel productive, leading to a recommendation for assigning a small task or project for the new employee to complete in the first week.

Throughout the first week, Newbie Ruby expressed that they felt lost and without direction almost every day at some point; this led to the creation of a free time task list to give to the employee, listing many different options for projects or training to complete during down times. Newbie Ruby mentioned that one of the workshops they attended during the first week was interesting, but they did not know why they were attending or what they were expected to learn or utilize from the content. This led to drafting an outcomes based agenda template used to highlight the intended learning outcomes of each item, if applicable (fig. 6).

Employee Experience Journey Map

Newbie Ruby: Week 1

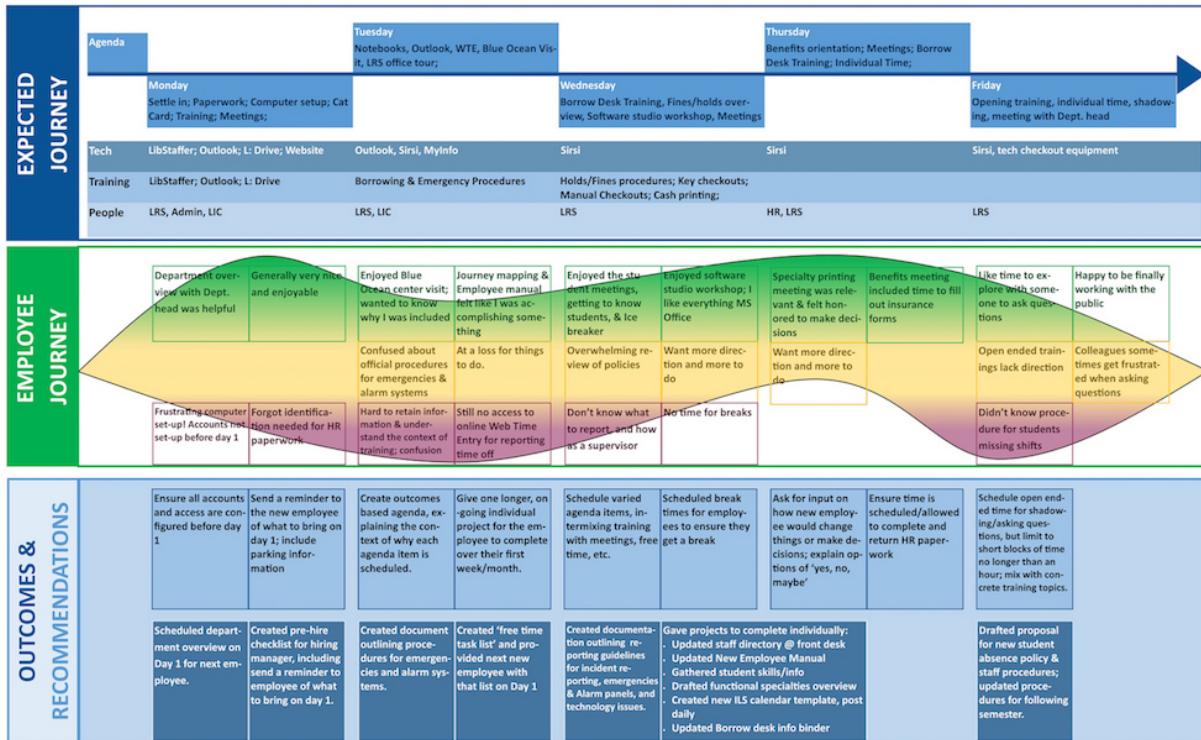


Figure 6. Employee Experience Journey Map for Newbie Ruby's first week.

Over the first six months, Newbie Ruby noted more negative experiences than positive. (fig. 7). Both positive and negative experiences from the first six months led to recommendations for change. For example, Newbie Ruby's positive experience of learning by example led to the idea of creating reference-training exercises compiled from past questions. Their experience of being expected to take on more committee work in a shorter amount of time than was given or approved of by their supervisor led to a recommendation to add information to a new employee manual about the expected timeline for joining committees.

