

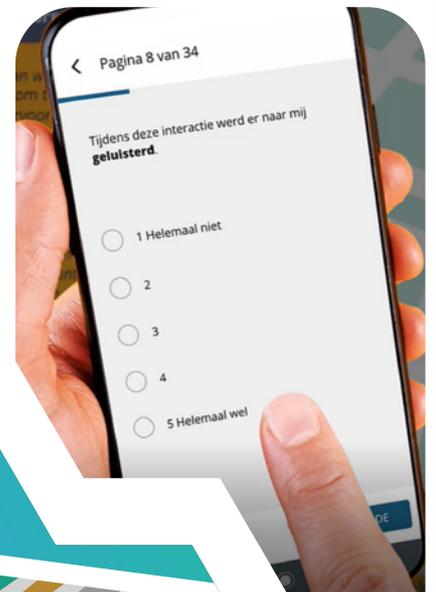
Optimal onboarding

How do you ensure that technical professionals feel at home and can use their talents optimally in their new job?

Why this research?

The 'war for talent' makes it a real challenge for technical organizations to attract and retain new employees. Already in the first few months, newcomers often decide whether they want to stay with, or leave the organization. Therefore it is important to get insight in the key ingredients for making new employees feel at home in the organization, already at the start of their new job.

This research shows that to make new employees feel connected, it is important to create an organization context in which newcomers can easily get in touch with their colleagues and in which they feel comfortable enough to be themselves at work and share their personal interests.



techyourfuture.nl/bridge-the-gap



Bridge the Gap!

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New employees



159 participants

139 employees, 20 interns



2140 interactions reported



Over 6 years work experience

Frequencies:

No work experience: 27%

1 month - 1 year: 19%

> 1 year - 5 years: 20%

> 5 years - 10 years: 11%

> 10 years: 23%



46 Women



109 Men



140 Dutch



15 Other



On average, participants filled out the 'Newcomers Experiences app' **15** times

Research:



October 2020 to June 2021



New technical professionals



Interview, start questionnaire, daily/weekly app, end questionnaire

Newcomer experiences app example question:



During this interaction I felt accepted by my interaction partner.

All new employees participated during the **corona crisis** of 2021 during which the government advised to work from home.

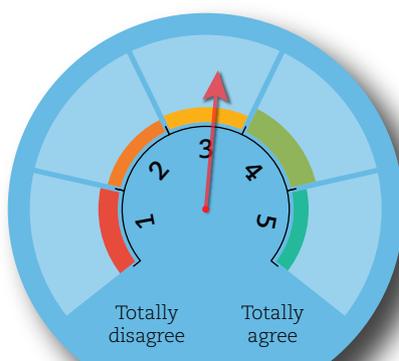
To what extent do new technical employees feel at home in the organization?

New employees feel very much at home in their new organization. On average they give a score of **4.2 on a 5-point scale**. Participants also consider themselves a good fit for the organization, feel competent, can be themselves at the organization and are happy to be a technical professional.

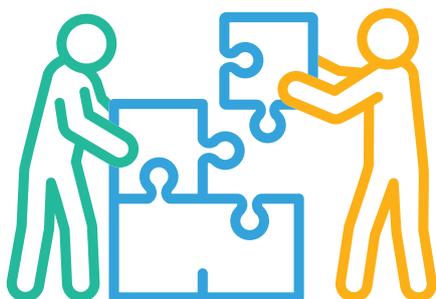
“This week...”



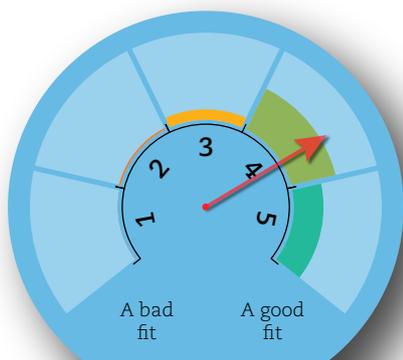
I am glad to be a technical professional



I could be myself at work



“Today I felt...”



a good fit



competent



at home



Workplace interactions

Newcomers were always asked to report their most important interaction of that workday/week in the app or to indicate that no interaction had taken place.

