



Ethics Ambassador Handbook

Dr Paul Vorster
Fatima Rawat



Authors: Dr Paul Vorster & Fatima Rawat
Principal reviewer: Prof Leon van Vuuren
Cover design and layout: Elsie Weich
Ethics Handbook Series Editor: Prof Deon Rossouw

Ethics Ambassador Handbook

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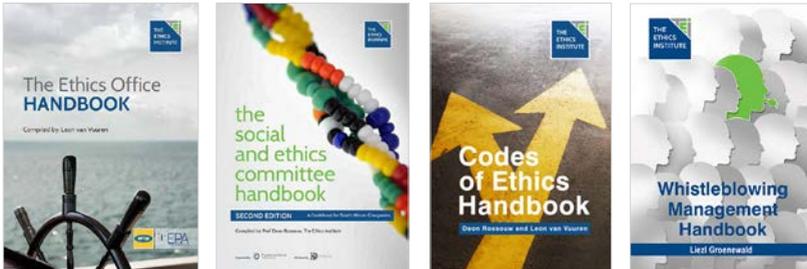
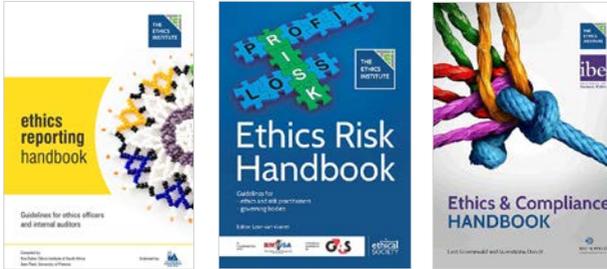
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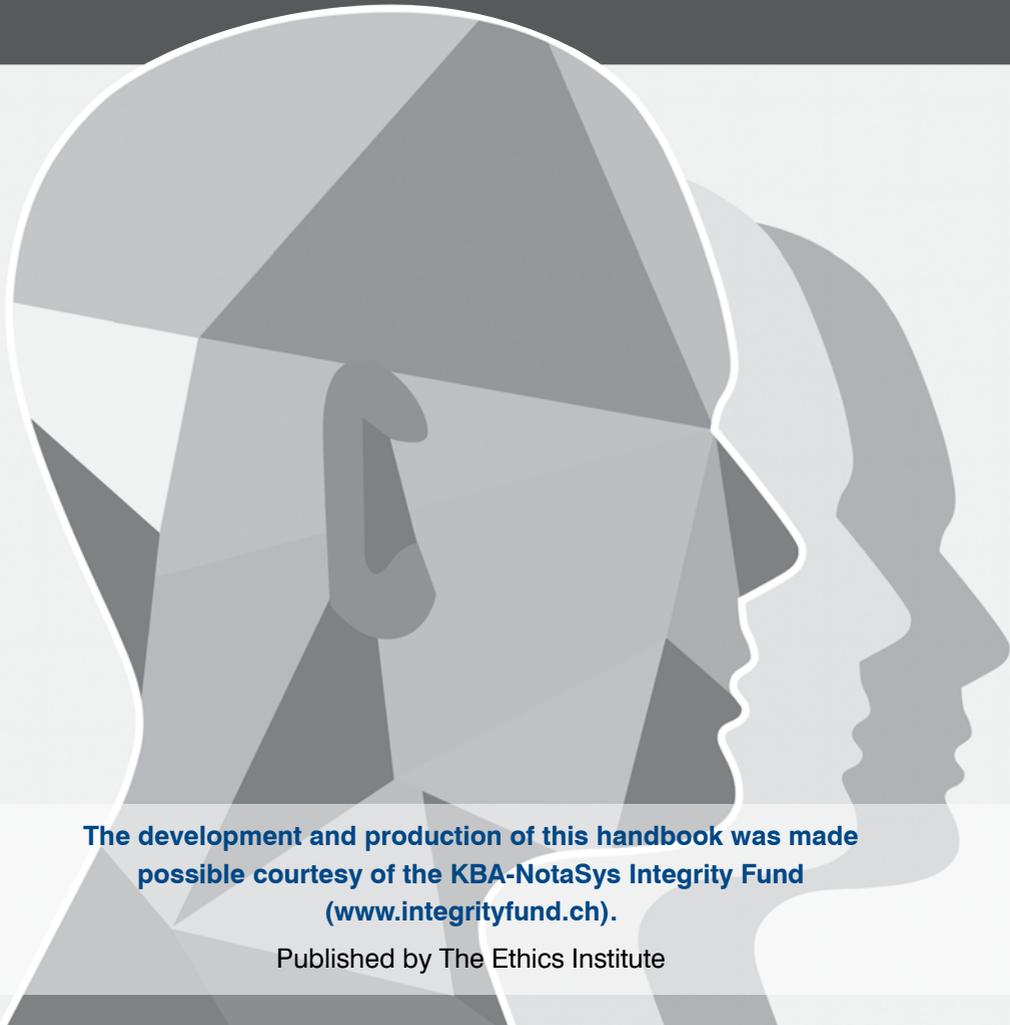
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This publication is dedicated to
Ethics Ambassadors and Ethics Practitioners
and all those who champion the cause of ethics in their
organisations and societies.

The Ethics Institute launched its *Ethics Handbooks Series* in 2012. The purpose of this series is to provide persons responsible for governing and managing ethics in organisations with practical guidance on various aspects of institutionalising organisational ethics. This series has turned out to be highly popular and is widely used by ethics practitioners in various parts of the world.

The *Ethics Ambassador Handbook* is the eighth publication in the *Ethics Handbooks Series*. It fills an important gap in the series, as it focuses on an aspect that has only been mentioned in passing in some of the other handbooks in the series. Ethics ambassadors are not fulfilling their ethics ambassador role on a full-time basis, but take on their ethics ambassadorial responsibilities over and above their normal job responsibilities. The fact that it is a part-time responsibility should not lead one to conclude that it is not an important role that ethics ambassadors fulfil in organisations.

Ethics ambassadors can play a very significant role in any organisation. They are promoters of ethics in the domain where they work on a daily basis. They can render invaluable support to the overall ethics management programme of an organisation, as they are so intimately familiar with the specific domain in which they operate, and can thus assist in making the ethical standards of the organisation relevant to their specific context. They can be an immediately available resource to their colleagues who might have questions or concerns about ethics in the organisation.

Ethics ambassadors can also be a most significant ally of the central ethics management function of an organisation. Given the fact that ethics ambassadors are dispersed throughout the organisation, they can act as the 'eyes and ears' of those responsible for managing ethics. Ethics Ambassadors can keep the ethics management function informed of the extent to which ethical standards have filtered through – and taken root – on all levels and in all functional areas of an organisation.

I would like to thank my colleagues, Dr Paul Vorster and Fatima Rawat for writing this latest addition to The Ethics Institute's *Ethics Handbook Series*. I am convinced that their rich experience of implementing ethics ambassador programmes in organisations will be of great value to readers.

Furthermore, I would like to convey my sincere gratitude to the Integrity Fund of KBA-NotaSys for financially supporting the writing and publication of this book.

Prof Deon Rossouw

CEO: The Ethics Institute

It has been a privilege to produce this *Ethics Ambassador Handbook*. We have had thoughts and ideas around an Ethics Ambassador Programme swirling in our minds for some time, and have been eager to convert them into a resource that would serve as a guide for ethics practitioners.

We would like to express our sincere thanks and appreciation to Professor Deon Rossouw and Professor Leon van Vuuren for their time, vision and guidance in helping us shape the content for this handbook. The Ethics Ambassador Programme was an idea born of their minds during deep discussion in the South African bushveld. We are privileged to have made these ideas 'real'.

To all ethics officers, we hope that this handbook inspires you to introduce and successfully implement an Ethics Ambassador Programme in your organisation as an enabler for your ethics vision.

To all organisations, it is our hope that this programme will make a positive difference to your organisational ethical culture, and fast-track a values-based ethical approach in your day-to-day activities.

Dr Paul Vorster and Fatima Rawat

1.1. Introduction

Most ethics management functions tend to be overwhelmed by a plethora of responsibilities (cf. the *Ethics Office Handbook*), and paired with limited resources, these functions may not be wholly capable of obtaining real-time information of what is going on in the organisation from an ethical perspective. It is often a very difficult task for the ethics management function to reach a threshold where it becomes influential enough to make a net difference by improving the organisational ethical culture. Even a well-resourced ethics office cannot succeed if it does not have the active support of various internal stakeholders.

