



**OBTC 2015 at University of La Verne  
June 17<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup>, 2015**

**Submission Template**

**SUBMISSION GUIDANCE**

- \* Remove all identifying properties from this document \**
- \* All files must be saved in PDF format \**
- \*Please include ALL supplementary text at the end of this document\**
- \*Only one document should be submitted\**

**Submission Template for the  
2015 OBTC Teaching Conference for Management Educators**

**1) Title of Proposal:**

Snake: Enable others to Act

**2) Abstract:**

An activity that can be done to explain Kouzes and Posner's *The Leadership Challenge's* Enabling Others to Act would be the snake activity designed by students to illustrate exemplary leadership practices. This activity allows all participants the opportunity to become leaders in their group and generate innovative solutions. Following the activity, group discussion about the barriers that occur when enabling others to act and how to overcome those barriers will occur. This exercise allows all participants the opportunity to become leaders in their group, generate innovative solutions, exchange ideas and provide the opportunity to learn.

### 3) Keywords:

Leadership, Followership, Trust

### 4) Format

- Activity or exercise  
 Discussion roundtable (60 minute only)  
 General discussion session

### 5) Time Requested:

- 30 Minutes  
 60 Minutes (*Roundtables must select 60 minutes*)  
 90 Minutes

### 6) Planning Details:

Open area for participants to move and walk around

Board or easel pads to write discussion ideas down

### 7) Learning Objectives or Goals for the Session:

In order for leaders to enable others to act they must:

- Foster collaboration by building trust and facilitating relationships
- Strengthen others by increasing self-determination and developing competence
- Realize that leadership does not always have to come from the top or from the front of the group; leaders can lead from any level
- Leaders do not have to know the whole picture to lead

### 8) Management or Teaching Topics:

The workshop approach to learning about leadership is innovative and based on two theoretical underpinnings: leadership skills can be developed, and giving away control of the learning process builds trust among learners.

“Snake: Enable others to Act” is a leadership training activity designed by University of Central Missouri management students enrolled in Management 4320 - Leading in Teams and Organizations. It is an adapted learning activity integrating Kouzes and Posner’s idea of “Enabling Others to Act.”

Activity Purpose: To promote joint effort, foster collaboration, develop interdependence, and create a climate of trust.

There are two aspects to the activity that make “Snake: Enable others to Act” pedagogically sound: 1) there are many layers to the set-up of the activity which lead to discussion questions about the activity itself (*activity debrief*), and 2) learners will do and say many things that connect the activity to the work world (*content debrief*).

The workshop approach to learning about leadership is innovative and based on two theoretical underpinnings: leadership skills can be developed, and giving away control of the learning process builds trust among learners.

“Leadership is influencing people -- by providing purpose, direction, and motivation -- while operating to accomplish the mission and improving the organization.” - US Army Field Manual

The US Army more explicitly defines 'influence' as a: “means of getting people to do what you want them to do. It is the means or method to achieve two ends: operating and improving. But there’s more to influencing than simply passing along orders. The example you set is just as important as the words you speak. And you set an example -- good or bad -- with every action you take and word you utter, on or off duty. Through your words and example, you must communicate purpose, direction, and motivation.”

In short, leaders must be ready, willing, and able to model the way for their constituents (Kouzes & Posner, 2007). Herein lies a great quandary for the teacher, how do we model the way to aid in learning about leadership principles and skills?

But wait, is our job as teachers to lead? Can and should we, as teachers, be seen by our students as “leaders” (Wilmore, 2007)? If we are to be seen as leaders, which the current educational climate seems to indicate, then are we not being hypocritical by teaching leadership without modeling the behaviors of an exemplary leader (Poplin, 1992)? If we are to model the behaviors of leadership, we must fundamentally reexamine our role inside and outside the classroom (Olson, 2007; Wilmore, 2007). Are educators transformational leaders? If we are, and knowing that transformational leaders must build genuine trust between themselves and followers (Burns, 1978; Bass & Steidlmeier, 1998), how do we build this genuine trust? How do we exemplify Bass’s (1997) transformational leadership components: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individual consideration?

We must learn to trust in our students as engaged learners, to show our emotions and be ready to be involved in the emotions of our learners (Beatty & Brew, 2004). We must build “a space for fun, interaction creating a space for fun, interaction, and trust. Teachers and students together (will need to) build a learning environment that promotes engagement, deep learning, and meaning (Robinson & Kakela, 2006, p. 202).” In short, we must create a learning space that *enables* students to *act* and lead, or at least to practice the skills of leadership. Such a learning environment would need to emphasize the process of learning, and not the product or outcome (Robinson & Kakela, 2006). We would need to personalize learning and contribute to developing the whole person. In essence, we would need to completely reexamine our approach to the

teaching-learning cycle.