New employees report as **most important interaction** most often...

In total, all employees together reported **2140** interactions in the **app**.

... an interaction with 1 person instead of several people

- 56% interaction with 1 person
- 15% interaction with 2 people
- 29% interaction with 3 people or more



... an interaction with direct colleagues



- 31% colleague from own department
- 20% colleague from project team
- 16% colleague from another department
- 16% manager
- 7% project leader
- 9% other...

... an online conversation with camera

- 48% online interaction with camera
- 34% face-to-face
- 14% online interaction without camera
- 5% written messages



But on days that newcomers worked in the organization

... a face-to-face interaction

- 72% face-to-face
- 15% online interaction with camera
- 10% online interaction without camera
- 3% written messages

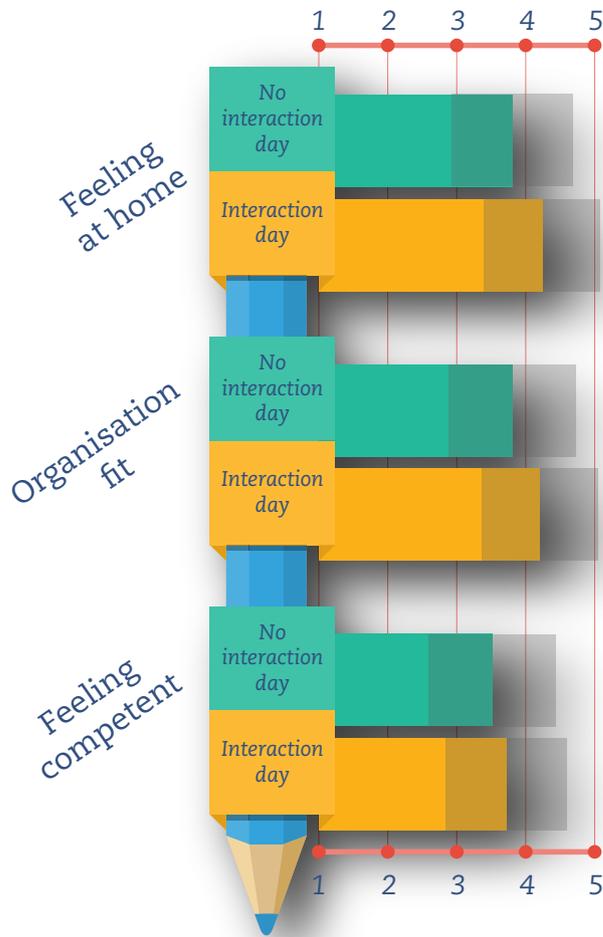


... an interaction with a partner(s) with whom they identify (a little bit)

- 20% different from me
- 40% neutral
- 40% similar to me



Days without interaction obstruct new employees



On 6.2% of the days, newcomers reported that no interaction had occurred.

On these days, newcomers also felt less at home in the organization, they felt a lower fit to the organization and felt less competent.

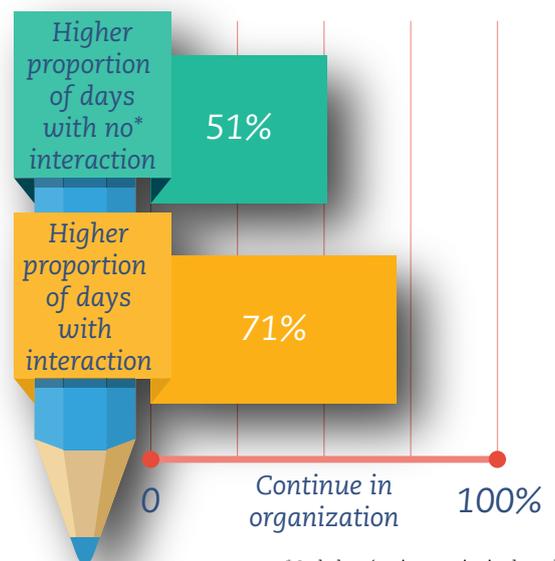


The higher the total number of days that newcomers reported that no interaction occurred, the lower they estimated their chances to continue working for the organization for the next 5 years



Conclusion!

