

THE STATE OF ONBOARDING 2026

# The *Hidden Lever* Driving Retention, Expansion, and Efficiency

Insights from 161 SaaS leaders redefining customer success through automation, AI, and early-value delivery

## EXECUTIVE FORWARD

### Why the First 90 Days Define Your Next 900

The most competitive companies know that the real revenue moment doesn't happen when a deal closes. It happens when onboarding begins.

Based on insights from 161 onboarding and customer success (CS) leaders across SaaS, healthcare tech, logistics, and other industries, one truth stands out:

Today's most resilient organizations understand that staying power is built early. The moment after the contract is signed is where customers evaluate whether they made the right choice. Customer onboarding has become one of the most strategic, and often overlooked, levers for business growth. It's the critical moment where teams translate a promise into a lived experience. When customers understand their path, see progress quickly, and feel supported, they become more engaged, more successful, and more likely to expand.

Onboarding sets a powerful pace from day one, creating momentum that drives faster value realization, stronger retention, upsell opportunities, and ultimately, true staying power.

This report explores how leading B2B companies are transforming onboarding into a high-impact growth function, and why those who fail to evolve will struggle to retain revenue in the next era of customer success.

## THE SHIFT

### From Handoff to Revenue Engine

The deal is signed. Excitement peaks. Expectations are clear. This is where customer success takes the baton, and where revenue risk begins.

Too often, what should be a seamless start turns into chaos: scattered spreadsheets, unclear ownership, and manual tasks that stall progress. When onboarding falters, every downstream metric suffers, from renewals and expansions, to advocacy.

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*"If we lose momentum after the contract is signed, everything downstream becomes harder. Onboarding is the moment of truth."*