Employee Experience Journey Map

Newbie Ruby: Month 1-6

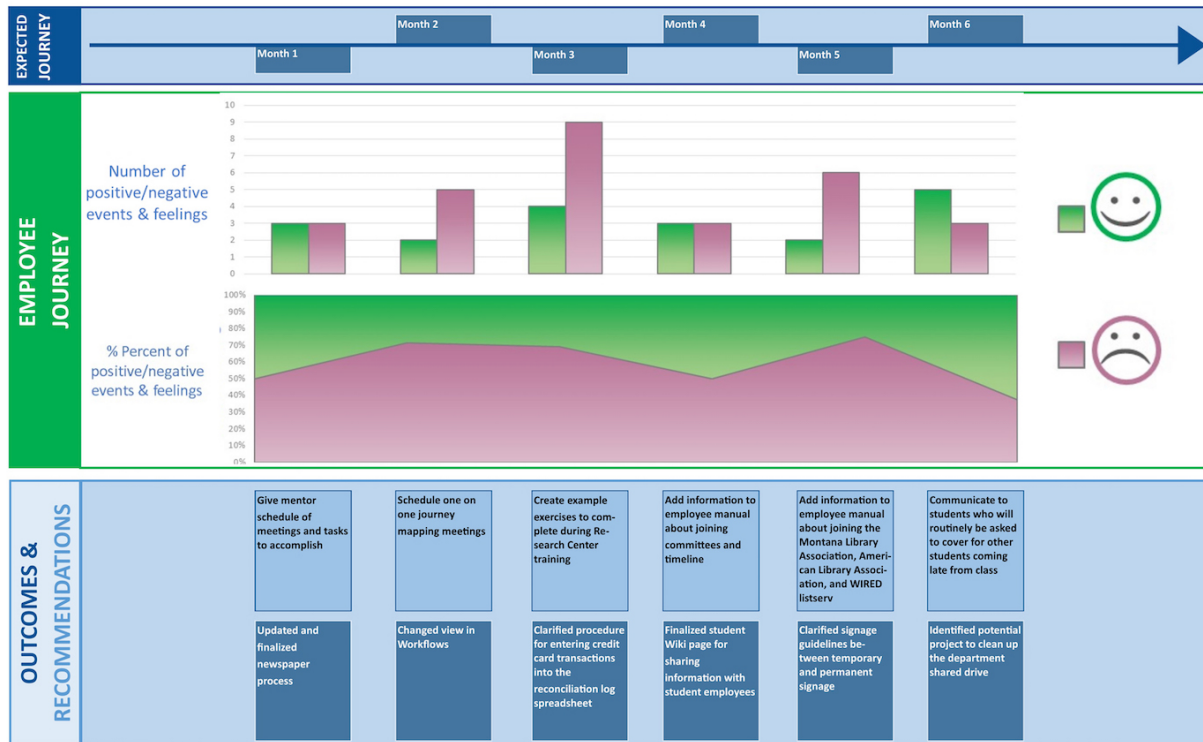


Figure 7. Newbie Ruby's positive and negative experiences over during their first six months.

Overall, the journey map (fig. 7) shows that Newbie Ruby ran into more roadblocks, questions, and negative experiences in the middle of their first six months of employment, and more positive experiences were noted toward the end in month six. This could be due to new employees naturally having more questions upfront, and hopefully in small part due to some of the immediate outcomes and improvements implemented throughout this process.

Rookie Cookie

It is important to note that Rookie Cookie's first day on the job was two days after Newbie Ruby's. We were able to implement some changes to Rookie's first two days based on what we learned from Newbie Ruby's day one journey.

Rookie Cookie was also given an agenda so we also knew exactly what their expected journey should look like for day one (fig. 8).

