



## HOW DO EMPLOYEE AMBASSADORS BENEFIT FROM PARTICIPATING IN AN OUTWARD BOUND COURSE?

### INTRODUCTION

Since 2012, we have invited our corporate supporters to contribute directly towards the impact of the Outward Bound courses that they fund through participating in our Employee Ambassador programme. The programme enables company employees to support the young people in person as they progress through their course. This gives them the opportunity to enhance the young people's learning, to act as ambassadors for their company and to witness the impact of their employer's funding first-hand.

Employee Ambassadors work alongside our Outward Bound instructors as they deliver a course to approximately 12 young people. Typically, they remain with the group for the duration of the three- or five-day course, supporting and encouraging the young people whilst participating in all activities themselves. Employee Ambassadors also give the young people an insight into the world of work by putting their learning into the context of their own experiences in the workplace.

While the primary purpose of the Employee Ambassador programme is to enhance the young people's learning, our evaluation indicates that it also has a positive impact on the Employee Ambassadors themselves. This paper provides a summary of the evidence collected in 2014 and 2015, building on evidence presented in 2013.

### EMPLOYEE AMBASSADOR FEEDBACK

At the end of their course, we ask all Employee Ambassadors to complete a feedback form. In 2014 and 2015, we received feedback from 128 Employee Ambassadors. Their responses indicate that they developed a range of skills as a result of their participation:

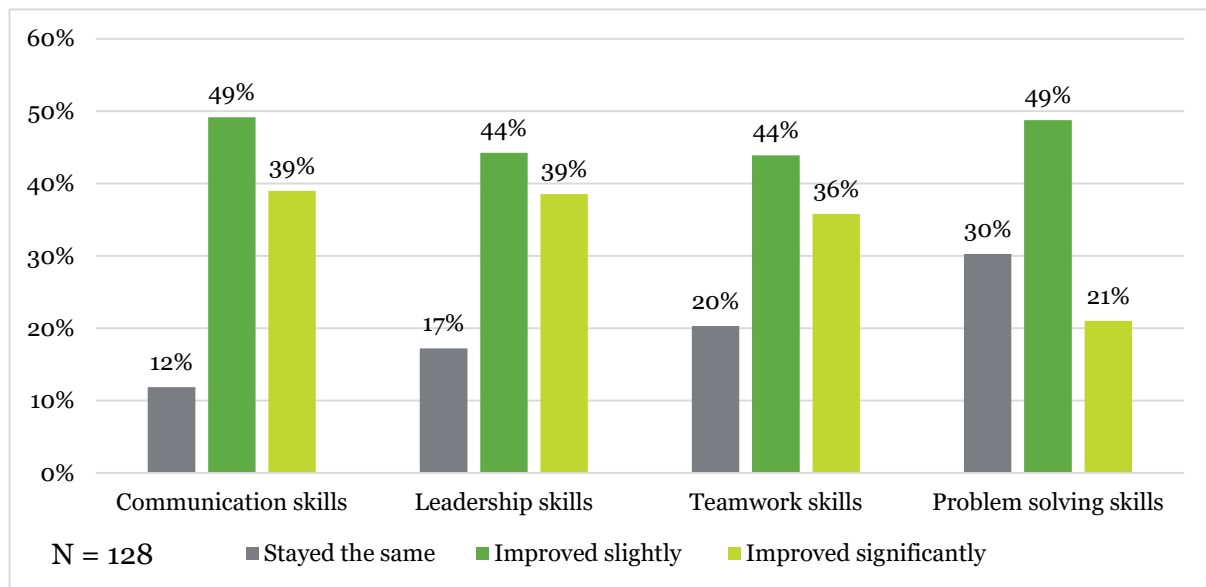
- **88%** (104 of 118) developed their communication skills
- **83%** (101 of 122) developed their leadership skills
- **80%** (98 of 123<sup>1</sup>) developed their teamwork skills
- **70%** (83 of 119) developed their problem solving skills

The evidence also shows us **the extent** to which they developed in these areas (see Chart 1).

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<sup>1</sup> While 128 Employee Ambassadors completed feedback forms, some of them did not answer all questions.