The introduction of ethics ambassadors (employees who take up the ethics promoter role) in organisations was therefore considered an impactful intervention to not only help resource the ethics management function, but also to engage with employees more directly about ethics across the organisation. Ethics ambassadors (hereafter referred to as 'ambassadors') are respected employees in the organisation who act as the 'go-to' person for ethics in their domain, and spread the ethics message widely and deeply.

The introduction of ambassadors in the organisation forms part of a dedicated organisational change and development programme with the aim to enhance the organisation's ethical culture.

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One of the primary goals of the ethics ambassador programme is to further improve the reach and effectiveness of the ethics management function, and to enhance and assist ethics officers to better manage the ethics of organisations. Furthermore, the programme should aim at fast-tracking the building of an ethical organisational culture by ensuring that the ethics function reaches a wider employee audience, and obtaining high-quality two-way communication between the programme and the organisation's internal stakeholders (employees).

Another primary goal of the ambassador programme is to lighten the burden placed on the ethics officer and assist the ethics management function to quickly tap into the ethical culture or climate of their organisations with the aim of enhancing them meaningfully. Consequently, numerous typologies of the ethics ambassador programme have been instituted in organisations over the years and much has been learned about the factors that make these programmes successful or unsuccessful.

This Ethics Ambassador Handbook is a guidebook on how ambassador programmes work.

This *Ethics Ambassador Handbook* is a guidebook on how ambassador programmes work. The factors that could make them a successful addition to the ethics officer's arsenal of ethics change interventions are also proposed. In addition, the handbook outlines the responsibilities of ambassadors, defines the key skills that they require, describes the training, competencies and theoretical knowledge required for the ambassador role, and outlines how such a programme can be instituted within the broader ethics management plan of the organisation. We also provide some guidance on how to measure the success of an ethics ambassador programme.

Another important objective of this handbook is to dispel the confusion about the ethics champion and ethics ambassador roles in an organisation, which should also not be confused with the ethics officer (ethics management) role. We will contrast these roles as a way of expressing clearly what defines the ambassador role in the organisation and review the salient differences between these ethics-related roles.

1.2. The purpose of this handbook

The purpose of this handbook, the 8th in TEI's Ethics Handbook Series, is to outline:

- (i) what an ethics ambassador is,
- (ii) how ambassadors can assist the ethics management function,
- (iii) what an ethics ambassador programme is, and
- (iv) what makes ethics ambassador programmes successful.

We hope that the experience we have gathered during the implementation of several ambassador programmes will better equip organisations to implement these programmes and ensure their success.

1.3. Target audience

We trust that this handbook will be a useful reference guide for organisations of all sizes and levels of ethical maturity, be they in the private, state-owned or public sectors of the economy.

Although the handbook should be of particular interest to ethics officers and ethics ambassadors, it is also a useful guide for anyone who wishes to enhance the strength of an organisation's ethical culture, or more specifically, implement an ethics ambassador programme.

This handbook should also be a useful guide for anyone who wishes to enhance the strength of an organisation's ethical culture, or more specifically, implement an ethics ambassador programme.

2.1. What is an ethics ambassador?

An ethics ambassador (also sometimes referred to as an ethics promoter) is essentially a *facilitator of ethics* who opens a line of communication with employees about ethics (i.e., expected behaviour and behaviour in line with the values of the organisation). It is not a highly formal role

Ambassadors are informal promoters, advocates, and guardians of the ethics cause in the organisation.

Ambassadors are informal promoters, advocates and guardians of the ethics cause in the organisation. They are considered respected opinion leaders irrespective of their rank or regular job within the organisation

The primary role of the ambassador is to be the *'go-to' person regarding ethics* in a particular division, region, department, cluster or section of the organisation (we refer to all these areas as the *domain* of the ambassador). Ambassadors support the ethics management function and report to it.

2.2. Who can be an ethics ambassador?

An ethics ambassador can:

- be anyone employed by the organisation in a full-time capacity;
- have any speciality or job-role; and
- be employed at any job-level from operational to senior level.

It is important that we abandon the notion that ambassadors only function in leadership positions in the organisation.

Ambassadors are usually nominated within the organisation, by peers or by the ethics management function itself. Depending on the size of the organisation, numerous ambassadors could be nominated to assume their roles throughout different divisions and job levels. The ambassador role is not a full-time position. It is an added responsibility for employees who already play a primary role in the organisation. Although ambassadors may positively influence employees outside their primary domain, ambassadors

tend to focus on the domain that encompasses their direct speciality or job role (i.e., where they spend most of their time in the organisation).

Any nominee for the ambassador role should be viewed as *credible, trustworthy, and have the capacity to reason clearly and effectively about ethics* (i.e., distinguish between right and wrong). It is also important that these nominees have a *sense of ethics awareness and sensitivity* (i.e., the ability to spot ethical challenges and dilemmas before they become problematic), and have a track record of *standing up against unethical behaviour or decision-making, that is, display ethical courage*. It is important to remember that nominees for such a programme do not necessarily have all of these characteristics initially. The question that needs to be asked is whether the nominee has the *latent potential* to be able to fulfil the ambassador role with some training.

In short, ambassadors should have the acumen to *identify ethical challenges and have the ethical courage to do something about these challenges in their sphere of influence by rallying employees to the ethics cause*.

2.3. Characteristics of an ethics ambassador

Ethics ambassadors are:

- known to have a good reputation;
- influential and trustworthy;
- known for doing the right thing (i.e., having integrity);
- known to stand up and speak out against unethical conduct;
- familiar with the broader organisational ethics cause;
- capable of convincing cynics in the organisation that ethics is an important business consideration;
- tactful in how they operate with others in the organisation (i.e., take a non-judgemental approach to solving problems);
- easily approachable and accessible;
- not overwhelmed by the responsibilities of their primary job-role; and
- capable of taking on the ambassador roles as an over-and-above responsibility.

2.4. Role of the ethics ambassador

Essentially, the ambassador role is an influencing role. Ambassadors should be known to employees, trusted, respected and able to influence employees when they speak.

Ambassadors are the go-to person regarding ethics in a domain. Although this may seem like a very simple point, its importance for the ethics management function cannot be overstated. The ethics management function is often either overwhelmed by employees seeking ethics advice, or involved in performing other tasks, or there is insufficient employee engagement with the ethics management function overall.

Ambassadors act as *facilitators of ethics*. This means that they *help employees to resolve their own ethical challenges without getting too directly involved in the actual ethical challenges*. This is a fine line to walk for ambassadors, who should not only be able to assist employees to do the right thing (i.e., act ethically and make ethical decisions) without getting too burdened directly, but also have the *responsibility to help resolve ethical challenges faced by employees* in their day-to-day work activities.

Ethics ambassadors are not the ethics police in the organisation. Their role is to convince employees to take the correct course of action without ever reprimanding them.

Ethics ambassadors are not the ethics police in the organisation. Their role is to convince employees to take the correct course of action without ever reprimanding them. The role is purely one of guiding employees in the right direction in an emotionally intelligent and tactful manner, while ensuring that decisions and actions are regularly tested against the values and standards of the organisation.

In some sense, ambassadors act as a *conduit of ethics information* and are considered *the voice of the ethics management function*. Their role includes the dissemination and distribution of the ethics message in the organisation over and above the communication efforts of the ethics management function. Nothing is more personal and impactful than a trusted colleague speaking the ethical language to employees in their own domain of influence.

Ambassadors create a shared ethical meaning by stimulating ethics talk. They do this by bringing ethics into formal and informal discussions with their colleagues to create a shared language and shared meaning about ethics, thus establishing a shared meaning of what is considered good, right and acceptable in an organisation. 'Ethics talk' changes the way employees think about ethics through the symbolic power of building an ethics vocabulary. Although this may seem trivial, organisations often lack the vocabulary to articulate what is ethical and what is not. To understand what is right and wrong, employees should know what is expected of them regarding ethical behaviour, but also know what the limits of acceptable behaviour are. This can only be achieved through creating a shared ethics vocabulary.

Therefore, ambassadors expand the ethics vocabulary in their domains of influence, and help to create a psychologically safe environment for others to talk openly about ethics. This helps employees bolster their ethics awareness and sensitivity.

It is interesting to note that the implementation of a simple ethics survey in an organisation often has the effect of increasing ethics talk amongst employees. This is purely the result of attaching language to ethics in the organisational context. Ambassadors are far more impactful than a simple survey as they can actively translate ethics from the symbolic to the pragmatic in the language specific to their domain of influence.

Ambassadors create a shared meaning of ethics with their colleagues, which becomes a shared meaning of the organisation's collective sense of what is 'good' across domains in the organisation.

In short, ambassadors create a shared meaning of ethics with their colleagues, which becomes a shared meaning of the organisation's collective sense of what is 'good' across domains in the organisation. If ambassadors speak the same ethics language, and can transfer this language across their domains of influence successfully, they can create a shared meaning of ethics for the entire organisation that will enhance the ethical culture.