For newcomers, a day without workplace interactions is a missed opportunity for making them feel at home in the organization!

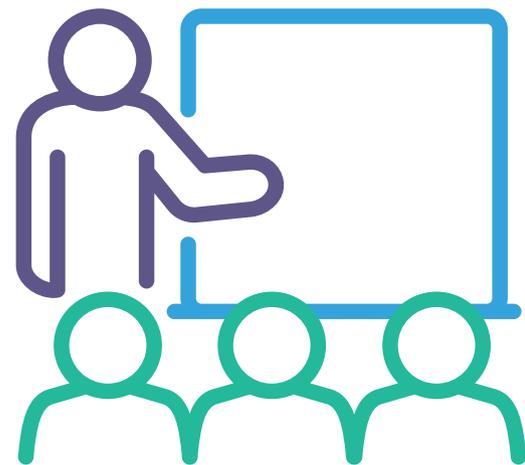


*Coded as 'no interaction' when there was no interaction in at least 10% of the days, otherwise coded as 'interaction'.

Learn more!

Honeymoon and Hangover in job satisfaction

At the start, employees are often very satisfied with their new job, referred to as the Honeymoon phase. This corresponds with what we see in the current research. However, it is normal that this satisfaction decreases somewhat over time. This hangover phase starts after about half a year. That is why it is important to continue to monitor new employees. This knowledge is also useful for properly interpreting satisfaction surveys.



Recommendation

Give a realistic job preview and regularly monitor new employees' job satisfaction for at least a year!

Learn more!

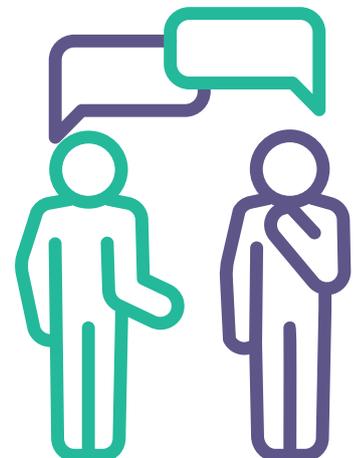
Realistic job preview

Research shows that it is important to give a clear and honest picture of the job and the organization, already even before someone starts with the job. This way employees will less likely become disappointed and chances are higher that only employees that really fit the job will be attracted.

Learn more!

Also the current research shows...

that when employees' expectations do not correspond with how they expected it in the beginning, they are overall less satisfied with their job and consider the chance lower that they will continue to work for the organization for the next 5 years. Thus, this underscores the importance of giving a **realistic job preview**.



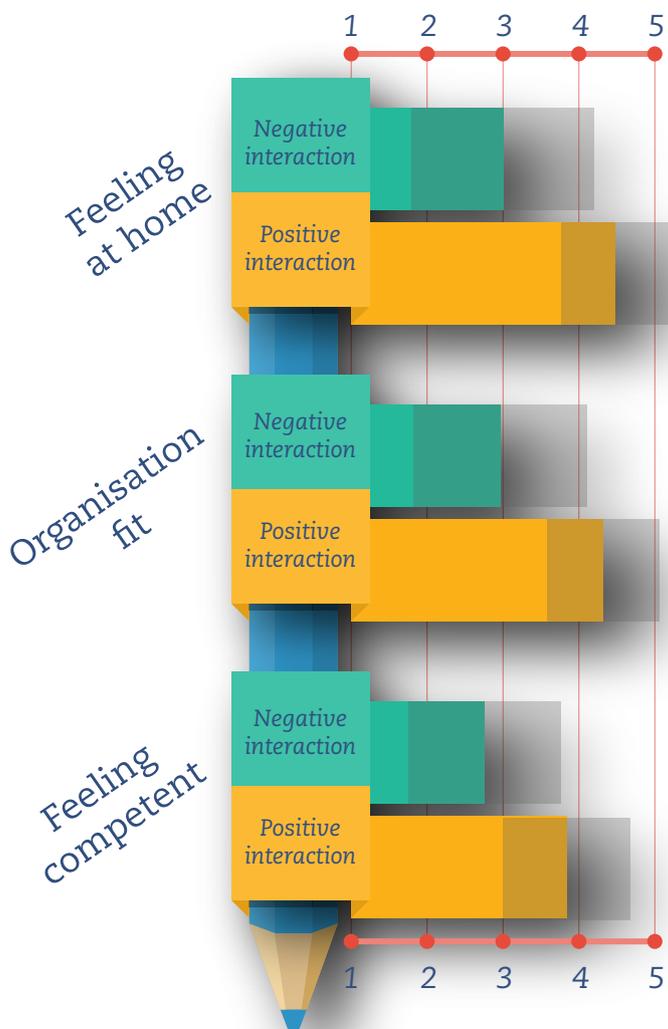
Positive interactions help newcomers to feel at home