**Chart 1: Employee ambassadors' perceptions of the extent to which they developed certain skills during the Outward Bound course**



"[THE COURSE] HELPED ME TO IMPROVE MY TEAMWORK SKILLS AND BE MORE AWARE OF DIFFERENT STYLES AND APPROACHES." **Rina Gioia, Chivas Brothers**

"[I HAVE LEARNT] THAT COMMUNICATION IS KEY." **Mark Chantler<sup>2</sup>**

"[THE COURSE GAVE ME] SOME VALUABLE INSIGHTS INTO OTHER LEADERSHIP STYLES." **Anonymous**

As well as asking the Employee Ambassadors about the skills that they had developed, we asked them what they had gained from the course, both personally and professionally. They gave a wide range of responses, but a number of key themes emerge<sup>3</sup>.

The Employee Ambassadors reported that they had gained **personally** in six key ways (see Appendix 1). They:

1. Gained **confidence** in themselves and their abilities and **realised that they are capable of more than they had thought**.
2. Developed **knowledge and skills** related to **interacting, and working, with others**.

<sup>2</sup> Some of the Employee Ambassadors did not wish their name and/or company to be disclosed.

<sup>3</sup> Based on a sample of 70 Employee Ambassadors.

3. Gained **satisfaction from contributing to the young people's development.**
4. Developed their **determination, resilience and ability to persevere.**
5. Increased their **knowledge/understanding of young people.**
6. Gained enjoyment from spending time in the outdoors/participating in outdoor activities.

Other personal benefits cited by Employee Ambassadors include developing self-awareness, gaining a greater appreciation of family, realising the importance of a healthy lifestyle and developing outdoor activity skills such as map-reading and how to construct a tent.

The Employee Ambassadors also reported that they had gained **professionally** (see Appendix 2). Many of the professional benefits cited are similar to those key personal benefits which can be applied to the workplace. They:

1. Developed their **knowledge and skills related to interacting, and working, with others.**
2. Developed their **leadership skills.**
3. Gained **confidence in themselves and their abilities.**
4. Developed their **patience and tolerance.**
5. Gained **independence** and increased their **self-responsibility.**

Other professional benefits that were mentioned include strengthening relationships with the colleagues with whom they attended a course, learning to deal with difficult situations and developing a more positive attitude towards work.

Finally, we asked the Employee Ambassadors how they thought the course would **help them at work** in the future. They gave a range of responses. In particular, they reported that their learning would help them to work with and support others, to tackle challenging tasks and to lead and make decisions with confidence.

**"[WHEN I RETURN TO WORK,] I WILL BE LOOKING TO TAKE MY EXPERIENCE FORWARD AND USE NEW TECHNIQUES TO TRAIN, MOTIVATE AND CHALLENGE MY OWN TEAM."** **Rory Dunn, Intu Properties**

**"[THE COURSE WILL HELP ME AT WORK AS IT HAS] IMPROVED [MY] COMMUNICATION, CONFIDENCE AND ASSERTIVENESS."** **Daniel Henderson, AkzoNobel**

**“[WHEN I RETURN TO WORK,] I WILL ASK QUESTIONS OF MY WORK COLLEAGUES TO GAIN MORE RELEVANT INFORMATION AND ALSO TO MAKE THEM FEEL MORE INCLUDED AND IMPORTANT.” Paul Kirnan, AkzoNobel**

**"[THE COURSE HAS IMPROVED] MY ABILITY TO SHOWCASE OUR 'CORPORATE DIFFERENCE' AND ADVOCATE THE BUSINESS." Mike Pickering, The Midcounties Co-operative**

## **SUMMARY**

The feedback collected from the Employee Ambassadors who attended courses in 2014 and 2015 supports previous evidence that Employee Ambassadors benefit from taking part in an Outward Bound course. Through participation, they benefit both on a personal and professional level, by developing their knowledge and skills, in particular in relation to communication and working with others, and growing in confidence.

They also reported that their learning would help them when they returned to the workplace, in particular in being better able to work with and support others, tackle challenging tasks and lead and make decisions confidently.

