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## NFL PLAYER ENGAGEMENT IN A LEAGUE OF ITS OWN

**POWERFUL PLAYER-TO-PLAYER MODEL  
CONNECTS GENERATIONS BY PROVIDING  
SERVICES FOR LIFELONG SUCCESS**



While the National Football League (NFL) reaches remarkable new records of popularity year after year, its NFL Player Engagement (NFLPE) department has created the gold-standard model for maximizing player potential for a lifetime of commitment, contribution and community.

By originating an innovative player-to-player (P-to-P) model, NFLPE Vice President Troy Vincent is connecting all generations of players through a variety of programs that keep the torch burning and ensure a seamless transition from on-field stardom to off-field success.

"We have made P-to-P the fabric and foundation of our department," says Vincent, who became the leader of NFLPE in 2010. "To us, the NFL means 'Notice for Life,' where active players who do the right

things become mentors and contributors in preserving and growing the game."

Vincent, a 15-year NFL veteran and five-time Pro Bowl player who has served as President of the NFL Players Association, recognizes that "the league's most valuable asset is our players."

Through this talent pool, Vincent's group is actively involved in protecting the iconic NFL brand, which translates in business terms into a combination of asset management, risk management, human capital development, employee relations and long-term pipeline sustainability planning, as well as fan interaction and community relations.

Vincent has built NFLPE with the aim of identifying and refining its mission, creating new programs and, ultimately, formalizing standards and certifications.

The mission is to maximize players' potential by facilitating education and life-skills training to prepare them for success before, during and after their playing career.

This comprises, for instance, the NFLPE Ambassadors program, a pioneering P-to-P curriculum where former players prepare high school and college athletes, partake in community-relations efforts such as Play 60 (a campaign that encourages kids to be active for at least 60 minutes per day) and reach out to current and former players in the core areas of academic excellence, leadership development, social responsibility, health, safety and wellness.

Most notably, NFLPE Ambassadors work across all NFLPE platforms: PREP (pre-NFL), LIFE (active NFL players) and NEXT (former NFL players).

To become an Ambassador, the player completes a training program that can ultimately lead to being certified as a Transition Coach who can assist athletes in the life-changing exit from the field.

"We are making this methodology of maximizing player potential during their athletic life cycle a fundamental best business practice, while also keeping them involved in the NFL family," says Vincent, who himself participated in an NFLPE program every off-season when he played.

This kind of commitment is communicated to each NFLPE team director, such as Rob Davis of the Green Bay Packers, who promotes the programs as a way to "help players keep one foot in the real world."

Since best practices are always top-of-mind, the NFLPE also is leveraging

its strategic partnerships. With Wharton Business School, it has developed an Athlete Engagement Certification program to provide an industry standard for player engagement and development in professional and collegiate athletics.

"No one else in the sports industry has our model, and we assist other leagues and industries through athletic development, by using technology and bridging age gaps," says Vincent.

To appreciate NFLPE today, it is important to understand its roots. In 1991, John Wooten, who played in the NFL in the 1950s and '60s, proposed a program to cover topics such as completing college, family assistance and financial planning.

Watching that idea blossom into today's trailblazing unit, Wooten says, "I am thrilled

with what Troy has done in taking our concept and continually adding on to it. I have had a special relationship with Troy since he was a player, and knew he would do the right thing with this program."

Another former player who later worked for the NFL, Ed Reynolds, has also watched NFLPE grow: "Where the program has come is amazing, and all of the components are headed on the right trajectory—but it is still peer-to-peer and about helping and protecting the player," says Reynolds.

Vincent is fully engaged in articulating the philosophy he inherited from the likes of Wooten and Reynolds. "Once a player, always a player, and our goal is to leave no man behind in creating this new standard in the athletic development industry," says Vincent. — *John Ingoldsby*

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