On 93.8% of the days, newcomers did report that they had at least one interaction and they were asked to evaluate their most important interaction of that day.

In general, newcomers evaluated their most important interaction very positively. They felt accepted and treated competently during this interaction.

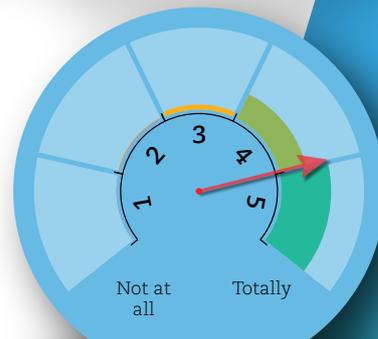
Having a positive interaction was extremely important for the socialization of newcomers. The more newcomers experienced their most important interaction as positive...*

- ... the more they felt at home within the organization,
- ... the more they felt a good fit with the organization,
- ... the more competent they felt



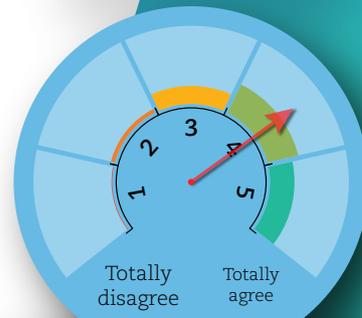
*Coded as a 'negative interaction' when employees rated the interaction as very negative (1) or bit negative (2) and coded as 'positive interaction' when employees rated the interaction as bit positive (4) or very positive (5) on a 5-point-Likert scale.

Being treated as competent during interaction



Example statement:
During this interaction my interaction partner was friendly.

Feeling accepted during interaction

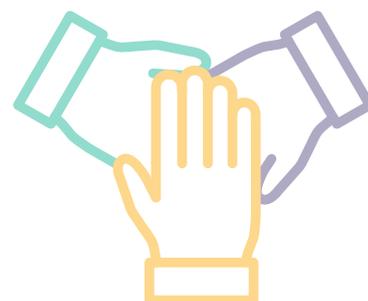


Example statement:
During this interaction I had the idea that my interaction partner perceived me as competent