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

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## Appendix 1: Key personal benefits from taking part in an Outward Bound Course for Employee Ambassadors

Benefit to Employee Ambassador	Details	No. of responses <sup>4</sup>	Example quotes from Employee Ambassadors
Gained <b>confidence in themselves and their abilities</b> and realised that they are capable of more than they had thought	As the Employee Ambassadors overcame challenges, their confidence in themselves and their abilities increased. By achieving things that they had not thought they could, they realised that they were capable of more.	28 (40%)	"I was able to take [the] lead in reviews and [this] helped boost my confidence." <b>Danielle Mitchell, SGN</b>
Developed <b>knowledge and skills related to interacting, and working, with others</b>	The Employee Ambassadors reported that they had developed their ability to work with a wide range of people. They described developing their communication, social and interpersonal skills and their knowledge of how to work with others successfully.	18 (26%)	"This week I [learnt to] put aside my own feelings [and] to put the need of others before me." <b>Michelle Leckie, SGN</b>
Gained <b>satisfaction from contributing to the young people's development</b>	The Employee Ambassadors reported that they had enjoyed observing how the young people developed during the course, and that they had found it rewarding to see that they had contributed to this.	18 (26%)	"[I felt a sense of] satisfaction watching the young adults develop as individuals and as a group." <b>Chrystal Fisher, SGN</b>
Developed their <b>determination, resilience and ability to persevere</b>	During their courses, the Employee Ambassadors were faced with a variety of challenges such as engaging young people and walking large distances as part of a hillwalking expedition. Overcoming these challenges helped them to develop their determination, resilience and ability to persevere.	8 (11%)	"I am not a strong walker and I found the hike very hard. [By doing the walk,] I gained stronger resilience." <b>Lizzie Tyte, Willis Group</b>

<sup>4</sup> Based on a sample of 70 Employee Ambassadors.

<p>Increased <b>knowledge/ understanding of young people</b></p>	<p>The Employee Ambassadors specifically highlighted what they had learnt about young people. They reported increasing their understanding of young people; their lives, abilities and needs, as well as how to help them develop.</p>	<p>8 (11%)</p>	<p>"[The course] has changed my perception of young people, in a positive way." <b>Chris Thorrington, Willis Group</b></p>
<p>Gained enjoyment from spending time in the outdoors/ participating in outdoor activities</p>	<p>The Employee Ambassadors reported that they had enjoyed spending time in the outdoors and participating in adventurous outdoor activities. They expressed a desire to do more outdoor activities in the future, and to involve their families in this.</p>	<p>8 (11%)</p>	<p>"I developed a greater love for the outdoors." <b>Keiron Greensmith</b></p>

## Appendix 2: Key professional benefits from taking part in an Outward Bound Course for Employee Ambassadors

Benefit to Employee Ambassador	Details	No. of responses	Example quotes from Employee Ambassadors
Developed <b>knowledge and skills related to interacting, and working, with others</b>	The Employee Ambassadors reported developing their communication and teamwork skills, improving their ability to motivate others and becoming more aware of the importance of teamwork.	38 (54%)	"[I learnt] to listen to everyone's opinions." <b>Anonymous</b>
Developed <b>leadership skills</b>	The Employee Ambassadors reported developing their leadership skills and skills in managing others. For example, they said that they had developed their knowledge of different leadership styles and the effectiveness of these.	13 (19%)	"[I learnt] new ways to lead a team." <b>Scott-Anthony Lyth, Whyte and Mackay</b>
Gained <b>confidence in themselves and their abilities</b>	The employee ambassadors reported that they had gained confidence in their abilities.	12 (17%)	"[The course has] given me more confidence to 'have a go' and take myself out of my comfort zone more often!" <b>Michele Griffiths</b>
Developed their <b>patience and tolerance</b>	The Employee Ambassadors reported that they had learnt to be more patient and tolerant of others as a result of working with young people in challenging situations.	6 (9%)	"I now have more patience." <b>Shaun McDonnell, Sodexo</b>
Gained <b>independence</b> and increased their <b>self-responsibility</b>	The Employee Ambassadors reported that they had become more independent and had developed their ability to take responsibility for themselves.	4 (6%)	"[I learnt that] it's ok to ask questions, but it's better and more rewarding to find the answer out for yourself." <b>Lizzie Tyte, Willis Group</b>