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Using Ambassadors to Increase Membership

**March 8, 2010
9:00 – 10:14**



Content Leaders:

Brandi Allen, Conferences and Education Director
Tracy Miller, Florida Regional Director
Toni Shope, CAE, East Regional Director

**2010 Great Ideas Conference
Colorado Springs, CO**

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Using Ambassadors to Increase Membership

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9:00 - 10:15 am

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Connecting Great Ideas and Great People



Agenda



- About the Alliance for Innovation
- Introduce Presenters
- Overview of Ambassador Program
 - ✓ Purpose
 - ✓ Composition
 - ✓ Roles/Responsibilities
 - ✓ Engagement
- Lessons Learned
- How to Replicate
- Questions and Answers
- Group Exercise
- Wrap Up



Introduction Alliance for Innovation

We are a network of innovative local governments pursuing solutions which can transform communities. We seek out innovative practices, challenge existing business models, exchange knowledge and information, and provide products and service which help members perform at their best.



About the Alliance for Innovation

- Partners with Arizona State University and the International City/County Management Association
- Roughly 350 Member Organizations from the United States and Canada (Cities, Counties, Towns, Special Districts, etc.)
- Member Populations vary from 800 - 1 Million +
 - Over 10,000 active users
 - Board of Directors made up of City and County Managers
 - Staff of Ten with Four Management Interns
 - Corporate Office Based in Phoenix, AZ



Who We Are



Purpose of Ambassador Program



- To increase organization wide participation
- To increase the Alliance Knowledge Base
- To increase our membership retention rate
- To increase ambassador's innovation skills



Roles and Responsibilities

- Ambassadors serve as the main point of contact
- Ambassadors share success stories and innovative practices
- Collectively assist in building content in key areas and providing feedback
- Ambassadors serve as a proponent of innovation



Solicitation and Composition of Ambassador Program

- Member Manager appointments
- Some self volunteered
- Ambassadors in 30% of Alliance Membership
- Team approach by the Alliance Regional Directors
- Our Cost - staff time
 - Everything done electronically
 - Zero cost to members



How we do it?



- **Ambassador Blog**
- Quarterly Ambassador Virtual Forums
 - Innovation Book Club
- **Monthly Updates Featuring**
 - ✓ Cliff Notes of Featured Book
 - ✓ Managers Insights
 - ✓ Time to Ideate
 - ✓ Innovation Exercises
- Direct Contact with Regional Director



How we do it?



In Practice Ambassadors are...

- ✓ **Beta Testers of New Website**
- ✓ Feedback and Survey Group
- ✓ Prosumer Members



- The Ambassador program is not a one size fits all effort
- Craft a program that fits the custom needs of your organization

Ambassador's as the Leadership Pipeline

Ambassadors as Your Innovation Team

Ambassador's Can Be Any of These... Or Use Your Own Ideas

Ambassadors Grow their Innovation Skills

Ambassadors as Bureaucracy Busters



What Kind of Ideas do Ambassadors Explore?

Scenario Planning

The Importance of Field Work

Storytelling

Leadership Pipelines

Brainstorming Techniques



Innovative Organizational Culture

Experimenting

Collaboration

Rapid Prototyping

Cross-Functional Teaming

Innovation Labs

Retaining Talent

Skills Finders

Deliberate Practice

Service

Being an Experience Architect

How to Develop Talent

Creating a New Future

Deep Dives

Continuous Improvement

Cross-Pollination of Ideas



Lessons Learned Survey Results December 2009

- 92% want the program to continue
- Reasons why they participate:
 1. learn innovative practices
 2. managers request
 3. build innovation skills
- 88% respondents read our Monthly Updates
- Less emphasis on book club
- More practical examples
- Time number one reason for lack of participation



Lessons Learned What We Have Seen

“ I find the most value in the Ambassador Program from being able to see how other organizations are addressing many of the concerns we may be experiencing, as well as sharing our own experiences with other agencies who are looking for guidance.”