Employee Experience Journey Map

Rookie Cookie: Day 1

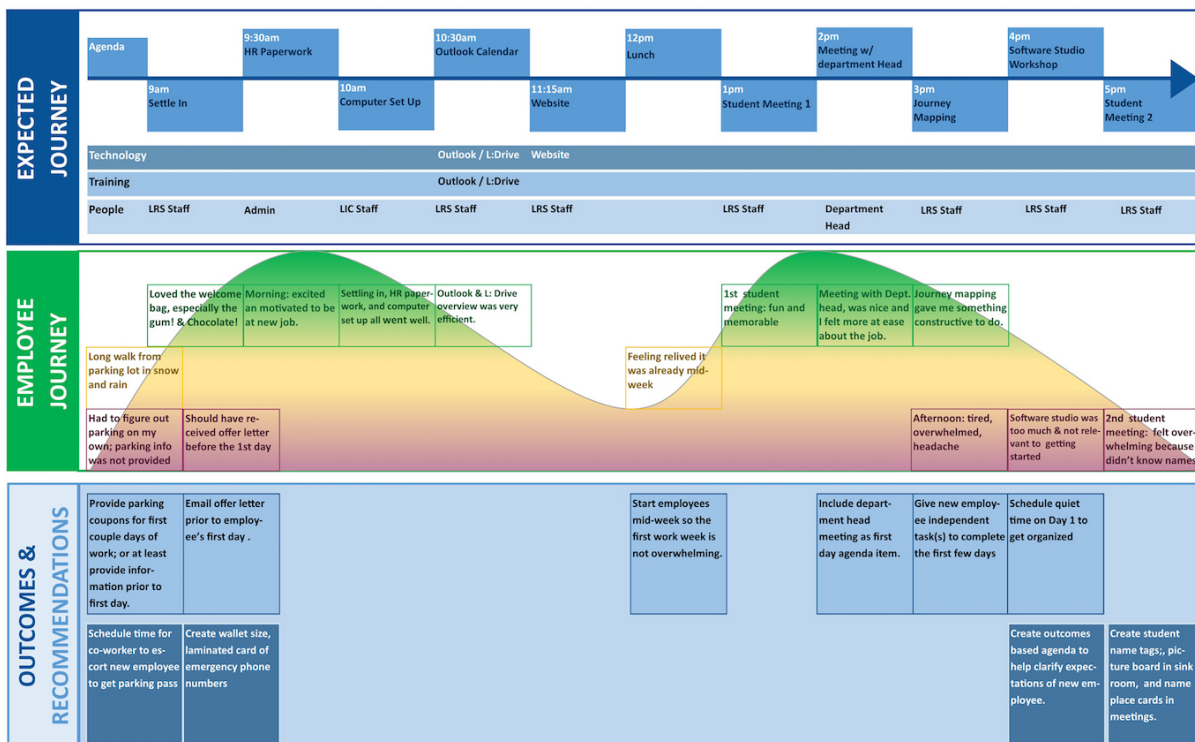


Figure 8. Rookie Cookie's journey during their first day.

On day one, Rookie Cookie noted a few negative experiences at the beginning and again at the end of the day, with largely positive experiences throughout the day. The negative experiences starting day one stemmed in part from a lack of knowledge that could have been avoided with previous communication and information provided by the employer. For example, Rookie Cookie noted that parking was difficult and stressful to figure out with no information provided, and that the offer letter was not received before the first day. These led to updating a pre-hire checklist to include a reminder to send parking information and the offer letter to the new employees before they start. Positive experiences throughout the first day also led to recommendations about what to continue doing in the future, including providing a small welcome gift bag and scheduling the employee to attend meetings to get acquainted with other folks in the department. At the end of the day, Rookie Cookie also remembered feeling overwhelmed in

a large meeting by not knowing people's names, which led to the addition of name cards in meetings when we have guests and new employees.

Rookie Cookie's first week was shorter, because they started mid-week on a Wednesday, and therefore the first week journey map (fig. 9) covers only the first three days of employment.