Ambassadors also *provide ethics advisory services* to their colleagues within their own domain of expertise. For example, an ambassador working within the procurement division may start conversations about ethical challenges regarding conflicts of interest,

gifts, or how to make the procurement process more transparent, fair and objective. They may also be capable of helping and advising the procurement department, and employees, to solve their own ethical challenges and dilemmas.

An ambassador who works in the organisational finance domain, on the other hand, may generate awareness about financial rules, legislation, policies and procedures that relate to responsible spending or investment. Additionally, such an ambassador may also communicate ethics as a form of fiduciary responsibility, and help the department and its employees to solve ethical challenges and dilemmas related to spending, budget allocation and other finance-related ethical challenges.

Ambassadors also ensure that *ethics remains on the business agenda* of both formal and informal meetings. They tend to act as a *'boundary link'* between the ethics management function and employees in the organisation. Ethics ambassadors can and should be used to communicate ethics initiatives to employees where possible.

Ambassadors help to solve many problems at once. Ambassadors operate in a primary domain in the organisation. This means that they have professional knowledge specific to their area of expertise and job role. Once trained on ethics and ethical decision-making, they have the skills to advise employees on how to overcome their own ethical challenges and dilemmas. This places the ethics ambassador at an advantage as compared to the ethics officer who has broad ethics knowledge, but does not necessarily have the contextual and content knowledge of the specific domains in which employees operate.

Ambassadors act as the eyes and ears of the ethics management function.

Ambassadors *act as the eyes and ears of the ethics management function.* Since ambassadors are the go-to persons regarding ethics in specific domains, and numerous ambassadors may operate in numerous domains, an ambassador programme can easily and effectively help the ethics management function to lighten its load regarding ethics advisory services.

Ambassadors are tasked with knowing what the primary activities, dilemmas and ethical challenges are that their colleagues face on a daily basis. Depending on how well an ambassador core (a group of deployed ethics ambassadors) has been mobilised

throughout the organisation, ambassadors can provide critical information to the ethics management function about the ethical issues faced within each organisational domain. This 'real-time' data, if managed correctly by the ethics management function, can be invaluable for designing specialised interventions for maximum impact.

It is important to understand that ambassadors are not rumour-mongers and should treat information given to them by employees in the utmost confidence.

This reporting should not be confused with reporting unethical behaviour. The ambassador will report anonymised opportunities, themes, risks, issues and ethical challenges encountered in a broad, but useful manner so that they can be actioned by the ethics management function. It is important to understand that ambassadors are not rumour-mongers and should treat information given to them by employees in the utmost confidence.

To summarise, the role of the ethics ambassador is to:

- act as the 'go-to person' regarding ethics in a domain;
- stimulate ethics talk in the organisation (i.e., speaking formally and informally about ethics, doing the right thing, and getting other employees to do the same);
- ensure that ethics remains on the agenda of both formal and informal meetings (where possible);
- act as an ethics resource for employees (their most immediate colleagues) who are aware of their advisory, facilitative, and influencing capacities;
- consistently communicate the business case for ethics and sell ethics even to hardcore sceptics; and
- act as a link between the ethics management function and their domain.

2.5. What knowledge should the ethics ambassador have?

To enhance their effectiveness, ethics ambassadors should make a concerted effort to get to know their organisation. As such, ambassadors should have a clear understanding and knowledge of the following:

- The contents of the code of ethics, code of conduct, and the values of the organisation.
- The contents of other ethics-related policies in the organisation (e.g., gift policies, conflicts of interest policies, whistleblowing or safe reporting policies, procurement policies).
- What their colleagues find challenging regarding ethics.
- What ethical dilemmas, challenges, and problems their colleagues are facing.
- The extent to which ethics is a consideration in meetings - both formally and informally - in their domain.
- Whether ethics is supported by management in their domain of influence.
- Whether employees are unclear about a policy, rule, process, or procedure (e.g., how to report unethical conduct, adherence to the code of conduct, know how to report unethical conduct).
- Whether there are types of unethical behaviour they have directly encountered and the possible causes thereof.
- Whether there are sceptics in their domain who may delay the process of making ethics real.
- Whether there are processes, policies, or procedures, or a lack thereof, that may make it difficult for employees to do the right thing.

2.6. Activities ethics ambassador need to avoid

Ethics ambassadors should take an *'observe and assist'* mindset to unethical behaviour and must play an advisory role to guide employees to solve their own ethical challenges or resolve ethical dilemmas. A simple way of thinking about this is that the ambassador is a conduit of ethics information.

Although they can get involved in content issues (e.g., explain standards or policies), they should always try and remain at arm's length from employees who may be embroiled in unethical activities.

Below is a list of activities and roles that ambassadors should try to avoid as much as possible:



- *Getting too personally or emotionally involved in employees' ethical challenges or unethical conduct.* Ambassadors must understand that they are not capable of resolving all ethical challenges that employees face in their sphere of influence. Whilst providing support, they need to maintain their neutrality, i.e., exercising a facilitative role. In other words, employees should be supported by ambassadors to make the right decisions



- *Being a preacher.* Ambassadors should avoid bringing their own particular religious views or values orientation into the ethical realm. Although this may be a source of ethics for them, many employees may not adhere to or understand the same principles or views. The ethics ambassador must therefore learn to speak secular ethics in the organisation. This means that the ambassador must bring employees back to the values and ethical standards of the organisation, and reason in an unbiased manner about right and wrong where possible. The ambassador should never 'lecture' or 'force' employees to adopt their personal values or beliefs.



- *Letting the ambassador role take over their other primary job-role responsibilities.* Although the ambassador role is an important one, it should be balanced with the employee's primary job role. Remember that ambassadors are full-time employees with responsibilities allocated to them by their primary job role. If the ambassador cannot cope with the additional responsibility of being an ethics ambassador, the ethics management function should relieve the ambassador from certain ambassadorial responsibilities, or provide them with more resources to get the job done. The ambassador role should never interfere with an employee's primary job role. A general rule of thumb is that the responsibility of the ambassador should not make up more than 10% of their overall key performance responsibilities.



- *Spilling confidential personal information.* Trust is at the heart of the ethics ambassador role. When employees approach the ambassador, they should be aware that what is disclosed to them is done in confidence. When the ambassador discusses the primary challenges faced in their domain with the ethics officer, names should not be mentioned, only an account of the major ethical challenges and dilemmas faced most frequently. In other words, information shared by the ambassador with the ethics management function is at a high level and focuses on trends and general concerns only.

Ethics ambassadors should take an 'observe and assist' mindset to unethical behaviour and must play an advisory role to guide employees to solve their own ethical challenges or resolve ethical dilemmas.

3.1. Introduction

In this part of the handbook, we discuss what an ethics ambassador programme entails, how to differentiate the ambassador role from other ethics management-related roles in the organisation, where the ambassador programme is situated within the ethics management framework, and possible steps to implement the programme.

3.2. The ethics ambassador programme

An ethics ambassador programme is a structured intervention in which the ethics management function has established a process for the nomination, selection, training, deployment, coordination and management of a group of ethics facilitators dispersed throughout the organisation. The programme clearly defines and structures how ambassadors will operate, what their focus will be, and how progress towards goals is measured and evaluated.

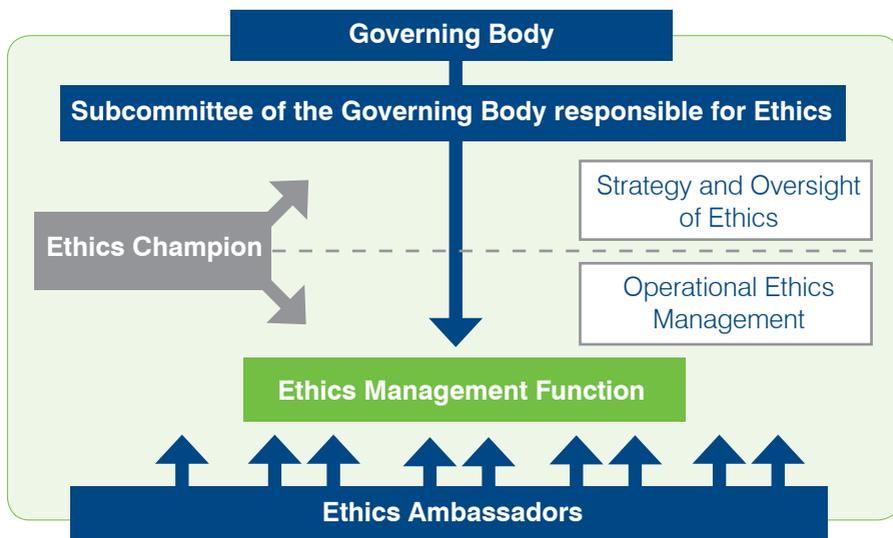
The effectiveness of any ambassador programme is determined to a large extent by the ethics management function and the ethics officer who needs to effectively utilise this resource.

