



FTA Awards Nomination/Entry Form

Person who led this effort or project

Name Kristin Reed

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About your program, idea, or project

Name your program, idea, or project: Employee Engagement at the Indiana Dept. of Revenue

What is the problem that you wanted to solve? While keeping employees engaged became a priority to the department a few years ago, it took on greater importance during the COVID-19 pandemic, when a majority of employees are working from home, isolated from their colleagues.

Who was involved in addressing the problem? Commissioner Grennes and the communications department took the lead on addressing the problem. There are two employees dedicated to employee engagement and internal communications.

How did they go about finding a solution? DOR went about finding a solution by looking at the available resources. Due to budget concerns brought on by the pandemic, funds were not available to expand employee engagement efforts. Therefore, we looked at cost-effective means, utilizing existing technology and resources to most effectively communicate with employees.

Describe the outcome. What is the new idea, approach, program, or activity? Rather than stepping back from employee engagement efforts during the pandemic, DOR took them virtual and even found new ways of reaching out.

#AskBob

One of DOR's new initiatives is #AskBob. Almost a year ago, when staff began working from home, Commissioner Bob Grennes began recording weekly videos on his phone for staff. These five-minute #AskBob videos provide employees with updates. Not only is the information informative, but fun! For example, Bob mentions employee work anniversaries and films his videos in different locations. He has filmed in front of various Indianapolis landmarks as well as district offices.

Agency Meetings and Long-term Service Celebration
DOR employees have come to look forward to quarterly Agency Meetings in a large auditorium that are more of celebrations than traditional meetings. Since last March, these gathering now take place over Microsoft Teams. They are still filmed onsite and have retained their celebratory style. For example, during the last meeting, in January 2021, Bob announced the 2020 DOR Employee of the Year, who receives a beautiful crystal trophy, and featured a video of Governor Holcomb announcing that the Indiana Department of Revenue won a Top Workplace USA award.

Also in January, the Communications team created a 45-minute video honoring long-term employees. Every year, the governor hosts a celebration for state employees who have worked for the state of Indiana for at least 35 years. This year, the event was cancelled due to the pandemic. However, DOR's commissioner didn't want his employees to go unrecognized so we held a virtual celebratory event. Guests of honor were surprised with videos of congratulations from their colleagues and supervisors.

Intranet Photo Gallery

The communications department maintains a photo gallery on its intranet. Several times a month, the department announces spirit days. Employees are invited to dress up and send photos which are then uploaded to the gallery. The pandemic has also afforded the opportunity for employees to share photos of their home life and hobbies (e.g., family members, gardens, pets, etc.). This photo gallery is one of the most viewed pages on the intranet site.

Examples: Veterans Day was a very popular day. Many employees submitted photos of themselves, spouses or family members in the service. We even received several old photos from WW II! Tell Me a Joke Day was also popular. These were posted and had much of the same look as a meme on social media. Employees also enjoyed sending in photos for National Son/Daughter Day. Any opportunity to show off family members (including pets) was a hit!

Awards/Recognitions

Employees can go to the intranet, DORway, to find several ways to celebrate their colleagues. For instance, they can send a "High Five." This form is sent as an email to an employee and their supervisor. High Fives recognize a job well done and let others know how their positive actions fit into the agency's core values.

Other awards that come from peers include a "DOR Prize," which comes with a certificate and small monetary award, and "Employee of the Month." At the end of the year, an "Employee of the Year" is selected among all of the Employee of Month recipients.

#DORGivesBack

#DORGivesBack is the agency's volunteer program which was instituted a few years ago. Staff will go help community

nonprofit organizations, such as food banks, Habitat for Humanity and veterans' groups, with projects. While these efforts were halted in early 2020, they resumed in the summer once organizations were able to put their COVID safety plans in place.

For example, a group picked produce from a farm that was donated to Central Indiana food banks. On another occasion, DOR employees loaded food into the trunks of cars at Gleaners Food Bank.

What has changed since this was implemented? How have your operations improved? Include any data, analytics or metrics that would show the value of your program. Don't forget management advantages such as improved morale.

Recently, more than 400 staff members completed an employee engagement survey. DOR employees really appreciate our efforts over the past year. We will use their input to make additional improvements.

The Indiana Department of Revenue continues to win Top Workplaces awards. Recently, the agency was recognized as a Top Workplaces USA for 2021. The agency also won regional Indianapolis Star Top Workplace awards in 2019 and 2020. The recognitions are based on employee survey data collected by a third party, Energage.

Is there any component of your program that makes it workable only in your state or city?

Everybody ought to be doing this.

Is this an in-house project, or did you partner with an outside vendor or service-provider?

100% in-house

Additional information or comments about your usage of outside vendors or service providers.

N/A

What comes next – will you be adding to your program, rolling it out more widely, trying additional approaches?

We will continue to use employee feedback to implement new ideas.

Additional Optional Materials

Website/Documentation URL (Must be publicly accessible) https://events.in.gov/event/Top_Workplace_USA



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Person who led this effort or project

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About your program, idea, or project

Name your program, idea, or project: 2020 Audit Conference

What is the problem that you wanted to solve?