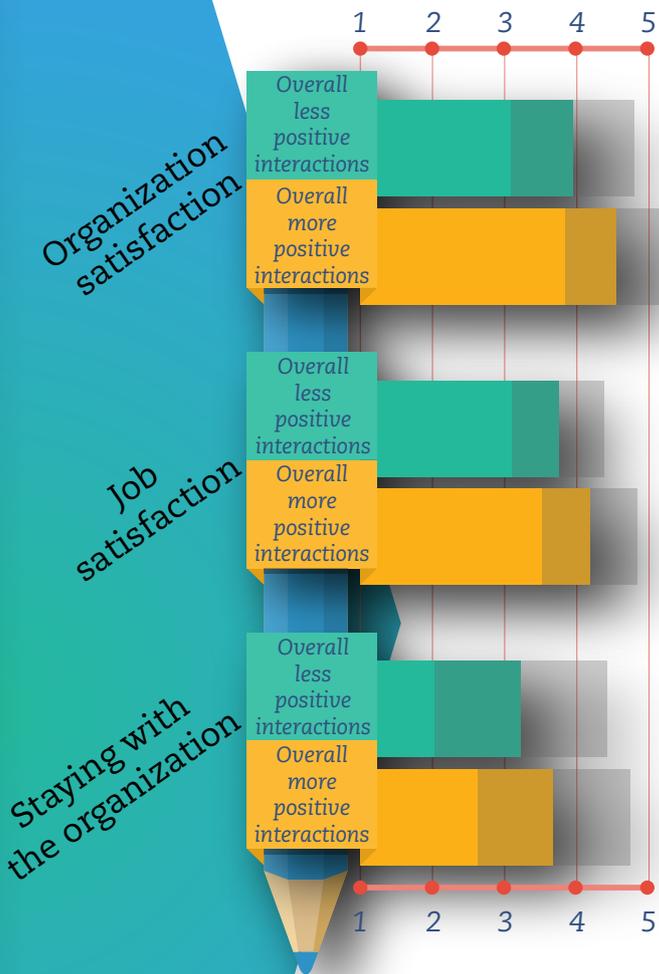
Evaluation of interaction



How do you look back on this interaction?



Positive interactions vs. negative interactions:



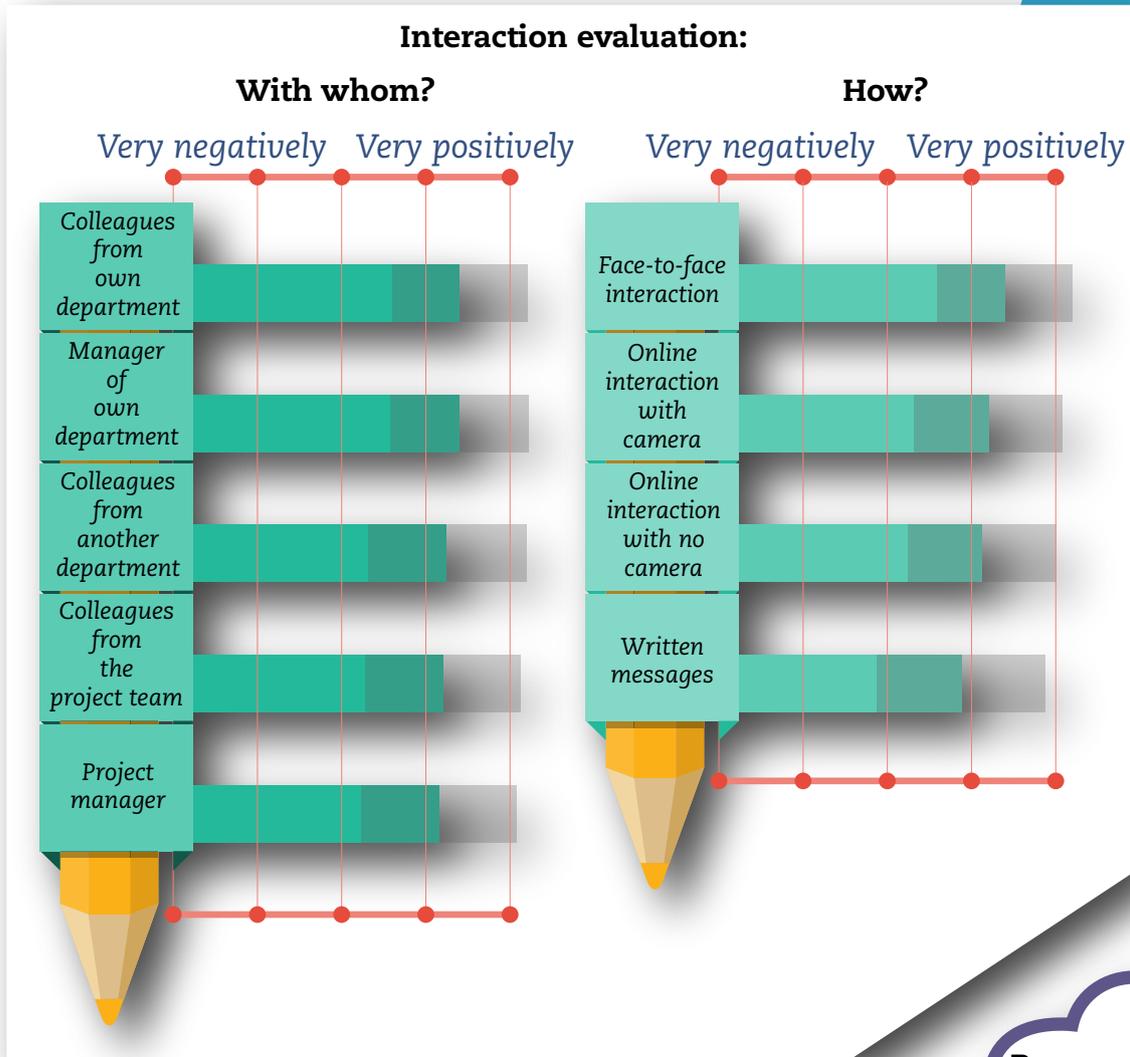
Moreover, when newcomers reported more positive interactions overall (during their first two months at the job)...

