Perfecting user onboarding to drive growth

**Based on content presented by Casey Winters,
Chief Product Officer at Eventbrite**

Onboarding is the most important part of growth

Slack, Stripe, Superhuman—the fastest growing companies of our generation have one thing in common—world class onboarding. Get it right and you'll increase retained users. Retained users bring more revenue to your company, increase your potential for word-of-mouth referrals, and reduce your need for paid acquisition.

Great onboarding also helps prevent your product from becoming too complex. If you retain more power users than casual users, your product shifts to reflect the complex needs of power users. That generally means your product becomes more complex than it needs to be, which then intimidates future new users.

Six takeaways to improve your onboarding

Onboarding is a valuable growth lever, but also a delicate process that takes a lot of experiments, user surveys, and interviews. Follow these six takeaways from Casey to get your onboarding right.

1. VALUE AND FREQUENCY ARE THE TWO VARIABLES OF RETENTION.

When looking at your product's retention, find the action that correlates with value, and determine how often that action occurs. Those two variables will help you put together a cohort graph.

For example, at Pinterest, Casey knew users found value when they saved a post. Frequency was a different story. At the time, there wasn't an online product similar to Pinterest, so they looked offline. Magazines provided a good analog for Pinterest, and since magazines are often delivered once per month, the company set their frequency to 30 days.

That meant that Pinterest evaluated active users by how often they saved a pin. If a user saved at least one pin every 30 days, they were considered an active user.

2. USE COHORT GRAPHS TO DETERMINE HOW LONG ONBOARDING TAKES.

When users stop dropping off from using your product, you'll be left with your active users. At that point, your cohort graph will flatten out. Onboarding ends when that happens, but the time frame for that plateau to happen varies by company.

Some companies might find their onboarding ends in one week. Other companies, specifically B2B enterprise companies, may find that their onboarding lasts six months.

Your onboarding team needs to have the ability to control the product experience for the entire onboarding process, even if it takes six months. When you give your onboarding team this level of access, your onboarding will improve.

> " **A design that educates is better than a design that doesnt educate.** "
>
> - Casey Winters

3. GET USERS TO FIND VALUE FAST, BUT NOT TOO FAST.

Your onboarding experience has two important moments: the aha moment and the setup. The aha moment is the point when someone finally understands the value of your product. The setup involves the steps needed to get to that point. You can't shortcut your way to the aha moment, because the setup is equally important.

At Pinterest, Casey wanted to get users to save a pin as quickly as possible, but forcing them to save a pin immediately upon entering the product would have skipped the setup. The users needed to understand why that action was important. To solve that, Pinterest removed all functionality in the onboarding process that didn't help someone save a pin. That gave the users one task, and a solid path to get there without shortcutting it.

4. USE EDUCATION TO HELP PEOPLE GET TO THE AHA MOMENT.

Conventional wisdom in Silicon Valley is, "if your design needs education, it's a bad design." That's bad advice, according to Casey. He recommends using education to tell people exactly what you want them to do when they enter your product. Don't leave it up to them to, hopefully, scroll to the right places and click on the right things.

When a user first enters the Pinterest feed, it prompts them to scroll to see more. When the user stops scrolling, another prompt tells them to click on a pin to learn more. Then, when they click on it, a final prompt tells them to save the pin.

5. BE PREPARED FOR FALSE POSITIVES OF YOUR AHA MOMENT.

The first time you try to find your aha moment, you'll probably get it wrong. It takes a few tries to really understand when that moment happens. You might find a few moments that correlate to user retention, but many of them won't be useful to improve onboarding.

Pinterest found that if a person pinned 100 things, they were going to retain. Realistically, that's not useful because you can't force users to pin 100 things in the onboarding process. That's too many things to pack into onboarding.

6. WATCH USERS GO THROUGH THE ONBOARDING PROCESS IN REAL TIME.

You can't find the hangups in your onboarding process by surveying users. You need to sit down and watch them go through the process. Doing this will help you understand where users are finding value and what's causing distraction from those value moments that take place during setup.

How Segment can help

Improving onboarding isn't a one-team effort. It takes a cross-functional approach, so you're going to need a lot of tools:

• Analytics to collect data about what's happening in your products

• Heatmaps to learn how people are using your products and where they're getting stuck

• Email to help teach people about your product and bring them back to it

• Push notifications to keep mobile app users engaged

• Surveys to help understand what's going on with churned/existing users in the onboarding process

• Warehouses to store all of your data

• Business Intelligence to help you analyze the data from all of these tools

Our integrations catalog can help you find all the tools you need.

Keep reading to learn more

• **PagerDuty's Stack for Optimizing Onboarding**

• **3 Must-Have Email Campaigns for User Engagement**

• **Get Users to Your Aha Moment Faster with Email**

• **How Imperfect Foods Built a Culture of Experimentation and Increased Customer Retention**