



# BRAND AMBASSADORS

Imagine an after-school team that is exceptional, commands respect, delivers quality, and role models excellence. Each member of this team reflects your ASP's desired brand image. They are ambassadors of your brand within the school, district, community and after-school field. In essence, they are your best sales force.

A brand, quite simply, is the sum of the perceptions, qualities, experiences and emotions people attribute to your organization or program when they hear or see your company name or symbols. A brand enables recognition and differentiates one from another.

Think of after-school programs in your region or state. Are they all the same or do they have different characteristics, perceptions of quality, and evoke different emotions? What words come to mind when you think of one program over another? The better you are at developing a strong brand, the more you will rise above the pack.

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An employee brand ambassador is someone who represents, reflects, promotes, and embodies the organization's brand. Today's leaders work to build brand ambassadors out of every employee. Here are a few of the reasons why:

- ◆ Employee brand ambassadors talk positively about your brand in the community, fostering excellent word-of-mouth marketing.
- ◆ Employee brand ambassadors know other people like them who may join your workforce.
- ◆ Employee brand ambassadors create raving fans out of customers (such as students, parents, teachers, and administrators).
- ◆ Employee brand ambassadors help your program build an outstanding reputation from the inside out.

The alternative to developing brand ambassadors includes employees who are left to their own devices to reflect and communicate the brand, and messages that are inconsistent in the public. A consistent message is a powerful message.

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How do you create after-school brand ambassadors within your team? Check off the practices below you already use and identify those you want to add:

- Let your employees know what your program brand represents and how they can promote it on the outside, both verbally and non-verbally.
- Make sure everyone walks the talk—role modeling brand behavior. You can't get away with telling parents you are all about encouragement and, at the same time, constantly be putting the people down at work. Brands are strongest when they are congruent inside and out.
- Help every member of your team understand how important they are and how they contribute to the big picture. Give them a sense of purpose. Teach them what the big picture is all about and involve them in the vision.
- Reinforce messages constantly, even to the point of feeling like you are a broken record. Communicate frequently and with clear, concise brand messages threaded throughout written and oral communications during the year.
- Research reveals that employees become stronger brand ambassadors when they feel they are working with an organization and people who are trustworthy, transparent, ethical, and authentic. Employees also indicate that they want to be treated with kindness and respect.
- Brand ambassadors also need you to clarify your expectations of them.
- Brand ambassadors feel a sense of pride in their organization, so set high standards for quality and reinforce achievements.
- Employees want to know that they are making an impact and that customers come first, so speak to them about the student and parent *experience*.
- An organization or program that is constantly seeking new ideas and fostering best practices can fuel brand ambassadors.
- Passion is contagious, so ignite it within your team of brand ambassadors. They'll become a powerful force to be reckoned with on behalf of your ASP.