Although an ambassador programme holds many advantages for the ethics management function and the organisation, its effectiveness is primarily determined by how the programme is managed, and how ambassadors are selected, trained and mobilised for maximum effect. As such, the effectiveness of any ambassador programme is determined to a large extent by the ethics management function and the ethics officer who needs to effectively utilise this resource.

3.3. Differentiating the ethics ambassador role

The work of the ethics ambassador falls within the domain of operational ethics management (i.e., frontline ethics management tasks), which in turn supports the strategic ethics goals of the organisation directly and indirectly.

The diagram below provides insight into the hierarchical structure of ethics-related functions and job roles of key ethics role-players in the organisation.



Ethics ambassadors and the governance and ethics management functions

It can be noted from the diagram that ambassadors are mobilised by the ethics management function. Therefore, the ethics officer is the manager of employees in their ambassador role. This means that the ethics function allocates tasks and responsibilities to employees in their ambassador role. The ambassador–ethics officer relationship is more of a partnership than a management relationship per se. Remember that the ambassador has a primary job role and is managed by their direct manager and not the ethics officer. Therefore, any additional responsibilities or tasks allocated to the ethics ambassador must first be signed off by the ambassador’s direct manager and they should always be kept in the loop.

In the next section, we will highlight the key differences between various ethics role-players, namely the ambassador, ethics champion and ethics officer. It is especially important to understand the difference between the ambassador and champion roles which are often confused.

The ethics champion role

The ethics champion is typically a member of the executive management team in an organisation and is considered the executive owner of the organisation's ethics management programme.

Whereas the ethics champion advocates for ethics at a senior level of the organisation and has mostly a symbolic role that involves lobbying for organisational ethics and resources for the ethics management function, the ambassador acts as a direct ethics resource for employees within their sphere of influence at any level in the organisation.

In a cruder way, it could be argued that the ethics champion is the *truthful politician of ethics* in the organisation who tries to persuade the governing body and executive management of the organisation to adequately resource the ethics management function and take ethics as seriously as other strategic, financial and operational considerations.

The ambassador should be well versed in the policies, rules, procedures, values, and ethical challenges of the organisation to provide advice to employees regarding these challenges.

The ambassador, on the other hand, is a *foot soldier of ethics* who should be well versed in the policies, rules, procedures, values and ethical challenges of the organisation to provide *frontline advice to employees* regarding these challenges, and advocate for the organisational ethical vision.

The ethics champion is positioned in a *linking role* between the strategy and oversight of ethics as executed by the *governing body* or a *subcommittee of the governing body responsible for ethics*, and the *operational ethics management function*, which is the direct purview of the ethics office(r) in the organisation.

Unlike the ethics champion, ethics ambassadors should be highly accessible to their colleagues, and be able to assist them to resolve ethical dilemmas and challenges, encourage them to speak up about ethics in an assertive yet tactful manner, promote ethical behaviour and ethical decision-making, and aid in the process of two-way communication between the ethics management function and employees.

We briefly summarise the most salient differences between the ethics ambassador and the ethics champion in the table below.

| Ethics Ambassador | Ethics Champion |
|--|---|
| Nominated by their colleagues in their domain or the ethics management function. | Nominated by the governing body or executive management. |
| A multitude of ethics ambassadors can operate in a single organisation. | Only one ethics champion operates in a single organisation. |
| Ethics ambassadors operate at any job level. | Ethics champions operate at senior or executive management level. |
| Provides frontline ethics advisory services to employees in their domain of influence. | Lobbies for ethics at the governance and executive management level of the organisation. |
| Spans the boundary between the ethics management function and employees. | Spans the boundary between the governance of ethics and operational ethics management. |
| Plays an operational role (i.e., helps with aspects of ethics management), but also plays a symbolic role. | Plays a symbolic, oversight, strategic and lobbying role. |
| Reports to the ethics management function and ethics office(r). | Reports to the governing body (or sub-committee of the governing body responsible for ethics) and executive management. |
| Provides ethics advisory and support functions to a highly specified domain within the organisation. | Provides symbolic belief in the importance of ethics across all domains in the organisation. |

Salient differences between the ethics ambassador and champion

The ambassador role is more operational in nature than the champion role. However, this does not mean that ambassadors do not carry a ‘symbolic ethical flag’ as well. They are indeed the flag bearers for ethics in a deeply symbolic manner. Their colleagues and co-workers will evaluate how they behave, what decisions they make, and will role model this behaviour. It is therefore important that the ambassador presents the right message to their peers and perceives ethical leadership as a key component of their role.

The ethics officer role

Ethics officers are persons responsible for the operational management of ethics in organisations and therefore manage ethics ambassadors in their ethics role. Please be reminded that ambassadors are managed in their primary job role by their direct manager who needs to be consulted before responsibilities for the ambassador role are allocated. The key differences between the ethics officer role and the ethics ambassador role are summarised in the table below.

| Ethics Ambassador | Ethics Officer |
|---|---|
| Acts as an informal promoter of ethics in the organisation as an additional part-time job role. | Manages the ethics of the organisation as their formal job role. |
| Reports to the ethics officer in their ambassador role. Is managed by their direct manager/line manager. | Reports to executive or senior management and the governing body, or a subcommittee of the governing body responsible for ethics. |
| Primarily provides ethics advice to employees in their direct domain of influence without getting too involved. | Provides ethics advice and helps to directly solve ethical challenges across the entire organisation. |
| Primarily promotes ethics and implements ethics interventions in their domain of influence. | Promotes ethics and manages ethics interventions across the entire organisation. |

Salient differences between the ethics ambassador and ethics officer roles

There is indeed some overlap in the roles of the ethics ambassador and ethics officer. However, their respective scopes of responsibility do differ. For example, both roles:

- Promote ethics and ethics talk;
- Advise employees on ethics related challenges;
- Keep records of ethical challenges and dilemmas encountered;
- Facilitate ethics discussions or disagreements;
- Role-model ethical behaviour;
- Make a case for the importance of ethics; and
- Create awareness about ethics initiatives.

Although these activities are similar in nature, the ethics officer always operates at an operational organisational level, whereas the ambassador’s work is limited to their direct domain of influence.

3.4. The ethics management framework

The governance of ethics and ethics management framework as developed by The Ethics Institute and depicted in the figure below provides a useful frame of reference for understanding what is required for the successful implementation of an ethics ambassador programme.



The governance of ethics framework ©The Ethics Institute

The Framework has been elaborated on in detail in the *Ethics Reporting Handbook* (2014), the *Ethics Risk Handbook* (2016) and the *Ethics and Compliance Handbook* (2017). In this handbook we focus on the location of the ethics ambassador programme within the *Ethics Management Framework*.

- **Leadership commitment and support**

For any organisational change programme to work effectively, it needs the express endorsement of leadership in the organisation. *It is futile to implement a programme that does not have the backing, support and gravitas given to it by the senior leadership structures in the organisation.* It can also be dangerous to implement a programme that is not understood and actively endorsed by senior leadership. The programme thus needs to be empowered by senior leadership and enabled through training.

It is therefore essential that senior and executive leadership fully understand and endorse an ethics ambassador programme long before it is practically implemented in the organisation.

It is therefore essential that senior and executive leadership fully understand and endorse an ethics ambassador programme long before it is practically implemented in the organisation. Middle management and line management should also buy in to this programme and understand fully what it entails and what its objectives are.

The ethics champion should be mobilised to explain the ambassador programme and the advantages that such a programme could hold for the organisation. Additionally, the ethics champion could also communicate the perceptions of leadership regarding such a programme to the ethics management function and whether there are any concerns or recommendations from this senior group.

Given the role of the ethics champion, this person should:

- be convinced of the utility of the ambassador programme and advocate for its implementation;
- be asked to motivate for the effective resourcing of an ambassador programme, in line with the strategic ethics objectives of the organisation;

- be a symbol for the ambassador and act as a role model for them;
- contact the ambassadors in the organisation, inspire them, motivate them, and act as someone the ambassador can seek advice from. It would be beneficial if the ethics champion could attend at least one internal ambassador meeting per year and be involved in their training programme as a motivational force;
- oversee the process by which ambassadors are nominated and selected to ensure its fairness; and
- explain to line managers how important the ambassador role is, and encourage them to support designated ambassadors.