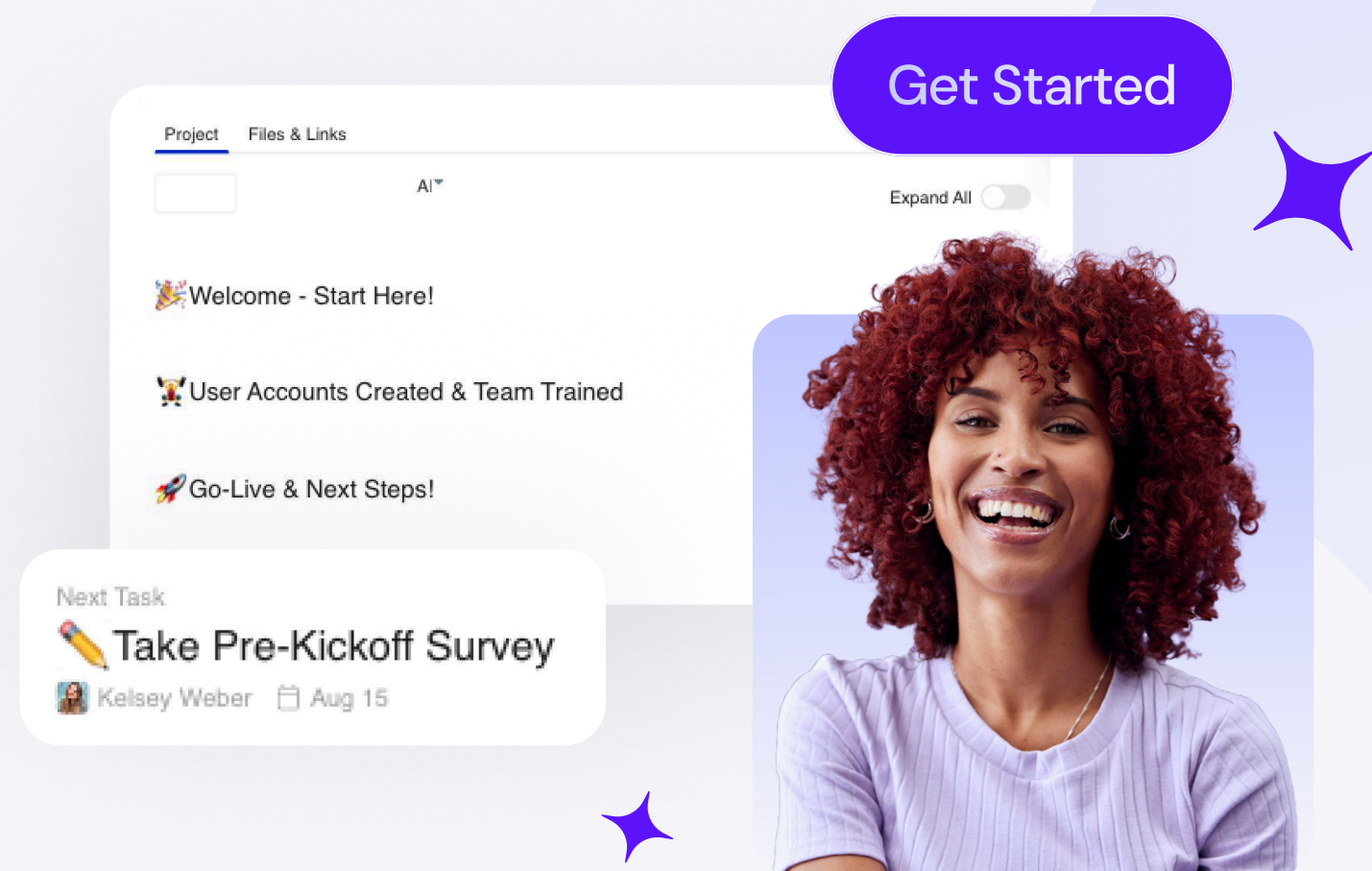
**SURVEY RESPONDENT**

Onboarding is the delivery of the promise sales made. Done well, it builds trust and confidence. Done poorly, it erodes credibility before value is ever achieved.

# The State of Onboarding in 2026

## Onboarding Solutions Is the **New Standard**

Teams that digitized onboarding **cut time-to-value by 25% + on average.**



## Visibility Is the New Advantage

62%

of CS leaders say they lack real-time visibility into customer progress.

57%

report onboarding friction directly impacts revenue realization.

1 IN 3

admit they don't know where customers stand in onboarding.

## Friction = Failure to Launch

Customers abandon onboarding when they don't see value fast. The biggest killers of momentum remain:

- Complex setup & scattered tools
- Unclear next steps & ownership
- Manual, disconnected communication

**57%** of companies that cut onboarding investment saw increased churn within six months.



# Mini Case Study:

Automation didn't replace people—it gave them time to focus on customers, not coordination.

Qualia, the leading digital real estate closing platform, faced a significant challenge with its onboarding team.

Eventually, Qualia's search led them to OnRamp. By implementing OnRamp, Qualia achieved significant growth in both efficiency and customer satisfaction. The company more than doubled its onboarding volume in 2025. They managed this growth without having to add additional headcount, thanks to the automation and scale provided by OnRamp.

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*“We were trying to solve how to continue to balance the idea of quality and efficiency with onboarding new customers. We needed to double our onboarding capacity in 3 months or less, which is not easy.”*



**BRIAN THOME**  
Chief Customer Officer  
Qualia

## Onboarding as a Revenue Strategy

Cutting onboarding budgets might save short-term costs, but it burns long-term revenue. 57% of companies that reduced onboarding investment saw churn increase.

### Now, onboarding teams are moving closer to revenue:

- 57% now report into the Chief Revenue Officer (CRO) or Revenue Operations.
- 69% have built dedicated onboarding functions rather than relying on generalist CSMs.

Leading organizations recognize onboarding as the growth catalyst that drives adoption, renewals, and expansion. **Key insight:** Every dollar invested in onboarding protection saves multiples in retention and expansion later.

### PROVIDING CLARITY

## Why Purpose-Built Platforms Matter

Most teams still rely on ad-hoc tools; project management software, spreadsheets, and email threads. That model breaks as soon as the business scales.

PATCHWORK SETUP	PURPOSE-BUILT ONBOARDING WITH ONRAMP
SCATTERED TOOLS	UNIFIED WORKSPACE
MANUAL REMINDERS	AUTOMATED TRIGGERS
LIMITED VISIBILITY	REAL-TIME DASHBOARDS
DELAYED HANDOFFS	PREDICTIVE ALERTS & AI SUMMARIES

Purpose-built platforms like OnRamp give teams operational clarity, aligning sales teams, CS, and customers in one transparent view of progress and value.



# The Onboarding Maturity Model

WHERE DOES YOUR ORGANIZATION SIT TODAY?

Stage	Description	Signal You're Here	Next Step
Manual	Reactive, spreadsheet-driven	Long setup cycles, slow TTV	Automate repetitive tasks
Guided	Templates, checklists	Inconsistent delivery	Add real-time tracking
Automated	Rules-based workflows	Predictable, scalable success	Layer AI for insight
Intelligent	Predictive, data-driven	Early risk detection, proactive action	Continuous optimization

# How Companies are Scaling Digital Onboarding

Our data shows the biggest blockers are operational:

- Misalignment between sales and CS
- Manual hand-offs and duplicated effort
- Fragmented data and ownership

Modern revenue teams are replacing these gaps with unified, digital-first onboarding operations that align people, process, and performance. The payoff is measurable: faster time-to-value, higher adoption, and earlier renewal conversations.

## Automation, AI, and the Future of Customer Success

Technology is redefining what “great onboarding” looks like.

