

# CHIEF LEARNING OFFICER

Solutions for Enterprise Productivity

## Onboarding for the Net Generation

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The Net Generation is characterized by enhanced social interaction and immediate relevance to the individual at the time of need. Emerging social networking Web sites and applications such as Twitter and YouTube represent technologies that keep users updated, informed and in constant contact with friends, colleagues and co-workers.

Net Geners are accustomed to creating and interacting with online communities relevant to their interests — anything from photography and music to dating and shopping and, more importantly, learning and sharing information.

Net Geners bring an interactive ethos to the workplace and increasingly demand creativity, social connectivity, speed, openness, playfulness and instant access to answer job-related questions.

Attracting, engaging and orienting Net Geners requires chief learning officers to rethink every aspect of their corporate learning programs. From new-hire orientation to leadership development programs, greater flexibility and cohesion in delivery modalities are critical.

This principle and a desire to engage new hires from Day 1 is leading to an overhaul in Sun Microsystems' new-hire orientation program. Karie Willyerd, Sun Microsystems vice president and chief learning officer, asked her team to design a comprehensive program that emphasized collaboration, communication and participation.

Because many new hires might begin working off-site from their first day, Willyerd's desire to combine the best Web 2.0 technology with the company's do-it-yourself culture already is enabling Sun new hires to quickly gain an understanding of how the company operates.

The five playful and engaging aspects of the Sun New-Hire Experience include:

- **New-Hire Welcome.** The first stop for the new hire is an interactive video that features CEO Jonathan Schwartz discussing Sun's mission and values. A link to Schwartz's blog provides insight into his leadership style and ideas, as well as his comments on Sun financial performance. New hires also view series of video

vignettes, “I Have the Best Job at Sun,” to gain insight and perspective on how employees view the company’s culture and values.

- **Learn.** New hires can find links to free learning resources, including one of Willyerd’s flagship initiatives: digitizing literally thousands of books, magazine articles and white papers related to Sun’s businesses, as well as information relevant to employee development. Willyerd views learning not as a separate task performed outside of one’s primary job but as a continuous, interactive process. By fostering formal and informal approaches to knowledge sharing, she hopes to build a community of practice around collaboration throughout the company.

- **Participate.** Sun is a global company with 34,000 employees (of which almost half work away from the office), so a high priority for Willyerd is to find a way to provide a sense of comfort to the new hire. The “participate area” synthesizes several social-networking components that motivate new hires to dive in and join the network. One goal of the New-Hire Experience is to have seasoned employees interact with new hires and show them around the office digitally through blogs, wikis, discussion forums and custom video tutorials.

- **Explore.** This is akin to the Company 101 of any new-hire orientation. From here, new hires can access industry reports, view competitive data on Sun and investigate key industry competitors. Through hyperlinking, new hires can explore a gold mine of data about Sun that gives them a sense of context for their new job.

- **Play.** The experience culminates in an interactive learning game called “Rise of the Millennials.” The objective is to teach new hires about Sun’s core businesses through an engaging game. Willyerd is a proponent of gaming in learning and views the New-Hire Experience as an optimal opportunity to have employees learn about Sun business, strategy, mission and culture.

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