What is a New Employee Ambassador Program?

An ambassador program is an onboarding and knowledge sharing method used to orient new employees. It involves assigning the new employee to a New Employee Ambassador. The ambassador is an existing employee who guides the new employee through the first two months on the job. It should include a formal documented process that outlines the ambassador’s responsibilities as well as what items they should cover over the first few weeks of employment. The ambassador system should also encourage the new employee to share tips, tools, knowledge, and techniques they learned from previous work experiences. The knowledge sharing goal is to incorporate new ideas and technologies that enhance the organization. Finally, a new employee ambassador gives the new employee an opportunity to offer confidential feedback about how the onboarding process is going.

What is a New Employee Ambassador?

An ambassador is someone who partners with a new employee during his or her first two months of employment. He or she is a colleague assigned to assist the new hire to get through the first nerve-wracking time period of being in a new position at a new organization. He or she provides insight into the day-to-day activities of the company and is there to help the new employee fit in more quickly. Typically, an ambassador would make him or herself available to show the new hire around the office, go over procedures, and generally help the new hire become familiar with the company's inner workings and culture. Ideally, an ambassador is a great communicator who can easily provide information and encourage the new hire to express their thoughts and concerns in a safe setting. He or she should be the type of employee the organization wants to duplicate.

Ambassador Responsibilities

Knowing “what is expected of me” is one of the most important questions that contribute to employee satisfaction, according to a Gallup Q12 study. New employees face a steep learning curve when they start with a new company. If an organization approaches orientation strictly based on job-related information, this provides little opportunity for communicating information that socializes the new employee. Building cultural competence is a process, not a one-time event.

Relationships matter. Current employees who act as buddies must want new employees to succeed and be committed to helping them. A workplace ambassador may be the first point of contact for a new employee and should be capable of establishing rapport quickly. We want the new employee to feel comfortable and safe asking questions and bringing up issues with their ambassador. An effective program primarily requires a culture of openness and teamwork.
The New Employee Ambassador becomes an ambassador for AURA, communicates our company culture, and relates non-job specific—but important—information. Make sure the ambassador employee has time to perform this work and is not on the critical path for urgent deliverables. Consider reducing assignments that could keep the ambassador away from the new hire. An ambassador should be accessible to the new employee, so location does matter.

Ambassadors should have the skills and knowledge to perform the following types of tasks:

- Teaching/or tutoring, such as explaining unfamiliar tasks;
- Explaining how to use office equipment, obtain office supplies, make travel arrangements, and the like;
- Socializing the new employee on company's guidelines, norms, culture, and unwritten guidelines;
- Sharing insights on how things are done in the organization;
- Involving the new employee in social or informal activities, such as lunch, coffee, and such.

An ambassador provides moral support during the first few crucial weeks by introducing the new employee to staff members and showing them around their new workplace. He or she should have a good work performance history and be someone whom other employees like and respect. Ideally, ambassadors are also rewarded through acknowledging the volunteer work in performance appraisals and/or gestures of appreciation and respect.

Characteristics of a Good Ambassador

When selecting an ambassador, it is important to choose an employee who has a well-rounded knowledge of our company and its mission and value. It is equally important that he or she have a positive outlook and is willing to be the face of the organization. Additional characteristics to look for when selecting an ambassador include:

- Has a willingness and ability to help others;
- Has demonstrated strong past performance;
- Has the time to be accessible to the new employee;
- Has some understanding of the new employee's job;
- Is a similar level of the new employee;
- Has excellent communications and interpersonal skills;
- Is well regarded and accepted by current employees.
An ambassador should epitomize our company's values and be familiar enough with the formal and informal organizational structures to be a reliable source of information. An appropriate ambassador will possess a positive outlook on the company and be able to use their perspective to encourage a sense of pride and loyalty in the new employee.

**What a New Employee Ambassador Is Not**

A new employee ambassador is not a substitute for the supervisor, mentor or trainer. They are available to answer relatively straightforward questions about operational issues. This contrasts with a coach who seeks to increase the individual's job-specific performance, or a mentor who is focused on personal and professional development. To be clear, a new employee ambassador is not someone who is involved in the new employee's individual development or job performance. The ambassador is not being asked to develop the new hire and should not be held accountable for the new hire's performance or job training.

If someone does not want to do this extra work, then don't assign him or her the ambassador role. Some people simply don't want the responsibility, or they are not well suited temperamentally for the role. Be sure to discourage gossip and speculation within the ambassador/new employee relationship.

Typically, organizations choose veteran employees to fulfill the ambassador role. An employee with less than one year of service may be more empathetic or closer in age to a new hire, but they may not have the full breadth of knowledge needed yet because they are still learning. While seasoned employees are best, the ambassador should not be a disgruntled employee. We don’t want new hires to learn bad work habits or become a part of the culture that damages productivity.

Unless requested, an ambassador does not peer review work products that the new employee creates so he or she should avoid giving unsolicited advice. Nor should he or she take over the work of the new hire; doing so may short-circuit the new hire's learning experience.

*Adapted from PMI.ORG*