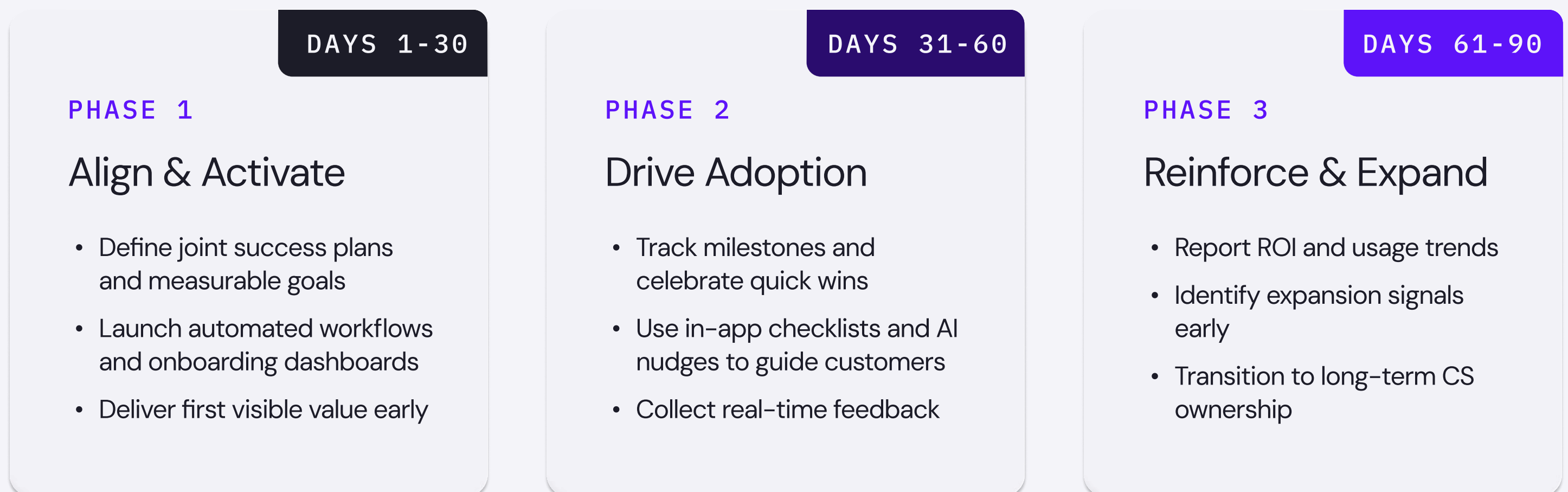
- **26%** of SaaS companies are actively investing in onboarding automation.
- **70%** of CS leaders expect AI to handle half of onboarding tasks by 2027.
- **96%** of teams using real-time tracking report increased engagement.

## The Rise of the Onboarding Co-Pilot

AI now handles the repetitive but critical work by summarizing progress, triggering milestones, and surfacing risks, so CSMs can focus on relationships and strategic impact.

Automation doesn't remove the human touch. It amplifies it, allowing your teams to deliver value faster and smarter.

## The First 90 Days Playbook



KPI	WHY IT MATTERS	BEST-IN-CLASS BENCHMARK
TIME TO FIRST VALUE	PREDICTS RENEWAL	< 14 DAYS
ONBOARDING COMPLETION RATE	ADOPTION INDICATOR	> 80 %
CSAT POST-ONBOARDING	EARLY SATISFACTION METRIC	≥ 4.5 / 5



# The Path Forward for Revenue Teams

Retention is revenue. Every dollar retained is worth more than a new one acquired.

The best companies have realized that growth doesn't always come from adding sales headcount, it often comes from eliminating the cracks in the customer lifecycle. That means treating onboarding not as a cost center but as a core revenue function.

## Top-performing teams now:

1. **Standardize** onboarding workflows for consistency and scalability.
2. **Automate** to reduce manual drag and accelerate value delivery.
3. **Measure** onboarding impact through retention, expansion, and advocacy.

If your onboarding experience isn't designed for growth, your sales pipeline is *running uphill*.

## Final Takeaways

- The first 90 days define your customer's perception of value and your company's ability to keep it.
- Friction kills momentum. Clarity, automation, and visibility build confidence.
- AI-driven onboarding turns customer success into a proactive revenue engine.
- Companies that standardize, automate, and personalize onboarding multiply and retain customers

**It's time to stop asking how to close more deals and start asking how to keep the ones you've already won.**

## About OnRamp

Founded in 2020, OnRamp is the intelligent, AI-enabled customer onboarding and engagement platform that helps companies accelerate adoption, strengthen customer relationships, and unlock revenue growth. By eliminating onboarding bottlenecks, automating workflows, and providing visibility into progress, OnRamp enables enterprises to deliver value faster, reduce churn, and expand revenue opportunities. Backed by Koch Disruptive Technologies, Javelin Venture Partners, Contour Venture Partners, and Pear VC, OnRamp serves multiple Fortune 15 enterprises and high-growth SaaS leaders—helping them transform customer success into a scalable revenue engine.

Ready to Win Your First 90 Days?

REQUEST A DEMO → [ONRAMP.US](https://onramp.us)