- ... they were more satisfied with the organization,
- ... they were more satisfied with their job,
- ... they estimated the chance more likely that they would stay with the organization for the next 5 years.



Face-to-face interactions are experienced most positively

Face-to-face interactions are valued more positively than virtual or written interactions. Furthermore, especially interactions with colleagues and the manager of the own department are valued positively. Whether the interactions are planned or unplanned does not matter for the degree to which interactions are valued positively.



Conclusion!

This research shows that positive workplace interactions promote good socialization, such as letting newcomers feel at home and feel competent. This increases the chance they want to stay with the organization for a longer period. Especially face-to-face interactions with colleagues and the manager of their own department are evaluated positively. It does not matter if these interactions are scheduled or not. **Therefore, we recommend to create an organizational context in which employees from the same department can easily get in touch with each other.** For example, by planning a daily coffee moment together. **If face-to-face interaction are not possible, for example in times of working from home, a planned interaction moment is valuable to increase the involvement and connection of new employees to the organization.**

Recommendation

Create an organizational context in which employees can easily get in touch with each other

Feeling different makes it difficult for newcomers to feel connected

Workforces are increasingly diverse in, for example, gender, nationality, and study backgrounds.

Such diversity could be beneficial for organizational performance because of the different perspectives, expertises, and networks that are available. At the same time, when employees feel different from each other, this can create friction and cause employees that belong to a minority to feel excluded and leave the organization. This makes it challenging to profit from the advantages that a diverse workforce can offer.

Therefore, it is important to ensure that also employees that belong to minority groups feel at home in the organization. **This way, minority employees are being retained in the organization and the potential of diversity for creative and innovative performance can be optimally utilized.**



Newcomers feel at home irrespective of their demographic background

In the current study we see that independent of gender, age, nationality, newcomers feel at home. Moreover, this demographic diversity did **not** predict the extent to which newcomers...

- ... felt a fit with the organization
- ... felt competent
- ... could be themselves
- ... felt similar to their colleagues
- ... were satisfied with their job and/or the organization.