As part of the preparation phase for the implementation of an ethics ambassador programme, the following key information should be included as part of the pitching of the programme to senior leadership:

- The purpose, vision and mission of an ambassador programme in the organisation;
- The benefits of an ambassador programme both pragmatically for the ethics management function, and for the organisation in its entirety with emphasis on building an ethical culture;
- The role of ambassadors in the organisation (i.e., what will these individuals do in the organisation);
- The performance incentives, support and protection for ambassadors in the organisation. This should include discussions about performance criteria for all ambassadors and the weighting and evaluation of this performance criteria;
- The scope of the ambassador programme (i.e., how many ambassadors will be deployed, where will they be deployed, and at what job levels and within which divisions will they operate). This can also be done in a phased approach;
- A request for support from the governance cluster and the heads of the major divisions to help manage the programme and share resources;
- Key deliverables of the ambassador programme (i.e., implementation of

ethics awareness initiatives, problem solving ethical challenges and dilemmas, acting as an ethics resource to employees, and overall ethical culture change);

- The structure of ethics reports that ambassadors provide to the ethics management function (i.e., broad themes and ethical challenges encountered by employees in their domain); and
- An indication of the resources, financial and otherwise, required for such a programme to work effectively with special consideration of the following:
 - Selecting the ambassadors (i.e., the time and human capital resources required to identify, select and endorse ambassadors);
 - Training ethics ambassadors to competently fulfil their roles (i.e., the time and resource costs of training ethics ambassadors, the content of training, whether external training will be required, etc.);
 - Additional time commitments taken up for meetings, management, evaluation and performance monitoring of the ethics ambassadors; and
 - A broad timeframe for the implementation of the ethics ambassador programme.

Without senior leadership buy-in and support, the ambassador programme will have very limited success and may be doomed to fail before it has even been implemented.

- **The roles of governance structures**

The ethics governance structure in the organisation plays a pivotal role in supporting as well as evaluating the effectiveness of the ambassador programme.

The ethics governance structure in the organisation (i.e., the governing body or a sub-committee of the governing body responsible for ethics) plays a pivotal role in supporting as well as evaluating the effectiveness of the ambassador programme. Its role is primarily one of oversight and evaluation of the progress of the ambassador programme towards strategic ethical objectives for the organisation. This is situated within the broader purview of the governing body, which is to ensure oversight of the ethics management function and all its related activities.

In a similar manner to senior leadership, the governing body should be convinced of the utility of an ambassador programme as well as be knowledgeable about the resources required and scope of such a programme.

- **The ethics risk assessment as a baseline measurement**

The first, and probably the most important step in the operational management of ethics, is the ethics risk assessment. This is a baseline assessment of the ethics opportunities and risks the organisation faces (cf. the *Ethics Risk Handbook*) and provides critical information on the overall maturity of the organisation's ethical culture and conduct.

The effectiveness of the ambassador programme is strongly related to its focus. Therefore, the objectives of the ambassador programme should be strongly aligned with the ethics risk assessment where possible.

Although ambassador programmes can be instituted without an ethics risk assessment, this is not recommended. The effectiveness of the ambassador programme is strongly related to its focus. If such a programme is applied without understanding the ethics risk and culture landscape of the organisation the ambassador programme takes a low resolution 'shotgun approach' to ethics management and culture change.

This means that the programme may focus scarce resources on perceived ethics priorities that are currently not present or critical for the sustainability of the organisation. This is an inefficient use of the ambassador programme. Therefore, the objectives of the ambassador programme should be strongly aligned with the ethics risk assessment where possible.

We list some of the key culture change dimensions that allow organisations to reach a more mature ethical culture in the box below. Organisations should ensure that the programme focuses on the dimensions that are underdeveloped in the organisation prior to progressing to those areas that are more developed or less critical.

**The primary key areas of ethical culture
include the following taxonomy (Vorster, 2020).**

1. *Ethics accountability and responsibility* (i.e., the degree to which the organisation holds employees accountable and responsible for their behaviours and decisions and provides fair and consistent sanctions for unethical conduct).
2. *Commitment to ethics* (i.e., the degree to which employees at all levels of management are committed to good and ethical conduct, role model ethics, and take policies, rules, and ethics seriously).
3. *Ethics talk* (i.e., the degree to which the organisation makes it easy for employees to talk about and discuss ethics and ethics related issues in an open and transparent manner).
4. *Ethical treatment of employees* (i.e., the degree to which the organisation treats its employees with respect, fairness, and dignity; and consider employees when making decisions that may affect them).
5. *Ethics awareness* (i.e., the degree to which employees are familiar with ethics and ethical conduct; receive ethics training; are familiar with ethics policies (e.g., codes of conduct); and know what is expected of them in terms of ethical behaviour).

Dimensions of a mature ethical culture

Organisations tend to vary on these ethical culture and conduct dimensions, and it is therefore important that the most prominent ethical culture risks are addressed first. For example, an ambassador programme geared towards creating ethics awareness is very different to one where ethics talk is the most pertinent focus.

- **The ethics strategy and management plan**

The ethics strategy and management plan flow directly from the ethics risk assessment and include broad strategic focal areas that need to be addressed through specific and practical ethics management interventions.

Several ethics management plan objectives can be accomplished using an ethics ambassador programme. The ambassador programme is in essence an ethics cul-

ture-building intervention and needs to appear prominently in the ethics management plan. The implementation plan should specify the resources required, objectives, timelines to meet the objectives, and those responsible for its implementation (the ethics management function and ethics champion).

If an ethics strategy and management plan is already in place, it is important to review this document to add the ethics ambassador initiative, and to have this document re-ratified by executive management and the relevant governing structures.

- **Institutionalisation**

The institutionalisation of ethics, or simply 'making ethics real', is what we would consider the legitimate axis of the ambassador programme within the governance of ethics and ethics management framework. The ambassador programme is a method to '*make ethics real*' for employees in the organisation and therefore primarily a form of institutionalising ethics.

3.5. Implementing the ethics ambassador programme

Generally, the implementation of the ambassador programme has three primary steps:

- (i) The nomination and selection of ethics ambassadors (i.e., identifying and nominating employees for the role based on certain role-fit criteria);
- (ii) training of ambassador (i.e., ensuring that ambassadors are upskilled on ethics and organisational ethics, develop an ethics vocabulary, and understand their role); and
- (iii) the deployment of ambassadors (i.e., ensuring that ambassadors understand what they need to do, and how to interact with the ethics management function).



The implementation of the ethics ambassador programme

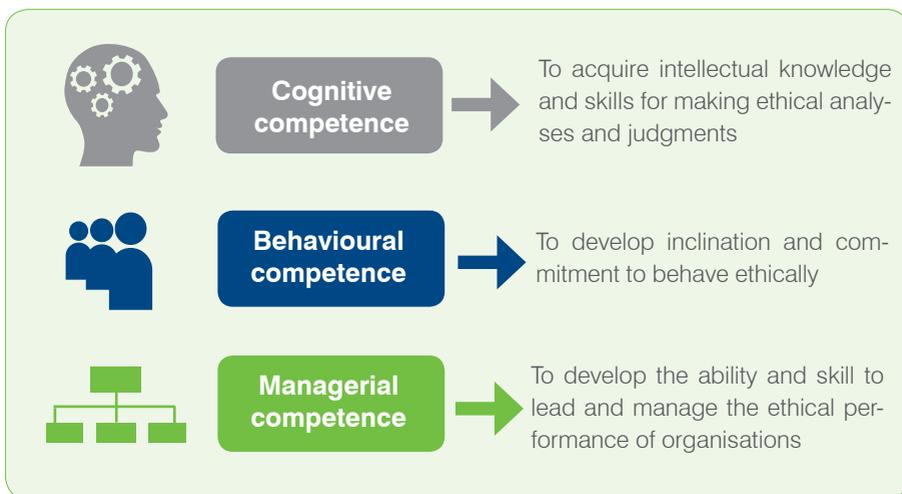
Step 1: Nominating and selecting the ethics ambassador

Ambassadors are often nominated by their peers and managers in the organisation. Ambassadors should be approachable, accessible and relatable to employees. If someone is nominated because that person is dogmatically ethical in the organisation, such an individual may be viewed by employees as unapproachable and judgemental. This defeats the point of being the 'go-to' person regarding ethics.

In most organisations, these nominations are the responsibility of the divisions and departments where the ambassador fulfils their primary job role. Management within these divisions will often be tasked to nominate two or three people to take up the ambassador role within the division or may allow employees to nominate or vote on a nominations list for their preferred candidates. The ethics management function may also nominate certain employees independently. At more senior levels, management may nominate employees at their own level or down to senior management level.