“Something in the educational process ... conditions students not to ask questions, not to voice ideas different from the teacher's, not to risk making a mistake in public. Most of the students who come into my classes would rather remain confused than admit that confusion in front of their classmates. They feel this way, I think, because our educational system teaches them to feel this way. Too often what students learn, even about the study of literature, is that there is one correct reading for every text-the teacher's-and that any reading which departs from this one is faulty and misguided.” - J. Dennis Huston, Rice University

This OBTC workshop examines building trust in the classroom, the kind of trust where learners will take a chance on their own learning. We will discuss building a climate where making mistakes is not only allowed, but encouraged. This *enabling people to act* focus is innovative because it asks workshop participants to reexamine their personal approach to leadership education.

## 9) Session Description and Plan:

At OBTC, we plan to run “Snake: Enable others to Act” in about 60 minutes, leaving approximately 10 to 15 minutes to discuss the University of Central Missouri’s workshop format for learning about leadership.

### Instructions:

- Separate the group in half. Put the two teams in a line. blindfold everyone but the person in the back of the line. Have everyone put their hands on each others shoulders.
- Place 2 objects away from the starting spot, several yards away (make it to where they have to turn) One team gets one item the other team gets the other.
- Inform everyone that the person in the back has to lead the person in the front to an object that is on the ground and the person in the front must pick it up and bring it back to the starting point.
- THE PERSON IN THE BACK CANNOT USE VERBAL COMMUNICATION

Followed by a discussion of how this relates to enabling others to act and relate to current problems participants may be facing or how past problems were overcome.

This activity takes around 15-20 minutes, depending on how quickly the teams complete the activity.

After the activity a discussion will be lead reviewing the learning outcomes and how these relate to the workplace.

### *Activity Debrief/Discussion Questions (10 minutes):*

1. How does this activity display a leader's ability to strengthen others? (Trusting other members to lead the team keeping them on track)
2. If the guide could have communicated verbally and shared information how would that affect your actions/feeling? More confident in your own actions? Makes people feel more powerful? Allowed for more collaboration?
3. In your life has anyone shared information with you or were you included on a decision that you weren't usually involved in? How does this encourage others to act? Allows ownership, collaboration, more buy in?
4. How else do you strengthen others? Give feedback (communication) leaders have to coach their team to keep motivation and energy flowing

- a. Is there a time you received or gave feedback? What was the result?

*Materials:* blind folds for all members, 2 buckets (depending on # of group), 2-4 objects, spacious room

*Instructions:*

Go to an area with plenty of space, Place buckets in a central location (next to everyone).

Separate group into 2-3 teams, line each team in a straight line with the leader at the very end of the line, give every member blindfolds to put on, each team will have someone without a blind fold (they are the leader of the team),

Once members are blind folded place objects around the space (several yards away from the teams)

Inform the leaders they cannot use verbal communication, but must guide their team to an object, the person in the front of the line must pick it up and place it in the bucket (and then retrieve the next one). Allow the leader one minute to inform their team of anything they see necessary, afterwards they must get at the end of the line and begin.

You may tell them no one can talk or just the leader.

The team to get both of their objects in the bucket first wins

*Discussion:*

In order to encourage others to act, there is a good amount of trust involved. Sometimes when given a project or task by our leader we feel unsure we will be able to complete it to their expectation. If leaders didn't trust their constituents they wouldn't be able to complete projects and make decisions on their own.

Also leaders do not always need to be at the front leading; they may be behind the scenes and keeping everyone on track, but trusting others to lead the team to victory.

Clear communication gives others the confidence to lead a group, without it they may feel wary and unsure of their abilities.

*Questions:*

Did anyone have concerns during the activity: confusion, lack of guidance, sense of being lost? Why? What would have helped rid of those concerns? How does this relate to real life activities? Has anyone felt more confused after instructions were given? How does that affect performance?

How would this work if you didn't trust the leader at the back of the line? Would you want to move if you thought they would run you into objects?

How would this relate to a real life situation? How would it affect your actions if you didn't trust your leader (guiding you in the wrong direction)?

What qualities make a person trustworthy?

Do you think trust is something that once broken, can't be regained?

How do you gain trust once it's broken?

Leaders aren't always in the front?

Leaders believe in others even if others aren't always sure of themselves (blindfolded)?

What if you didn't trust someone in the chain? Would you follow them if you thought they'd run you into something?