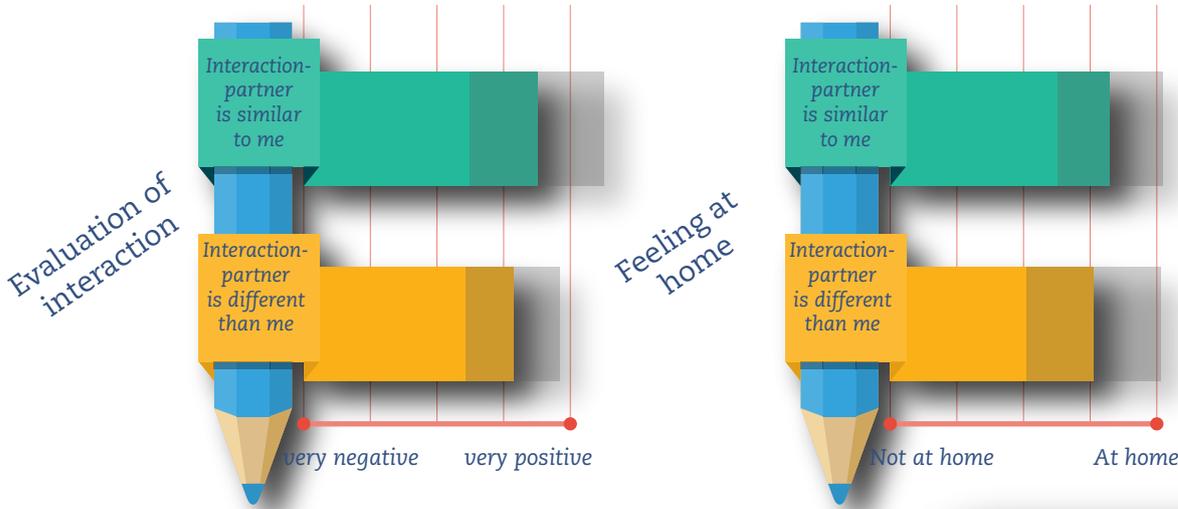
Newcomers feel **less** at home when they feel dissimilar in personality and interests

Employees can also differ from each other on less visible attributes such as their personality and interests or their skills. However, the extent to which newcomers feel dissimilar to their colleagues in **knowledge and competences** did not predict how much they felt at home. However the extent to which newcomers felt dissimilar to their colleagues in **personality and interests** does predict feeling at home (see more information on the next page).



In the current study we see that when newcomers report that their most important interaction of that day was with an interaction partner to whom they felt similar, they...

- ... evaluate this interaction more positively
- ... feel more at home in the organization.



Moreover, newcomers who feel **dissimilar to their colleagues in personality and interests** increasingly feel over time that...

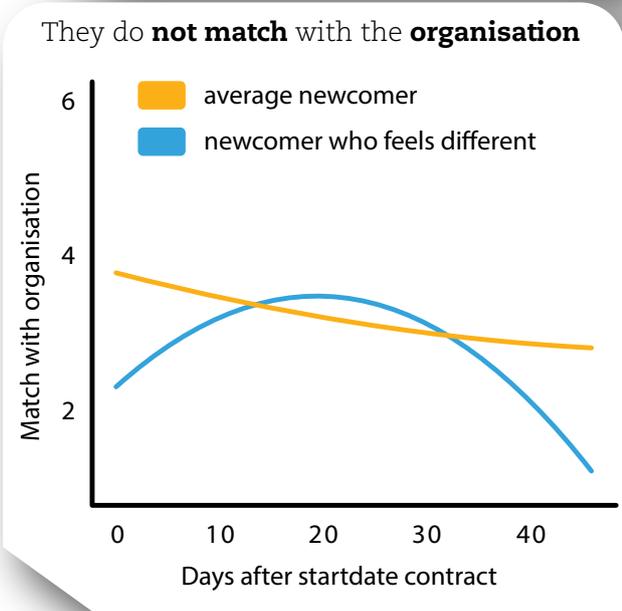
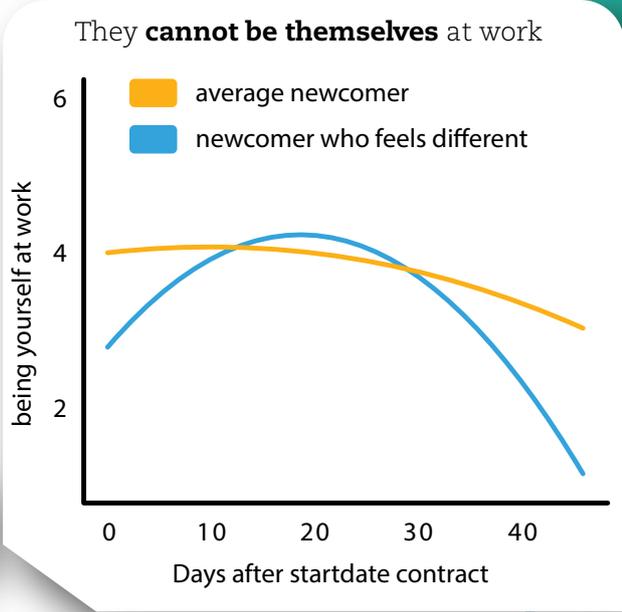
- ... they **cannot be themselves** at work
- ... they do **not match** with the **organisation**

Recommendation
 Create an organizational context in which everyone can be themselves

Learn more!