No two organisations are the same in their ambassador nominations process, however it is important that ambassadors are nominated with key competencies, skills, abilities, experience and knowledge in mind.

In the figure below, we present the three core competencies of the ethics ambassador.



Competency dimensions for ethics job roles in organisations (Rossouw, 2002)

It can be noted from the figure above that ambassadors require a cognitive competence (the capacity to acquire the intellectual knowledge and skills to make proper ethical analyses), a behavioural competence (the capacity to develop an inclination and commitment to behave ethically) and a managerial competence (the capacity to direct the ethics performance of the organisation). We break these broad competencies down in the next few sections within these broad categories and present them as content for guiding the training programme of the ambassador.

Step 2: Training the ethics ambassador

Although several criteria exist for the nomination and selection of ambassadors, this cannot compensate for effective training. Training the ambassador is a pivotal task that allows the ambassadors to speak the same ethics language, understand their roles and responsibilities, and develop core skills that are vital to their role effectiveness.

Ambassadors should be familiarised with their tasks before they can take up their role in the organisation. To integrate this information, we set out some guidelines related to the competency model presented in Step 1 of implementing the ethics ambassador programme.

It is important to realise that competencies, as presented here, represent capacities. In other words, the degree to which any employee can develop the skill, knowledge and the aptitude required to function effectively in the ethics ambassador role. The ethics practitioner must judge which employees can learn these competencies even if they have not mastered them at the time of nomination.

(i) Cognitive Competence



The overarching cognitive competence is composed of several sub-competencies. These include *awareness of the ethical dimension*, *having an ethics vocabulary*, *having the capacity to reason ethically*, *make ethical decisions*, and *being capable of tolerating ethical differences*. We unpack below how these competencies relate to the ethics ambassador role. These competencies should also be upskilled in the ambassador training programme.

- Understanding and defining ethics and organisational ethics

Ambassadors should understand what ethics is and how it relates to organisations. This training content should focus on defining ethics and organisational ethics, explaining how ethics differs from the law, how ethics is institutionalised in organisations, and how to balance the objectives of various stakeholders while maintaining trust and mutual beneficence amongst all.

The objective of this training content should be to develop an ethics vocabulary for ethics ambassadors, generate a shared meaning about ethics across the ambassador core, and enable ambassadors to have a common vocabulary which they will be able to use and share with employees.

- **Making ethical decisions**

Ambassadors should undergo ethical decision-making training where they can develop and build skills for resolving ethical problems, and apply ethical decision-making frameworks to past, current and future ethical problems. Any such training should be practical and allow ambassadors to apply ethics decision-making skills and tools to real-world problems, and come up with practical solutions. Engagement with relevant case studies in their domain of influence can broaden their skillset and give them practical opportunities of building their experience. Ambassadors must be capable of reasoning clearly about ethics. Although some individuals are better suited than others to make ethical decisions, this is essentially a skill that can be developed in most employees.

Ambassadors should know the difference between an ethical challenge and an ethical dilemma and be able to apply ethical decision-making frameworks to resolve them. Additionally, ambassadors should also be capable of balancing the needs of stakeholders when doing so.

Ethical decision-making is a primary skill that the ambassador should harness daily.

Ethical decision-making is a primary skill that the ambassador should harness daily.

This is partly because the ambassador role is one of ethics support and advice, and employees will approach their ambassadors to help them resolve ethical challenges and dilemmas.

- **Understanding how to facilitate discussions and generate consensus**

It is recommended that ethics ambassadors learn how to facilitate discussions and solve problems cooperatively by being exposed to facilitation skills training opportunities. Although this may not form part of the initial training programme for ethics ambas-

sadors, nor be an absolute requirement, it is a vital aspect that can be developed into a key skill.

Ethics ambassadors need to be facilitators of ethics. This means that ethics ambassadors should be able to help a group of people to work together, understand their common objectives, and plan on how to achieve these objectives in relation to the management of ethics. In addition, they must get the group to achieve these objectives without getting too involved and remaining neutral in the process.

- **Understanding the roles and responsibilities of the ethics ambassador**

Any training for the ethics ambassador must delineate their roles and responsibilities and how they fit into the organisation. In addition, ethics ambassadors should know what behaviours, roles or actions may undermine their ability to act as an effective ethics ambassador.

(ii) Behavioural Competence



Behavioural competence for the ethics ambassador role includes numerous sub-competencies that should be developed and broadened in training, which include aspects such as *ethical sensitivity*, *ethical vision*, *ethical imagination* and *ethical courage*. We discuss some of these and how they relate to the ethics ambassador in the next few sections

- Ethical sensitivity and awareness

Ethics ambassadors should be able to spot ethical challenges or dilemmas in their everyday work environments.

Usually, this sensitivity arises from deep knowledge about the organisation's values, its aspirations, its policies, rules and procedures, the code of conduct, the code of ethics, legislation pertaining to the operation of their domain, and knowledge about other ethics-related policies in the organisation such as but not limited to procurement, gifts and entertainment, conflicts of interest, fair treatment of employees, the ethics reporting system and many others.

Since the ethics ambassador is the 'go-to' person for ethics advice, knowledge about the standards of the organisation is essential. Although nominees may not necessarily be completely familiar with all the relevant organisational standards, they should be evaluated as being capable of internalising these standards and be capable of spotting situations where these standards or values may be at risk by either the decision-making or behaviour of employees.

- Ethical courage

Ethical courage is the ability to do the right thing, even when there is a cost to doing so.

Ethical courage is the ability to do the right thing, even when there is a cost to doing so. Ambassadors should be capable of standing up for what is right in their domains and tactfully challenge managers and employees who may wander into unethical territory. This 'standing up' or 'speaking up' behaviour should be assertive and not confrontational or aggressive – firm but respectful.

- Ethical role modelling

Ambassadors act as role models regarding ethics. This means that ambassadors should behave and think in an ethical manner. Hypocrisy is the greatest enemy to the legitimacy of the ambassador or any ethical leader. In short, ambassadors should 'walk their talk'.

This also means that ambassadors' ethical integrity in their professional life should cascade to their personal life as well. Individuals who have a different set of ethics professionally versus personally are not good ethical role models, and it can negatively affect their credibility in the eyes of other employees.

- **Motivated to take on additional responsibilities**

Since ambassadors are drawn from employees who hold primary job roles within the organisation, they should be sufficiently motivated to take up the ambassador role with the aim of making an ethical difference. They should also have the capacity for taking on the additional responsibilities of the ambassador role, and not be overburdened within their current job roles. This is essential, as an ambassador needs to be an active influencer regarding ethics in the organisation. A person who cannot cope in their current job role will not be able to execute their responsibilities as an ambassador effectively.

- **A good reputation grounded in ethical integrity**

Ethics ambassadors need to be individuals of integrity. Prospective ambassadors should be viewed by their colleagues as someone who takes ethics seriously, acts with integrity, discusses ethical concerns, and is a reliable part of the organisational teams they operate within.

It may be necessary to evaluate the integrity of nominees for this role before they are cleared for ambassador training. This could take the form of a quick background check ensuring that the employee does not have a poor disciplinary record within the organisation, or that they are known by their peers as someone who can be trusted. It can be very embarrassing to nominate someone as an ambassador in the organisation when they have a reputation for not following the rules, have disciplinary action being taken against them, and are known for being cynical about organisational ethics.

- **Tactful, objective and emotionally intelligent**

Ambassadors should address unethical conduct and decision-making tactfully and diplomatically, and never act on unethical behaviour in a condescending or 'preacher-like' manner. They should play the role of the benevolent 'devil's advocate' and be able to prompt employees to solve their own ethical challenges and dilemmas.

It is important to remember that the ambassador is a facilitator of ethics and therefore they should not get too involved in the ethical challenges and dilemmas they are asked to advise employees about. They should provide employees with all the related facts, help guide them in the right direction, and convince them about taking an ethical course of action. Ambassadors do not force employees into a decision or action.

The ambassador therefore should be someone who is: (i) a content expert regarding ethics in their domain but should (ii) balance their involvement in ethical challenges and dilemmas through acting in an advisory or facilitating capacity. If the ambassador feels that the situation cannot be resolved through diplomatic facilitation, they should have the courage to report such behaviour to the ethics office.

(iii) Managerial Competence



(a) Understanding organisational ethics management

Ambassadors should understand what it takes to manage ethics in organisations, and be aware of the ethical standards that inform ethics management. This means that ethics ambassadors should be trained on the content of rules, policies and procedures in the organisation. The following are typical policy documents which should be included in ambassador training:

- | | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| a. conflict of interest policy | b. whistleblowing policy |
| c. code of ethics and conduct | d. industrial relations policy |
| e. procurement policy | f. remuneration policy |

The knowledge and understanding of policies can also be converted into a performance criterion for ambassadors (i.e., passing an evaluation on the contents of policies and standards in the organisation).

