

THE CONTRIBUTION THAT EMPLOYEE AMBASSADORS MAKE TO YOUNG PEOPLE'S LEARNING DURING THEIR COURSE

Introduction

Employee Ambassadors are individuals from our funders' organisations who participate in our courses in order to support young people through their experience. Typically, they attend for the duration of a course and become an integral member of the team, taking part in all of the activities. Prior to the course, they receive a briefing session, and in some cases, tailored training, in order to prepare them for the experience.

During the course, the ambassadors support the young people through all aspects of their experience, providing practical support during the activities, as well as assisting their instructor and accompanying teachers when needed. In some cases, they continue to work with the pupils when they return to school.

Previous research has indicated that there is a positive relationship between the number of employer contacts that a young person has in school, and their confidence in progressing towards their career goals, the likelihood that they will become NEET, and their future earnings¹. It also shows that young people value hearing the views of professionals they come into contact with in educational settings, and find that contacts help them with their career decision-making.

This suggests that the interactions that young people have with their Employee Ambassador during their course may contribute towards the development of their employability by supporting them in the development of their skills, and increasing their exposure to the world of work through the ambassador's experiences. In 2015, over seventy Employee Ambassadors attended one of The Trust's courses. In order to understand the value of this initiative, an evaluation was conducted into the effectiveness of the role that they play during the course.

Scope of the evaluation

The evaluation sought to understand the extent to which the Employee Ambassadors:

- Acted as a positive role model to the young people
- Supported the instructor in providing one-to-one support to the young people
- Provided a positive exposure to the world of work

The evaluation involved three elements:

1. Feedback from visiting staff members²
2. Feedback from young people³
3. Feedback from instructors

¹ It's who you meet: why employer contacts at school make a difference to the employment prospects of young adults, Dr Anthony Mann, Director of Research and Policy, Education and Employers Taskforce

² Feedback was collected from forty-eight visiting staff members

³ Feedback was collected from approximately ninety young people aged 13 – 15 who attended two different programmes

Summary of findings

The evaluation indicates that the Employee Ambassadors can play an important and valued role during an Outward Bound course. Young people **enjoy the experience of working alongside an adult from a different context**, who provides a further level of **emotional support, encouragement and attention** when needed, reinforces the value of the skills they develop during their course, and **shares their life experiences with them**.

“HE TOLD US HOW IMPORTANT IT IS TO BE CONFIDENT AND TO COMMUNICATE. HE TOLD US WHAT QUALITIES AN EMPLOYER LOOKS FOR.” Pupil

The teachers who accompany the pupils on their course also value the extra support the ambassadors are able to provide, and the exposure to the world of work that they offer. They observed how ambassadors developed strong and **positive relationships with pupils, role modelled positivity and enthusiasm**, and **provided one-to-one emotional and practical support**. **98% (46) of teachers reported** that the Employee Ambassador had **made a positive contribution** towards the young people’s learning during their course; **91% (41) described the contribution as “significant”**.

“POSITIVE ATTITUDE - MORALE BOOSTING. SUPPORTIVE / NURTURING. POSITIVE ROLE MODEL. IT WAS INCREDIBLY HELPFUL HAVING ANOTHER ADULT WHO THEY DIDN'T SEE AS A TEACHER.”

Visiting staff member

Three main themes emerged in relation to the positive role they played during the course:

- 1. The Employee Ambassadors provide additional emotional and practical support during the course*

The feedback provided by teachers and pupils suggests that the Employee Ambassador increases the level of support available for individual pupils (further to that provided by their instructor and their teachers); providing encouragement, motivating them during challenging periods, and giving valuable feedback regarding their achievements. Ambassadors are also in a position to build strong relationships with the pupils during the week, and when they take a real interest in pupils’ development, they are able to provide particularly effective additional support.

“WHILE WE WERE DOING THINGS HE HELPED US AND NEVER TOLD US WHAT WE HAD TO DO TO FIGURE OUT.” Pupil

“HE ENCOURAGED ME THROUGH THE COURSE AND MADE ME MORE CONFIDENT DURING EVERYTHING. HE IS ALSO SOMEONE TO TALK TO.” Pupil

“ALL OF THEIR POSITIVE ENCOURAGEMENT HELPED THE STUDENTS SO MUCH. THEY PUSHED THEM TO TRY THEIR BEST AND ALWAYS PRAISED THEM FOR THEIR ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND YOU COULD TELL HOW MUCH IT MEANT TO THE STUDENTS.” Visiting staff member

2. *The Employee Ambassadors provide a ‘real-world context’ for the learning that takes place during the course*

A number of teachers and young people described how the Employee Ambassadors effectively related aspects of the learning during the course to situations they encountered at work, which made a valuable contribution to how learning was framed throughout the course. They were able to share their knowledge of particular topics and expertise in areas which enhanced the pupils’ experience.

“WHEN WE WERE IN A SITUATION, HE COULD RELATE TO THE SITUATION WHICH WOULD ALWAYS HELP US SOLVE THE PROBLEM.” Pupil

“THE AMBASSADOR CONTRIBUTED BY GIVING THEM SUPPORT, ENCOURAGEMENT, ADVICE AND REAL WORLD COMPARISONS TO TASKS BEING COMPLETED.” Visiting staff member

3. *The Employee Ambassadors help to develop the young people’s awareness of the workplace and routes to employment*

Many of the young people described how their Employee Ambassador shared valuable information with them about their journey to employment, the kinds of skills they would need, and what employers specifically look for when recruiting. In some situations, they were able to provide specific advice and guidance around securing particular jobs or job placements.

“HE WAS TELLING US ABOUT WHAT AGE HE STARTED WORK AT AND THE SKILLS HE USED AND WHAT YOU WILL NEED.” Pupil

“SUPPORTED YOU TO BE MORE CONFIDENT TO GET THE DREAM JOB YOU WANT.” Pupil

“THE INPUT FROM THE MENTOR WAS INVALUABLE; AS AN EXTERNAL VOICE, THE STUDENTS RESPONDED FANTASTICALLY TO ALL FEEDBACK, AND GAINED A SIGNIFICANT UNDERSTANDING OF THE [COMPANY’S] PERSPECTIVE, NOT ONLY AS A SPONSOR, BUT AS A BUSINESS.” Visiting staff member

Conclusion

The evaluation indicates that Employee Ambassadors make a positive contribution to young people’s experiences during their course, as they act as a positive role model, help to enhance their learning, and increase their knowledge and understanding of routes to employment; this contribution is valued by young people and teachers alike. It suggests that their involvement in the course is most effective when they are fully involved and engaged with the pupils’ learning and development, and are able to provide targeted one-to-one support.

This document has been produced by The Outward Bound Trust’s Evaluation team:

T: 020 3301 6481

E: evaluation@outwardbound.org.uk