Employee Experience Journey Map

Rookie Cookie: Week 1

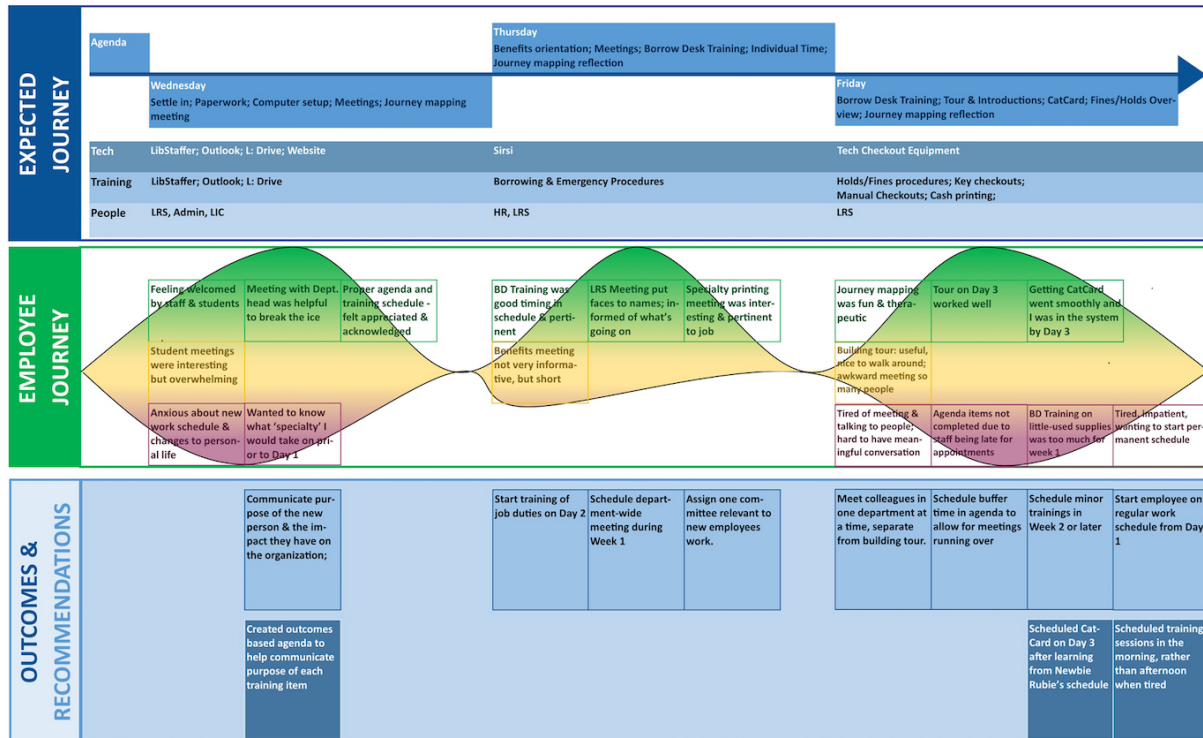


Figure 9. Employee experience journey map for Rookie Cookie's first week, which only consisted of three days.

Day two notes mostly positive experiences, while day one and three show both positive and negative experiences. Training on day two seemed to go well and built tangible skills needed for the job. On day three, Rookie Cookie expressed feeling overwhelmed by meeting so many people on a full-building tour that was combined with introductions to many colleagues; therefore, we recommend that building and workspace tours be scheduled separately from meeting colleagues, and that new employees be introduced to other colleagues one department at a time.

Over the first six months (fig. 10), Rookie Cookie noted more positive experiences than negative. Again, as with Newbie Ruby, both good and bad experiences from the first six months led to recommendations. For example, Rookie Cookie found it difficult to explain to our student employees what the expectations were regarding technology troubleshooting and what we expect student employees to be able to help with. This led to the creation of a one-page worksheet with tech-troubleshooting guidelines and reporting form, that students now use to help them walk through the troubleshooting process, and report any issues that persist. Rookie Cookie also expressed being interested in diversity issues, and was then put in contact with the diversity initiatives working group in the library to collaborate with in the future; this positive experience was a reminder to ask new employees about their interests, areas of expertise, and previous experiences that can be beneficial to their new position.



Figure 10. Rookie Cookie's overall emotions during their first six months.

Consideration of Both Journeys Together

Both employees shared positive and negative experiences that led to a deeper understanding of our onboarding practices, and how they both experienced the process as unique individuals. Sometimes they shared similar experiences. For example, both of them were appreciative of meeting individually with their department head at the end of the first day because it made them feel welcomed and they were able to clarify questions. They also both said that they wish the computer setup had gone a little smoother, with more clearly outlined instructions for logging into the computer, email, and creating all their necessary accounts.

Occasionally, recommendations from one employee were implemented immediately, which improved the process for the second employee, such as how they got their university ID cards. On the first day, Newbie Ruby was scheduled to go get their ID card; however, that process did not go well because they were not in the system yet, and they had to return a day later. Knowing that, Rookie Cookie was scheduled to get their ID card on day three instead, and the process went much more smoothly. This led to the recommendation of scheduling that task later in the first week for all new employees.