Since ambassadors will report to the ethics management function, they should be familiar with who the ethics officers are, the roles and responsibilities of the ethics management function, and to whom the ethics officer reports. Ambassadors should also be introduced to the ethics champion and know that this individual plays a supportive role for them and for the ethics management function. (Please refer to Section 2.5 and 3.1 of this handbook for more clarity on these roles.)

Training content may also include deliverables ambassadors are expected to accomplish and insight into their performance appraisals and key performance indicators, as well as familiarising ambassadors with the terms of reference for the ethics ambassador programme.

The objective of this training is to get ambassadors to understand the broader ethics management landscape and the roles and responsibilities of the ethics management function.

The objective of this training is to get ambassadors to understand the broader ethics management landscape and the roles and responsibilities of the ethics management function.

- **Understanding the organisation's ethical landscape**

Ambassadors must be exposed to the broader ethics landscape and understand where they fit into that landscape. They should be made aware of what the aspirations of the ethics management function are, and what the vision of the organisation is to build an ethical culture. Ambassadors should be made aware of the results of any ethics risk assessments and the contents of the ethics strategy and management plan.

- **Ethical leadership**

Ethics ambassadors are tasked with role modelling ethics to other employees in the organisation. They should have the capability of being an informal ethics leader in the

domain in which they operate. Although the ethics ambassador may not hold a formal leadership role, they should be a respected opinion leader known for their integrity. Consequently, they need to be credible, respected and trustworthy.

This does not mean that ambassadors should be paragons of virtue all the time. They should however be viewed as legitimate ethical leaders within the organisation by what they do and say in the organisation.

- **Making a business case for ethics**

Ambassadors should be trained about the impact of unethical conduct and decision-making from a strategic, financial and operational perspective.

Ambassadors should be trained about the impact of unethical conduct and decision-making from a strategic, financial and operational perspective.

Ambassadors need to be equipped to convince the sceptics regarding business ethics and must 'bust' certain myths about ethics in organisations such as: (i) that ethics is a fuzzy issue in the organisation; (ii) that business and ethics do not mix; (iii) that ethics is for those that can afford it; (iv) that all business is about unfair advantage (i.e., Machiavellianism); and (v) that ethics does not add value to an organisation's performance.

Ambassadors must not only buy in to the fact that ethics is important for the organisation's reputation, the trust of its external stakeholders, the trust of its internal stakeholders and the quality of its business relationships, but must also be capable of making this case to other employees and managers in the organisation.

Step 3: Deploying the ethics ambassador

Once the ambassadors have been nominated, selected and trained, they need to be deployed in the organisation. This means that ambassadors are introduced in their respective divisions or departments so that employees explicitly know who their ambassadors are, and what this role entails (i.e., how the ambassador is a resource for employees). If employees are not aware of who their ambassadors are and what they do, the role has little use.

The ethics management function should thus budget to promote the ethics ambassadors in the organisation to give them exposure. This could take the form of a virtual ceremony where ambassadors are given their certificate of completion (i.e., of the training programme) and are inducted as ambassadors to an organisational audience. Awareness of the ambassadors should also take place in organisational forums, ethics roadshows and staff meetings. In addition, the verbal endorsement of ambassadors by senior leadership will also go a long way to adding much needed clout to this role.

Some organisations opt for a webpage where the role of ambassadors is introduced and described. Less overt methods may include awareness generation of the ambassador by managers in a specific domain (through meetings for example) or through an organisational newsletter.

It is important to ensure that the following information is disseminated to employees about their ambassadors:

- The name and a photograph of the ethics ambassador;
- The domain in which the ethics ambassador will operate (e.g., division, department or team);
- The role of the ethics ambassador (what they can do for employees);
- Distinctions between the ethics officer, ethics ambassador and ethics champion roles; and
- Clear (verbalised and written) support from leadership in the organisation for the ethics ambassador role.

Once ambassadors are deployed, they will need to give effect to their roles and responsibilities as briefed by the ethics management function. The ethics management function should create a meeting or contact protocol for the ambassadors (i.e., how they contact the ethics management function, how often meetings will be conducted, etc.).

Once ambassadors are deployed, they will need to give effect to their roles and responsibilities as briefed by the ethics management function.

4.1. Managing the ethics ambassador programme

The ethics management function is responsible for the direct oversight and management of the ambassador programme as well as of the ambassadors. The success or failure of an ambassador programme rests heavily on the ethics management function. Two key documents critical to the management of the ethics ambassador programme are: (1) the ethics ambassadors' terms of reference and (2) their workplan. The terms of reference usually contain information about the roles, responsibilities and operating procedures of the ambassador programme, whereas the workplan outlines the specific activities and the timelines of these activities for the ambassador core.

A desirable method for establishing the basics of a terms of reference and workplan is to ask questions. The content of the terms of reference and workplan can be generated through a facilitation session with ethics officers, the ethics champion and the ethics ambassadors where simple questions need to be addressed by this group and placed in a particular format. It is preferable that the ambassadors are included in this process as it will contribute to their buy-in and allow them the opportunity to provide input.

4.2. Terms of reference

The ethics ambassador terms of reference is a guiding document. An ambassador should know what is expected of them and how their role will work.

The ethics ambassador terms of reference is a guiding document. It provides critical information about the ethics ambassador programme and should be designed in such a way that it can be used to induct ambassadors and ethics officers into the programme. By reading the terms of reference, an ambassador should know what is expected of them and how their role will work. Similarly, an ethics officer should know exactly what the ambassador programme is about after reading this document. The terms of reference is also key to ensuring the continuity of the programme should the ethics officer or ethics champion leave the organisation, as it documents the organisation's processes and thinking on ethics ambassadors. In addition, it also allows new employees to easily become acquainted with the programme and how it operates.

- **The content of the terms of reference**

The terms of reference should include information about (i) the vision and purpose of the ethics ambassador programme, (ii) the broad focal areas of the programme, (iii) the specific objectives and activities in these focal areas, and (iv) process considerations (e.g., the number of meetings, attendees in meetings, training and development opportunities, and the content requirements of ethics ambassador reports to the ethics management function).

Key questions that can be asked to generate the content of the terms of reference are discussed below.

- **What is the purpose of the ethics ambassador programme?**

The answer to this question should be easy to understand and not take the form of more than one sentence if possible. It should be broad enough to encompass the general purpose of the ambassador programme in the organisation. Below is an example of a real organisation's vision statement.

The ethics ambassador programme seeks to raise awareness around ethics management in the organisation with the aim of building a positive ethical culture."

It can be noted that this organisation wants to use the ambassador programme to put the ethics management function in touch with employees. Its primary aim is to raise ethical awareness across the organisation. It is important to remember that this purpose statement will be different for organisations based on the key focus areas of their ethics strategy. Here are some more examples.

- *"The ethics ambassador programme aims to create a shared meaning of ethics in our organisation amongst employees of every level."*
- *"The ethics ambassador programme aspires to help employees resolve ethical problems and act as an ethics resource for all employees."*
- *"The ethics ambassador programme aims to raise ethics awareness, build ethical cohesion, and role model ethics to all employees."*

It can be noted that there are similarities across these examples, yet each focuses on something specific. Usually, this specified focus is determined by the primary ethics risks in the organisation and what the ethics ambassador programme aims to address.

- **What are the focus areas and responsibilities of ethics ambassadors?**

This question aims to establish what the broad focal areas are for the ambassador programme. It is best to pose this question in a timeframe of three years in order to force the ethics management function and those who may attend a facilitation session for generating the terms of reference to think over the medium to long term about these focal areas. These focal areas should be succinct yet broad enough to encompass several practical interventions. It is preferable that no more than three of these focal areas are established. In this case, less is more as each focal area will encompass several practical interventions which ultimately will form part of the workplan.

Below, we provide the broad focal areas of a real organisation developed for their ambassador programme.

The organisation has decided on the following key focal areas for the ethics ambassador programme:

1. *Ethics sensitisation: Ethics ambassadors should create awareness about ethics in the organisation and sensitise employees to unethical conduct.*
2. *Initiate ethics talk: Ethics ambassadors must find opportunities, either formal or informal, to open the dialogue about ethics in the organisation.*
3. *Ethics accountability: Ethics ambassadors should help to embed a culture of ethics reporting and accountability.*

It can be noted from the above that the key focal areas are a little more specific than the purpose, but each talks to an overarching objective that the ambassadors need to realise in a three-year period.

