Servicewide New Employee Ambassador Program

NTEU Briefing
Ambassador Pilot Background/Scope

- HCO and Workforce of Tomorrow joint initiative, piloted in SB/SE and supported by NTEU, to enhance new employee on-boarding.

- Best practices find that:
  - effective on-boarding can improve employee productivity, performance and retention and increase employee engagement; and
  - pairing an Ambassador with a new employee facilitates transition into the job, increases connection to the organization and contributes to effective on-boarding.

- Ambassador Pilot Scope
  - SB/SE Exam Revenue Agent Wave employees; EOD 4/13/09
  - 212 new employees hired; pilot included 63 new employees in 15 PODs within Western and South Atlantic Areas.
  - Duration of pilot: 3/15 to 5/15/09
Pilot Program Highlights and Feedback

- SB/SE Director, Examination generated program awareness and interest by a message to staff announcing the program; program information was distributed using multiple media including IRS intranet, SB/SE website, and newsletters;

- 21 Ambassadors were selected; each Ambassador was assigned 2 - 4 new employees; Ambassadors felt the number of new employees assigned to them was manageable; all Ambassadors participated in an orientation session;

- Time spent for the duration of the program averaged 7 hours per Ambassador, with a steady decline as the program progressed;

- Most common type of help/information solicited by new employees was about the IRS office environment; and

- Feedback on program benefits and value collected by OPERA from new employees and Ambassadors was favorable.
Servicewide New Employee Ambassador Program

- Based on Pilot program success, IRS proposes to expand the program servicewide for new hires, including wave, ad hoc and migration employees. W&I Campus operations are excluded.

- Enhancements to the program will include:
  - online ambassador orientation in an ELMS self-directed learning product;
  - web-based resources for ambassadors and managers;
  - assessment of program effectiveness – by survey or focus groups; and
  - incorporation of the program into the servicewide onboarding process.
Definition of an Ambassador

Typically, an Ambassador is an IRS employee who is:

- a peer in the same occupation and Business Operating Division;
- geographically co-located with the new hire;
- willing to be the first “real face” the new hire attaches to the organization; and
- identified by the manager to be a non-evaluative resource to the new employee for approximately 30 – 90 days. *Ambassador may be assigned more than one new employees during large hiring initiatives.*
What is the Role of an Ambassador?

The Ambassador’s role is an informal resource for the new employee; a peer relationship, where questions and concerns can be explored comfortably.

The Ambassador role is informal and includes:

- reaching out to the new employee prior to their report date to both welcome and establish credibility as a reliable source of information and resources;
- contacting the new employee when he/she initially reports to POD;
- providing information about the office location, transportation options and other general information that can help an employee feel settled and acclimated to the new workplace;
- introducing the new hire to website materials and providing instruction on how to access information about the IRS (e.g., BOD mission, vision, values, history, structure, business goals); and
- making periodic follow-up contact with the new employee to answer questions.
Ambassador Identification and Eligibility

Ambassador Identification
- Servicewide communication announcing program and resources
- Manager solicitation of interest when need arises
- Manager will identify an Ambassador from eligible employees

Ambassador Eligibility
- Employees are eligible to serve as an Ambassador if they meet all of the following criteria:
  - minimum of 6 months of IRS experience
  - availability for 30 – 90 days; approximate timeframe of program
  - not subject to leave counseling or leave restriction letter
  - not under performance improvement letter
  - not under investigation for conduct matter
Orientation and Resources

Ambassador On-line Orientation and Web-based Resources will include:

- Program overview
- Program administration
- Roles and responsibilities
- Guidelines
  - Includes “no-fault” termination of Ambassador if requested by either party and assignment of new Ambassador
  - Sample communication templates
- FAQs
Evaluation and Recognition

Employee Performance Evaluation
■ Serving as an Ambassador does not affect performance evaluation

Program Evaluation
■ Confidential, voluntary surveys or voluntary focus groups with a limited number of new hires and Ambassadors
■ Question on new employee general entrance survey (for future implementation)

Employee Recognition
■ Ambassadors may identify their participation for purposes of self-assessment
Conclusion

- The Servicewide New Employee Ambassador Program identifies and facilitates improvements that streamlines the SB/SE Ambassador Program Pilot, applies best practices, shares information, and fosters collaboration throughout the organization.

- The mission is to enhance the program and make the Servicewide New Employee Ambassador Program predictable, repeatable, and optimal in order to meet agency standards and employ best practices. To achieve this mission, the program will:
  - Streamline ambassador identification
  - Provide the Manager and Ambassador web-based tools and resources
  - Assess the effectiveness of the program through survey or focus groups
  - Incorporate the Ambassador Program into the service onboarding process.