For almost a decade training at DOR was given very little priority, continuous improvement was not in our vocabulary, and morale among the staff was very low. Then about 4 years ago in came a new administration with their ideas about "culture" and "employee engagement", and they put a lot of emphasis on training. They created a small Audit Training team who was immediately faced a daunting task to create an audit training program, one that would not only equip our team to do their jobs, but also one that would promote consistency state-wide as well as contribute to the idea of "culture" and support our Commissioner's new vision of what DOR could look like. One of our major projects to address these goals was the creation of the Annual Audit Conference. The 2 annual conference that we were able to have as live events were incredibly successful in helping us move towards our goal. In fact, the annual conferences were so successful that they set the bar incredibly high and the pressure was already being felt in the beginning of planning our 3rd audit conference. Then when 2020 came with the COVID-19 pandemic, it completely changed the way we work and feel as we were all separated from each other. We were faced with the challenge of figuring out how to conduct this conference to continue training and engaging our team while dealing with the safety and logistical issues that came with the COVID-19 crisis and the separation of our team.

Who was involved in addressing the problem?

The initial annual audit conference was developed as a collaboration of the Audit Training team with the help from the DOR Communications team, Audit Compliance and Support team, and Finance team along with a group of speakers from Audit Operations, Legal and Tax Policy, Human Resources, Business Systems Support, as well as outside speakers. Even our Commissioner and Chief

Operating Officer were involved. For the 2020 Audit Conference, Audit Training teamed up with Audit Quality Assurance team to come up with a theme and a plan for the conference. The DOR Communications team assisted with graphics and videos, and the DOR Training team helped learn the technology and with the theme development that pulled everything together.

How did they go about finding a solution?

Even for past events, creating a one team environment was a challenge as our Audit Operations team is spread out and stationed at 12 locations throughout the state as well as several who are located in various states throughout the US. Our idea was to host a 3- day training event that brought the entire team together for the first time and to introduce them to the support team who work with them. Due to a special seating arrangement, individuals from various offices sat with teammates from various function groups - Income / Sales & Use auditors sat with Special Tax and Motor Carrier auditors as well as with someone from the Business Tax Compliance team, Audit Billing & Support, Quality Assurance. They were able to meet each other, find out what other teammates did and who they were and to meet face to face with someone with whom they had worked for years on the phone or through email. It was exciting and over the 2 years that we were able to hold an in-person conference, we saw dramatic changes in attitudes and the way people connected and worked together. Then came 2020 and we were not going to be able to meet in person, and some were concerned that there would be no audit conference. All around us events and operations were cancelling or shutting down. We were sure that everyone would have understood if we announced that we would be skipping the 2020 Audit Conference, but by this time it was too important for us and our organization, so we knew we had to find a way to hold our conference.

Due to the size of the event, it takes about a year to plan. We have to get a budget approved, find an appropriate venue to hold the meeting with the large general session and the multiple breakout sessions, find hotel accommodations for all attendees coming into town, arrange flights for the out of state team, arrange speakers, equipment etc. By March 2020 we had already begun the search for a venue and were in the process to sign the contract when COVID hit and we were all sent home to work so everyone was even more isolated and removed from the team environment. At that time, we had no idea how long we would be working remotely but we knew we couldn't stop the planning. Fortunately, DOR was already in a good place for a virtual event to be considered. Our team was working remotely with laptops or desktops, we had internet and VPN, we had been working a bit with WebEx and some had just started to work with Microsoft Teams. We had what we needed, we just needed to figure out how to use it.

Over the Summer, the Audit Training supervisor had several meetings with members of the DOR Communications team

and DOR Training team to learn and discuss the technology. We practiced using the technology and before the event held practice sessions with all of the presenters and even with the attendees who were uncertain so that when the time came everyone would feel confident and no one would miss a session because they couldn't figure out how to log in. We practiced with livestream so that the presenters would feel confident with the technology and would be able to focus only on the presentation of their materials. A schedule session times, descriptions, speaker bios and meeting links were sent out weeks in advance so attendees could plan, but then each morning that day's events and links were sent out to make it easy for attendees to log in. As we planned for the content of the event, we kept in mind that training can happen at any time, but the purpose of the audit conference is to connect and engage which was going to be a little harder with a virtual event. The theme of the conference was "Coming together while being apart," and with that in mind, we put in extra elements and effort to bring everything and everyone together. We paired our theme with the book *The Outward Mindset* by the Arbinger Institute. This book illustrates how many of us operate from an inward mindset, a single-minded focus on our own goals and objectives and how this approach invites tension and conflict. Then it teaches how to change your mindset and illustrates what happens when you adopt an outward mindset. During a pandemic, people cling even more to the inward mindset as the world around them is so uncertain, so this theme was even more important to the theme of the conference.

Describe the outcome. What is the new idea, approach, program, or activity?