An integrated terms of reference document should contain all the answers to these questions as a guiding document. These sets of questions can also help ethics officers to evaluate the proposed scope of an ethics ambassador programme long before it is implemented in the organisation. Although these questions provide the basic outline of a terms of reference document, it is important that the ethics management function adds any additional information it might deem important for the specific ethics ambassador programme. Ultimately, such a document should be reviewed every 12–24 months to determine whether any changes need to be made, or new objectives established after initial objectives have been met. It is important that the terms of reference also be ratified by the governing body or a subcommittee of the governing body responsible for ethics.

4.3. Workplan

Once the key strategic focal areas are outlined in the terms of reference, it is important to then start asking questions about the activities of the ambassador programme to address the practical tasks that need to be accomplished by ethics ambassadors to achieve these goals. The answers to these questions are referred to as the workplan of the ambassador programme, and outline the specific activities that need to be accomplished by the ambassadors individually and as a team.

The questions in the following sections can be used to structure the thinking around the workplan for the ambassador programme.

- **What are the specific tasks that ethics ambassadors must complete?**

In Chapter 1 we discussed the roles and activities of the ethics ambassador. These can easily be converted into specific tasks for the ambassador in most organisations. Remember that these activities must fall within the scope of the ambassador role. In Annexure A at the end of this handbook is an example of the focal areas of a real organisation and some of the specific activities they have set to accomplish these focal areas in their workplan.

It can be noted from the example that this organisation has identified six interventions in total for three broad focal areas. Each of these interventions is clearly defined and

includes a 'deliverable or proof of completion' criterion as well as a timeframe (i.e., by when deliverables are due and in what format). Ideally, all focal areas and interventions should be captured on a single sheet if possible.

Although these interventions may work for this organisation, it is important to remember that the nature and types of interventions differ for each organisation. Some organisations use the ethics ambassador programme purely to provide airtime for certain ethics policies that are poorly understood, or focus on discussing ethics informally and not in formal meetings. What is key is that these interventions are practical, measurable, can be reasonably accomplished by the ethics ambassador, and are succinctly captured in a workplan document.

• **How often should the ethics ambassadors meet with the ethics management function?**

The ethics management function and the ethics officer must decide how often to meet with ethics ambassadors and whether these meetings will be face to face or virtual in nature. It is strongly recommended that the ethics champion attend these meetings when possible.

The meetings should include:

- evaluation of the challenges and successes of the ethics ambassadors,
- submission of deliverables by the ethics ambassadors,
- any operational consideration (i.e., employee turnover, new ambassador induction, future meetings, etc.),
- amended objectives or focus areas,
- discussion of overall progress, and
- any additional resources or support the ethics ambassadors may need.

In terms of scheduling, these meetings can be aligned with the submission of key deliverables such as progress reports by the ambassadors. Most organisations opt for four meetings per year, once every quarter. However, it is not uncommon for meetings to be held more frequently or less often. The number of meetings and meeting agendas will depend on the maturity of the ambassador programme and the size of the organisation.

The ethics ambassador programme potentially holds great promise as an approach to make ethics real in organisations, that is, 'taking ethics to the people' and 'taking the fuzziness out of ethics'. The ethics ambassador programme has the potential of connecting the ethics officer with the rest of the organisation.

We have evaluated a number of different ethics ambassador programmes over the years, and there are no two programmes that are exactly the same. Each programme differs somewhat in its reach, scope, objectives, and activities.

This handbook provides a core set of activities that should be, at the very minimum, considered before an ethics ambassador programme is attempted.

As with any organisational change intervention, the ethics officer needs to understand that sometimes there are unintended consequences when organisational development and change interventions are implemented. These must be managed to ensure that the ethics ambassador programme overcomes these small hiccups that may occur.

If there is one bit of advice to internalise from this handbook, it is that the ethics officer must remain vigilant about the ambassador programme. It will not succeed by itself.

The success of the ambassador programme must always be evaluated against the ultimate goal of all ethics interventions, which is the establishment of an ethical culture.

We trust that this *Ethics Ambassador Handbook* provides you with the necessary structure and tools to implement an ethics ambassador programme successfully in your organisation. It is our hope that organisations will embrace the ethics ambassador programme as a way of contributing towards building an ethical culture, and that these programmes will be managed with finesse and care.

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| | Interventions | Deliverable/Proof of completion | Timeframe |
|---|--|--|----------------|
| Focal area 1: Ethics Sensitisation | Intervention 1: Ethics ambassadors must make one presentation to their direct colleagues on ethics and business ethics | One 1-hour presentation covering what ethics is and why it should be important | 1st quarter |
| | Intervention 2: Ethics ambassadors must provide ethics advice to employees regarding organisational policies and standards | Find opportunities to give advice on policies, act as a resource for the team, and help team members solve ethical challenges related to these standards. An excel spreadsheet including the type and frequency of advice offered to employees must be submitted to the ethics management function | Every 3 months |
| Focal area 2: Initiate ethics talk | Intervention 3: Ethics ambassadors must facilitate discussion about the organisation's values in meetings | One 5–10-minute discussion regarding what the values of the organisation means or any other ethics-related topic. Submit meeting minutes to confirm discussions and content of discussions team meetings | Every 6 months |
| Focal area 3: Improve ethics accountability | Intervention 4: Ethics ambassadors must raise ethical concerns in meetings and ask their colleagues to consider the ethical implications of business decisions | Number of instances the ethics ambassador has provided insight into the ethical concerns of business decisions. This must be in an excel spreadsheet format indicating the type of business decision and the mitigation of unethical decision-making | Every 3 months |

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| | <p>Intervention 5: Report any observed accountability failures to the ethics management function</p> | <p>An excel spreadsheet including the type and frequency of ethics accountability failures must be submitted to the ethics management function</p> | <p>Every quarter</p> |
| | <p>Intervention 6: Speak to employees about their duty to report unethical conduct and how they can do so safely</p> | <p>Number of instances the ethics ambassador has provided insight into reporting unethical behaviour to employees. This must be in excel spreadsheet format indicating the type of discussion and what was achieved</p> | <p>Every quarter</p> |

Dr Paul Vorster earned his PhD degree in Industrial and Organisational Psychology at the University of Johannesburg in 2016. He specialises in psychometric measurement and research and has worked in areas of applied research, psychometrics, test development, safety, employee selection, business and behavioural ethics and human behavioural assessment. From 2011 to 2015 Paul worked at JvR Psychometrics where he focused on applied organisational research, test construction and psychometric measurement. In 2016 Paul joined The Ethics Institute (TEI) as an internal research specialist focusing on quantitative research design, measurement of ethics culture and conduct in organisations, and behavioural predictors of (un)ethical behaviour.

He currently holds an academic affiliation with both the University of Johannesburg's Department of Industrial Psychology and People Management and the Unisa Graduate School of Business. Paul is also a member of the International Test Commission, as well as a founding member of the World Congress of Personality. In 2016 Paul was presented with the Professor Johann Schepers Award for outstanding and pioneering work in the field of psychometric measurement and quantitative research.

Fatima Rawat is an Associate Subject Matter Expert at The Ethics Institute. She has a Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Laws and Masters in Management (Local Governance and Development) from the University of Witwatersrand as well as Certificates in Legislative Drafting and Compliance Management from the University of Johannesburg. She is an admitted attorney of the High Court of South Africa, a Certified Ethics Officer as well as a Certified Director.

Fatima has a keen interest in governance, ethics management, anti-corruption, compliance and regulation. She has extensive experience in working with and supporting the public sector both as an official and as a public sector management consultant.

Fatima is involved in TEI's advisory and consulting activities for a diverse range of clients from both the public and private sectors. She has been part of ethics risk assessments teams in organisations, trains and facilitates on ethics, and is part of the faculty for TEI's Ethics Officer Certification Programme. She is also a key team member on the Gauteng Municipal Integrity Project as well as the Local Government Ethical Leadership Initiative.

The Ethics Institute is an independent institute producing original thought leadership and offering a range of products and services related to organisational ethics.

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We pursue our vision through thought leadership and an organisational ethics-related offering, including training, advisory services, assessments and products. We work with the public and private sectors, and with professional associations.

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Website: www.tei.org.za

Contact: info@tei.org.za



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Ethics Ambassador Handbook

The Ethics Ambassador Handbook is a guidebook on how an ethics ambassador programme can be implemented in an organisation. The factors that will make such a programme a success are hereby introduced. The handbook outlines the responsibilities of ethics ambassadors, defines the key skills that they require, describes what knowledge they need to acquire for the ethics ambassador role, and outlines how such a programme can be instituted within the broader ethics management programme of an organisation. Guidance is also provided on how the success of an ethics ambassador programme can be measured.

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