Employees who feel dissimilar to others at work often feel less included. This is also what we see in the current research. When newcomers perceived that they differed from their colleagues in term of personality and interests, they felt less at home in the organization.

Importantly, research shows that the more inclusive the organizational climate (i.e., fair unbiased treatments of all employees), the more employees feel comfortable to be themselves. This helps all employees but especially employees who feel dissimilar to their colleagues to feel included in the organization. The current research shows that newcomers who feel dissimilar in personality and interests from their colleagues also feel less comfortable to be themselves and thus underscores **the importance of creating an inclusive organizational context in which everyone can be themselves.**



Working from home makes it difficult for newcomers to feel connected

Working from home makes it more difficult for newcomers to feel at home. On days that newcomers worked from home, they reported to feel less connected to the organization and to feel less at home.

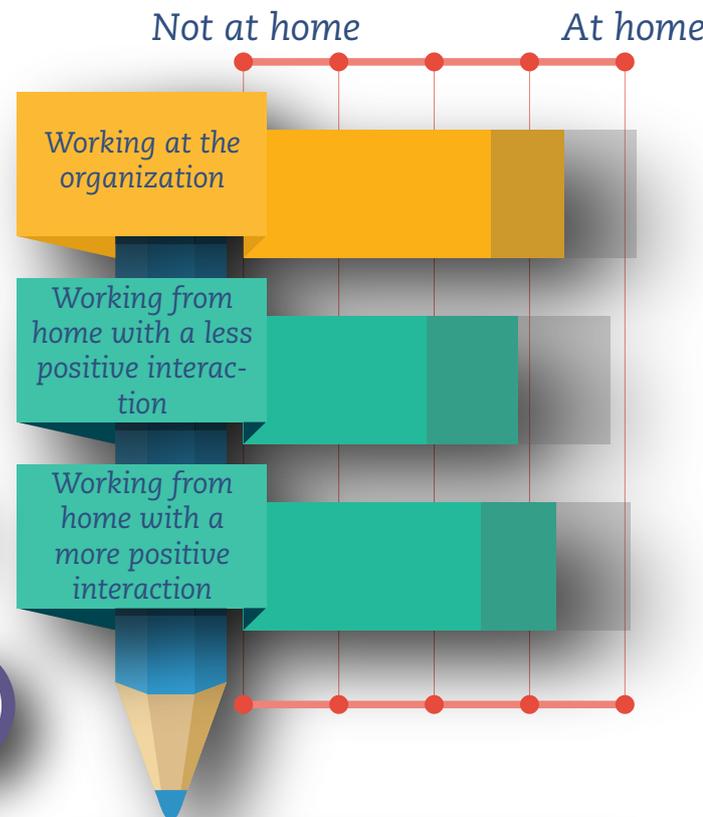
But if newcomers reported a positive interaction with a colleague or someone else from work that day, this negative effect was buffered. So, it no longer mattered whether they had worked at home or in the organization.

Recommendation

Schedule also meetings with newcomers on days that they work from home.

Conclusion!

This research shows that working from home can make it more difficult for new employees to feel at home. At times when new employees work from home AND they do not interact with their colleagues or only have a negative interaction, working from home results in feeling less at home. However, when employees had a positive interaction while working from home, they felt equally at home as on a day that they worked in the organization. **This research shows that working from home can make it more difficult for new employees to feel connected to their organization.**



Thank you!

We would like to sincerely thank the companies and their new hires for their participation in this study on optimal onboarding (part of the bigger 'Bridge the Gap!' project). For questions about this factsheet, please contact the research team at: bridgethegap@utwente.nl
You can address your e-mail to Lianne Aarntzen (main researcher)

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