*Content Debrief (5-10 Minutes)*

At the University of Central Missouri, when we debrief our leadership activities, it is the task of the facilitation team (students) to connect the activity to the work world. We have found that asking facilitators to write down "quotable quotes" in a publically viewable space makes for a fairly disciplined approach to connecting the activity to the content of "The Leadership Challenge" and, in turn, to the work world. For example, in "Journey to the Center of the Earth" our facilitators were focusing on Enabling Others to Act.

## **10) For Activities and Exercises:**

Blindfolds for participants

Objects for teams to retrieve

Board or easel pads to write discussion ideas down

## **11) Implications for Teaching or for Teachers:**

“Snake: Enable others to Act” is an original learning activity based on Kouzes and Posner’s idea of Enabling Others to Act. James Kouzes and Barry Posner have been involved in leadership research for over 30 years resulting in a set of leadership practices centered on “what leaders do and what constituents expect (2007, pg vii).” Enabling Others to Act is one of the Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership that Kouzes and Posner have identified as being key behaviors (actions) of every-day leaders in today’s work world. To enable others to act, leaders must make two commitments: Foster Collaboration and Strengthen Others. The content covered by “Snake: Enable others to Act” includes, but is not limited to:

- Foster collaboration by building trust and facilitating relationships
- Strengthen others by increasing self-determination and developing competence
- Realize that leadership does not always have to come from the top or from the front of the group; leaders can lead from any level
- Leaders do not have to know the whole picture to lead

At the University of Central Missouri, it is the task of the facilitation team (students) to design and deliver training activities that connect the content of “The Leadership Challenge” to the work world. Over the past 12 years of coaching this workshop format, we have found that when students design their own activities the resultant debrief and conversation is much richer than when students find “ready-made” activities. We have also found that these self-designed activities need to very clearly state the content that will be covered in the workshop or students will struggle; for example, the content list was generated by students prior to their Fall 2014 workshop.

At the core of the workshop approach to leadership is a belief that learners will internalize material most deeply if they can experience the content in some “live” setting. We are proponents of experiential learning which, to us, means applying material to a work world setting in as timely manner as possible. For example, “Snake: Enable others to Act” was designed in September, 2014. It was delivered as an in-class experience in mid-September by the design team at which time the team learned what they did and did not understand about the content material. The activity then served as the basis for a leadership training workshop put on for a local client in mid-October by a separate delivery team.

A key element to our workshop process is that both participants and facilitators are learning about leadership. Participants respond to a set of stimuli that the facilitators designed to foster discussion around a specific leadership topic while facilitators are still very much learning about the content as they prepare the workshops. The workshop format we have adapted as our pedagogy to leadership development is very much an example of Joseph Joubert’s idea that “to teach is to learn twice.” We find that very few teams will embarrass themselves by putting on a “poor” workshop, rather many teams feel that they owe it to their classmates to create a truly memorable, hands-on (minds-on) learning experience. Research has shown that good leaders are good teachers, so the workshop format was developed as a practice ground for students to learn about

teaching (and coaching). As a result, all of our workshops have two sets of learning objectives: objectives for the participants and objectives for the facilitators.

Success of every organization is a shared responsibility. You need a competent and confident team; same with leader. Take action, trust, communicate, give feedback, develop confidence in your group.

As a result of attending this session, participants will:

- Foster collaboration by building trust and facilitating relationships
- Strengthen others by increasing self-determination and developing competence
- Realize that leadership does not always have to come from the top or from the front of the group; leaders can lead from any level
- Leaders know they can't do it alone
- Leaders do not have to know the whole picture to lead

As a result of preparing and leading this activity, facilitators will:

- Observe different ways of communicating and evaluate which communication techniques worked and which did not.
- Determine who the true leaders of each group are and compare differences between groups.
- Lead a discussion about leadership by determining the reactions from group members, writing down these reactions and discussing them through a debrief.
- Demonstrate the connections between Enabling Others to Act, Fostering Collaboration, and Strengthening Others.

## **12) Application to Conference theme:**

As leaders, we have an opportunity to learn *within* our own *classroom community* and to work *with* our *local community* to strengthen their operational management. When setting up "Snake: Enable others to Act" facilitators purposefully help local companies understand that everyone plays a role in leadership and everyone within that operation can support *Learning in Community* in the role of a leader. The early debrief questions of this leadership training activity center around a variety of potential differences found in the workplace community.

## **13) Unique Contribution to OBTC:**

This session has not been presented to OBTC before BUT on four previous occasions we have presented specific activities that are related to the Leadership classes at the University of Central Missouri.

## **14) References and/or Additional Materials:**

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