Innovation Ambassador Comment on Survey

Lessons Learned Evaluate and Readjust

- Continue Momentum - invite more members to participate
- Publish results and plan for 2010
- Demonstrate ways ambassadors can build innovation teams internally
- Continue with Monthly Update
 - Book Club -provide reading list
 - Quarterly Webinars - invite guest speakers
 - Push momentum of Knowledge Network



Lessons Learned



- Start off slow to test the waters
- Volunteer based rather than manager appointments
- Don't bite off more than you can chew
- Reenergized our staff
- Remember that time is the biggest constraint to participation
- Listen, evaluate and readjust



How to Replicate

Great Members Great Staff

- Define Purpose
- Identify Audience
- Identify team or staff to be responsible for the program
- Identify communication methods (email, eblast, website, etc.)
- Identify how to engage your ambassadors
- Establish evaluation timeframe and process



Questions and Answers



Time to Ideate

- Icebreaker - What is your organizations golden hook?
- What role would an ambassador program play in your organization? Thinking about

Audience

Communication

Skills

Internal resources, etc.



Wrap Up

“When you stop getting better you cease to be good”

Cheryl Hilvert, City Manager Montgomery Ohio and Alliance for Innovation Board Member



Thank you for Your Time Contact Information

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East Regional Director



Invitation Letter Example



Date

Name

Title

Address

City, State Zip

Dear Mr. Name:

I am proud to introduce to you the new Alliance for Innovation Ambassador Program. I am confident you will find this new program to be a vital step in maximizing the value your organization receives from the Alliance.

As an Alliance member, we realize part of the value of your membership is the unique opportunity that every employee of your organization has to access Alliance resources. In an effort to engage as many of your staff as possible and to ensure that your organization stays informed, we've implemented a new **Alliance Ambassador Program**.

We anticipate that Alliance Ambassadors will be proponents of innovation within your organization and our profession. We will work diligently to equip them and provide them an opportunity to grow their innovation skills and knowledge as we develop the program.

We are asking each member manager to appoint designated staff to serve as Alliance Ambassador(s). Some organizations may appoint one (1) Ambassador and others may choose to have an Ambassador per department. You can do whatever makes good business sense for your organization. Currently, we have over 100 Ambassador's representing 63 local government organizations.

Attached you will find information outlining the program. Please complete the last page and fax back to our business office (813) 664-0051. We will contact your organization's Ambassador(s) and provide a brief orientation.

I look forward to a continued and rewarding relationship with NAME OF ORGANIZATION.

Yours Truly,



Karen Thoreson
President
Alliance for Innovation



EXAMPLE MONTHLY EBLAST

Innovation Ambassador August Update

“The first step in becoming extraordinary is simply to stop being ordinary,” Tom Kelley.

As a part of the Alliance for Innovation Ambassador Program we are sharing new techniques to encourage you to think beyond ordinary boundaries to build extraordinary organizations.

In the August Update you will read more great examples of how to do this including:

- Special interview with Ray Patchett, former City Manager of Carlsbad, CA:** Ray shares the importance of creating an organizational culture where “trying new things was accepted and valuable.”
- The Ten Faces of Innovation – Part III:** Tracy Miller, Alliance for Innovation concludes our first quarterly book review. You will read about the four building personas, the Experience Architect, the Set Designer, the Caregiver and the Storyteller. Also, you don’t want to miss the tips on how to construct an innovation lab!
- Time to Ideate:** Investing In Scenarios Writer to Create the Future – is there merit to this idea or just another crazy idea? Check out page nine of the update to read more.

On **August 20, 2009 from 1:00 – 2:00 pm EST** we invite you to join other Ambassadors as we conduct our first virtual book club. Haven’t read the book? Join us anyway! We have provided you the cliff notes of the book in our June, July, and August Updates. (LINK TO EACH) We will talk about how the book applies to your organization, ideate about great things happening in your communities, hear an Alliance update, and collectively choose next quarter’s book for our Innovation Book Club.