Over the first six months, Newbie Ruby discussed more negative experiences than positive, and Rookie Cookie discussed more positive experiences. This does not necessarily mean that one had a more positive experience than the other employee, or a more positive experience overall. Rather, it suggests that the positive experiences were more memorable for that employee and therefore were recalled and discussed in meetings and written reflections more often than negative experiences, and vice versa. Regardless, both perspectives of each employee proved very useful, and positive experiences led to recommendations about what to keep the same in our onboarding process, while negative experiences led to recommendations about what to change or improve.

Outcomes at MSU Library

At a high level, the project goals were to learn about the current onboarding experience, learn about journey mapping as a UX technique for gathering information, and to identify improvement opportunities at MSU Library. All

high level goals were successfully met throughout the course of the project. After identifying key challenges and areas of improvement, including lack of documentation, outdated procedures, and inconsistency in the way new employees were oriented to their job, some immediate improvements were made as tangible outcomes of the project. In addition, a list of local, long-term improvement opportunities was provided for future consideration by MSU Library.

Immediate improvements were made at MSU Library as a result of this project included:

- Updating a comprehensive onboarding manual for new employees to help gain consistency in onboarding practices
- Creating documentation and updating procedures for training/daily tasks
- Creating a ‘free time task list’ for new employees to refer to during down times
- Updating building emergency procedures for quick referral
- Adopting an online scheduling tool for student employees to increase transparency and communication between student employees and supervisors

We also identified long-term recommendations for improvements at MSU Library, including scheduling training sessions with the Office of Disabilities on a yearly basis for all public services employees and new hires. Immediate improvements and long-term, local recommendations were made after new employees identified these specific areas as pain points during the onboarding process. These improvements provided immediate benefits to the Learning and Research Services department and MSU Library, and will improve the onboarding experience for future employees.

Participant Feedback

Throughout the project, we consulted with the new employees often to gather feedback and make sure they were comfortable sharing certain information more broadly. This feedback was used to modify and develop the project timeline, the structure, and it shaped how the project was shared

internally and externally. For example, after participants expressed that they preferred to meet individually, the meeting structure was altered to reduce the duration in order to accommodate separate meetings.

Overall, participants expressed feeling comfortable and were able to speak freely during the project, and therefore multiple ideas to improve employee onboarding and library processes were generated. At the end of the project during a retrospective interview with the two new hires, they both noted that while they really enjoyed the project, they would not have felt comfortable saying no to participating on their first day. This highlights a potential challenge for this project if employees are reticent to share honestly when arriving at a new job; for new employees wanting to make a good impression, it could be hard and stressful to start by sharing negative feedback or shortcomings, understandably. While that challenge cannot be removed or avoided completely, some strategies to mitigate the situation would be to designate a project facilitator from an outside department allowing the new employee to share frustrating processes of their new job with someone unattached, delaying the data gathering for a period of time in order to build trust with the new employee, or following up again to gather more data after trust has been built. Finally, even with more limited and tempered feedback from employees who are hesitant to be completely honest, recommendations for improvement can still be identified from what is shared and then acted upon, which can still lead to positive outcomes.

Conclusion

At our institution, the goal of using journey mapping was to highlight areas of improvement that would enhance employee onboarding experiences from the user perspective. Utilizing journey mapping as a design research tool allowed us to capture the experience of new employees, and deploy actual changes to the onboarding process within MSU Library. All high level goals were met, and we gained a clear understanding of existing assumptions and the current onboarding culture at MSU Library, while identifying key challenges and areas of improvement.

However, beyond our institution, this project demonstrates potential outcomes and benefits that can be gained by using employee experience

journey mapping as a technique to improve onboarding. As our project shows, employee experience journey mapping can be an effective method for learning about current onboarding practices, as well as identifying areas of improvement in any organization. It can also be used to start a conversation across departments within an organization, about where they overlap and how they can work together to create an overall positive experience for employees as well as patrons. Improving the onboarding experience of new employees in libraries is highly important, as good onboarding practices lead to increased retention, employee satisfaction, engagement, and higher productivity (Hall-Ellis, 2014; Snell, 2006).

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