

CASE STUDY

Revolutionizing State Auditing:

How a New Bootcamp Program Transformed Team Efficiency and Job Satisfaction

INTRODUCTION

Like many employers hiring for entry-level accounting positions, a state government's auditing division faced critical staffing challenges. Budget constraints in government auditing have forced divisions to reduce the number of staff who can spend time training new auditors. Most new auditors come to their first auditing job with only one or two auditing courses in college, meaning auditing divisions need to teach these new professionals how to audit. This is a very time consuming process.

The state's legacy onboarding process for new hires and transfers covered the typical administrative processes, like IT and HR, focused on tasks such as computer set up and completing timesheets. Following the administrative portion of onboarding, new auditors were immediately put on a team, no matter what stage of the audit they were in and had to learn as best they

could from the on-the-job experience. This means they may come into an audit right in the middle of the audit and not really have a chance to experience the entire audit process or understand the rationale behind certain procedures.

Senior auditors in the field were already stretched thin with heavy workloads, causing significant reductions in the time available to train new staff in the field. In many cases, the seniors expressed it was quicker for them to perform the basic tasks themselves than to train the new hires on the job—leading to a continued skills gap for the new hires from one engagement to the next.

For the less experienced new hires, the legacy onboarding training, combined with "on-the-job" learning, was no longer achieving the desired objective.

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THE CHALLENGE

The audit division's senior leadership held a strategic session, which identified the lack of preparedness of new hires as a key stressor for the entire division. **Senior leadership recognized staffing shortages had intensified the pressure on critical mid-level professionals**, who were now being tasked with greater needs for training new hires in foundational tasks like worksheet preparation, self-review, and presenting an issue for review.

At about the same time that the leadership was identifying this challenge, **COVID-19 struck and changed the way this group did its job almost**

overnight. Now, the agency needed to train candidates to be more effective and efficient auditors on their first engagements, but they also needed to train them to be more self-reliant remote workers—another brand-new challenge for the current class of new hires.

The auditing division reached out to 20-20 Services to find a solution that would provide new auditors with a consistent set of foundational skills they could bring to their first audit, aiming to reduce the time spent by senior auditors teaching basic auditing practices and principles to new hires.



THE SOLUTION

20-20 Services consulted extensively with leadership to determine the complex root causes of the challenge. A combination of factors, including talent shortages, turnover, and increased work expectations, had created strain on audit teams.

Supervisors needed staff who could contribute right away, rather than spending hours in on-the-job training. As the talent shortage progressed and the organization expanded the hiring search to non-traditional backgrounds, the agency developed a need for deeper training and support.

To respond to these challenges, **20-20 collaborated with the agency to build an innovative new hire auditing bootcamp**, aimed at effectively preparing new hires to jumpstart their careers.

The auditing bootcamp was constructed as a simulated audit training program including:

- **A core curriculum of foundational accounting and auditing skills**, providing all new hires with a consistent baseline for their first and future engagements.
- **A real-life “mock audit” used to provide a hands-on training experience** and the opportunity to apply the foundational concepts learned in the course.
- **Opportunities to practice preparing and performing self-review of workpapers in a department-accepted format.** Additionally, during the training program, workpapers completed by participants are actively reviewed by instructors who provide written feedback, simulating a real audit.
- **Opportunities to learn and apply time management skills.** By completing tasks within real-world time constraints, participants who struggle to complete tasks in the expected timeframe receive additional, tailored support to improve performance in areas they may have initially found challenging.
- **One-on-one and group coaching to strengthen participants’ ability to identify and address issues of concern.** During the simulated audit, participants practice asking questions, learning to bring proposed solutions when reaching out to their supervisor for help. The new hire bootcamp aims to shift new hire mindsets from, “I don’t know what am I supposed to do,” to a more proactive perspective: “I’ve taken the following steps, but something isn’t adding up. Can you help point me to my next step?”
- **Practical experience to develop improved self-reliance and remote work capabilities.** The course is delivered entirely virtually, allowing participants to learn to interact through Zoom, Microsoft Teams, and other channels critical to remote workers.



20-20 and the agency worked closely together to customize the bootcamp, including creating an extensive full audit case study, based on actual work previously completed by the department. Instead of taking time from a mid-level senior who is already stretched thin doing the work of the department, **participants have access to group and one-on-one time with a dedicated 20-20 instructor.** Each course section involves a full day of training, plus time spent in independent work. The program begins with basic

auditing concepts and progresses to applying the new skills and knowledge to specific case studies.

Trainees who complete the program receive digital access to an array of resources, including instructional materials and a collection of sample workpapers they have completed, along with individualized instructor feedback. With these resources, participants are well-positioned to carry the knowledge gained from the training into their first live engagements and beyond.

“The experience, knowledge, and energy that 20-20 Services has offered has gone a long way toward making sure our newly hired auditors are successful while at the same time alleviating our senior auditors and managers of having to get our new hires up to speed. The foundational knowledge that the bootcamp offers is immeasurable in terms of resources and time.”

THE RESULTS

The program has proven to be highly successful. Not only has the bootcamp become the flagship experience for all new agency auditors—the format is even being adapted into other parts of the organization.

The program has greatly reduced the amount of time senior staffers spend on teaching basic workplace skills, freeing them to handle more of their own traditional responsibilities. This shift in capacity also allows senior staffers to dedicate meaningful time and energy to serving as mentors and guides to new hires, instead of being bogged down in overwhelming on-the-job training.

The more effective use of these critical mid-level resources has improved audit efficiency and helped the group meet budgeted hours requirements and expand into other non-financial audits. By investing in an impactful, effective new hire training experience, the agency reaps the benefits throughout the organization.