REGISTER TODAY: at <https://www2.gotomeeting.com/register/462972291>

Also, below are a few Alliance updates/reminders:

- Submit your 2010 Transforming Local Government Case Study Applications by September 11, 2009:** The 2010 TLG Conference is being hosted by Southern Nevada June 2-4th. The theme for the conference is *The Future of Service in Local Government*. To learn more visit: www.tlgconference.org.
- Alliance Makeover:** The Alliance for Innovation, in collaboration with ICMA, is creating an exciting new website and Knowledge Network that will feature new resources, be user intuitive and provide easier access to member benefits, resources, research, publications and more! Watch for newsletter, Twitter, Facebook and eBlast updates. Contact your Regional Director if you have questions before the Fall launch of the new website and Knowledge Network.
- Upcoming Webinars and Events:** http://www.transformgov.org/events/events_webinars.asp
The Alliance has an exciting fall e-learning calendar: Power of Partnerships, Using GIS and the Web to Effectively Enable Government Services, Green Initiatives, and many more emerging topics.
- Ambassador Resources:** Use your Knowledge Center Member ID/Password to access ambassador resources. If you aren’t sure of your login please contact your Regional Director.
Ambassador Blog Site: <http://www.transformgov.org/blog.aspx?id=2572>
Ambassador Tool Kit: <http://www.transformgov.org/ambassadors/ambassador-toolkit.html>

We are all looking forward to meeting in the virtual world on August 20th! Please don’t hesitate to call or email with questions and comments.

Sincerely,

Your Regional Directors



Questions Asked on the Innovation Ambassador Survey

Used Survey Monkey

Name, Organization, City, State

1. Why did you choose to participate in the Innovation Ambassador Program? (Click all that apply)
 - a. Participating at the request of my supervisor or City/County Manager
 - b. To stay current with Alliance benefits, news and events
 - c. To share my organizations success stories
 - d. Learn innovative practices underway within local government
 - e. To build innovation skills
 - f. Networking Opportunities with colleagues
 - g. Other – INSERT BLANK

Innovation Book Club

2. Do you find the Innovation Book Club of value?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Further Comments: Insert Text Box
3. How can the Alliance improve our virtual book club?
Open ended

Monthly Ambassador Update

4. Do you read the monthly ambassador Updates?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No (*If no, proceed to question7*)
5. On a scale of 1-5, how do you rate the content of the monthly ambassador Updates?
6. Which section of the monthly ambassador update do you find most valuable?
 - a. Manager Interviews
 - b. Book Review
 - c. Time to Ideate
 - d. Alliance Updates
7. Which section of the monthly ambassador update is your least favorite? (Click all that apply)
 - a. Manager Interviews
 - b. Book Review
 - c. Time to Ideate
 - d. Alliance Updates
8. Do you have suggestions on how to improve the monthly ambassador updates?
Open Ended
9. If you do not read the monthly ambassador updates, please explain why?
 - a. Time Conflicts
 - b. Haven't received the updates
 - c. Content not of value to my position
 - d. Updates too lengthy
 - e. Not applicable, I read the updates



Questions Asked on the Innovation Ambassador Survey
Used Survey Monkey

Quarterly Ambassador Webinars?

10. Have you participated in the quarterly ambassador webinars?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
11. If no, please explain why?
 - a. Time/Schedule Conflicts
 - b. Haven't received the invitation to participate
 - c. Content not of value to my position
 - d. Not applicable, I participate in the quarterly ambassador webinars
12. Do you have suggestions on how the Alliance can improve the quarterly ambassador webinars? (Click all that apply)
 - a. Invite guest speakers
 - b. Hold more frequently
 - c. Make more interactive
 - d. Other Please Explain (Insert box)

Ambassador Program

13. Do you want to see the Ambassador Program continue?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Further Explanation (Insert Box)
14. What change would you like to see? Open Ended
15. Are there subject areas you would like to see more focus on? Open Ended
16. Would you be interested in having a mentor program with your fellow Ambassador's?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
17. Do you have any further comments on the Innovation Ambassador Program?
Open Ended