The 2020 was a 4- day virtual event that included general sessions, break-out sessions, a panel discussion, and a session with an outside speaker, and from a technical standpoint, the event went off without a hitch and ran incredibly smooth. The general sessions and panel discussion all worked to support the theme of working together for a organization objective. The panel discussion consisted of panelists who are our customers – a representative from the business community, a tax preparation software provider, an attorney who represents lower income taxpayers, and a tax preparer – and shared their experience of working with DOR and shared ideas on how we could work better together to serve the taxpayers of Indiana. This is important to the outward mindset concept as you need to be able to put yourself in the other persons shoes or to see things from your customers perspective. To bring all of the topics together and to engage the audience, attendees were assigned a "case" that had a problem they needed to solve as an uncover agent in a role that was not their current role at the department. The problem was presented in the style of *Where in the World is Carmen Sandiego* with video assignments and clues. During one of the presentations, "the chief" interrupted the session to introduce the case and "clues" that were hidden in the

PowerPoint slides through-out other presentations, as well as videotaped clues in the Teams channels. These clues would help them “solve the case,” which was basically to complete a task that was normally completed by a different section within DOR or by the DOR’s customers. The goal was for the person to see how their work was used by someone else in DOR, and by seeing their work as others saw it, learn how to do their job better by viewing their work with the mindset of the other party—i.e. walking in their shoes. For example, the Field Auditors had to do the work of the Quality Assurance Auditor and review someone else’s audit file. They learned the importance of clear explanation and documentation to support adjustments as well as empathy from reading an audit case cold and having to rely on the case log and case attachments for the story of the audit. The Business Tax Compliance team had to work as a Hearing Officer and write a Letter of Finding on an individual protest. The BTC team learned how important it was to make notes in the system to explain adjustment and to include supporting documentation to back up their work so that they were documenting what was done not for themselves, but from the mindset of the next person down the line to see why and the support for the adjustment. The Individual Tax Compliance team played the role of a fraudulent tax preparer with the challenge of filing a fraudulent tax return that could make its way through our system to generate a fraudulent refund. This task helped to spot potential weak spots in our system and to help the analyst have a better understanding of the bad actors on the other side of the process.

Each section had a channel in Teams within which to work – they could use the chat to discuss the clues or what they found while working on their case. On the final day of the conference, we held a wrap up session to discuss the cases, give answers, and to allow attendees to discuss their experiences. Comments overwhelmingly expressed a new and greater appreciation for other teammates, a new commitment to slow down and find new ways to do a better job with their own work, and more understanding and less frustration towards others as they were doing their part to meet the organization mission. It worked; they learned to see things with the outward mindset by stepping into the shoes of another and gained their prospective as to the task at hand. They said they would approach their jobs differently from now on and view the task there are completing with new eyes as to what is needed from the other party’s perspective.

At the end of each day’s training, we held a virtual happy hour for fun and to encourage comradery. We had a game night, a Wine & Recipes night, and a music and sing a-long night. The happy hour events were well attended, and like every other good party, people didn’t seem to want the evening to end.

People came away from the conference feeling a closeness and renewed sense of energy towards completing their work in a way that was best for the agencies mission. They saw the value of their work, how it affect others, and how we really are one team “Coming Together While Being Apart.” 4

What has changed since this was implemented? How have your operations improved? Include any data, analytics or metrics that would show the value of your program. Don't forget management advantages such as improved morale.

There have been many changes at DOR that have contributed to increased morale and teambuilding, and the annual audit conferences are one of them. The training helps to increase job skill and knowledge, but more importantly made our staff feel like an important part of a team. They learned that their work is more valuable when created with the other party's perspective in mind. The outward mindset has led to better quality work and better comradery. There used to be lots of hurt feelings when cases were returned by QA or cases where lots in protest, but now since walking in the other persons shoes a sense of better understanding as evolved. They see how everyone fits into the puzzle of meeting the organizations goals and objectives and appreciate each other roles in a way that brings us closer together. Several individuals reached out to personally thank us for the conference because of the way everything fit together and how solving the case changed their perspective in how they would perform their work each day. The responses to daily questions showed that "stepping into the shoes" by being and under cover agent worked in opening their eyes to the broader prospective of how others see their task or work, which improved moral as they had a broader understanding of how their work affect the department's objectives. This truly showed how we are each a member of one TEAM working towards the same department objective and "Com[e] together While Being Apart."

Is there any component of your program that makes it workable only in your state or city?

Everybody ought to be doing this.

Is this an in-house project, or did you partner with an outside vendor or service-provider?

100% in-house

Additional information or comments about your usage of outside vendors or service providers.

No outside vendors or service providers

What comes next — will you be adding to your program, rolling it out more widely, trying additional approaches?

Other areas within DOR such as Legal Division and Corporate Tax Processing have reached out and asked to go through the program and to "work the case" so that they may gain the insight from working from another's perspective. We are planning follow up meetings with the area supervisors on how they can continue to coach the ideas and facilitate the use of the outward mindset to solve issues as they come up. The Legal Division of DOR has already reached out and asked to have a bigger involvement in the 2021 Audit Conference. We were also contacted by another Indiana agency's training department to share our experience and insight on how to plan and orchestrate an annual training event so that they could work to develop a similar program.

Additional Optional Materials

Documentation Upload



2020 Expanded Agenda Days 1 2.docx



2020 Expanded Agenda Days 3 4.docx