



## **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:

Customized instruction and support for student network creation and the exploration of professional identity using the LinkedIn professional social network

## 2) Abstract:

*Please include a brief session description (not to exceed 100 words). If your proposal is accepted, this description will be printed in the conference program.*

Successful networking is accepted as a critical activity for business students but enormously challenging even for advanced students paralyzed by the experience. Exponential growth in online social networks has added complexity to networking but has simultaneously magnified opportunity. This workshop provides instructors with hands-on, customizable networking and professional identity-building activities that take greater advantage of the 300+ million LinkedIn professional network, shifting emphasis to better understanding professional self and community foundations rather than simple LinkedIn tool use. A short presenter introduction transitions rapidly into customized network/identity activities that participants can use to meet their students' professional needs.

## 3) Keywords:

*professional networking, professional identity management, LinkedIn professional social network (PSN) use*

## 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 *NOTE: This time is desired but not absolutely necessary.*

## 6) Planning Details:

*Does your session have any special requirements for space or materials?*

*If a computer lab is available, this would provide users with valuable (but not essential) access to the LinkedIn PSN.*

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

*What are 2-4 specific learning outcomes that participants will get from your session?*

Activity workshop participants will:

1. Recognize the different teaching strategies for student introduction and use of the LinkedIn PSN.
2. Explore how student knowledge of professional networking and professional identity management eliminates critical barriers to PSN use.
3. Identify a range of activities that help students to establish and better manage their professional networks and professional identity.
4. Apply professional network and identity management approaches and customize those approaches to their particular students' needs.

## **8) Management or Teaching Topics:**

*Describe what management and/or teaching topics are relevant to your session, and why? Please include theoretical, disciplinary, or theoretical foundations that will help reviewers understand how your ideas fit within the broader field of management.*

The authors use the LinkedIn professional social network's tools as a platform to discuss and actively use course concepts, theories, and frameworks in a way that will, at the same time, connect students to related discussions occurring in their fields of interest. Through experience, the authors have found that the LinkedIn PSN provides numerous, rich opportunities for active learning by connecting students with open and closed professional interest groups, discussions, articles, and forums created by the network's users. Students can also tailor their experience by creating their own professional profile, following certain companies, organizations, or other thought leaders which define student professional identity; improves their awareness, self-perception, description, and presentation (Ibarra, 1999; Roberts, 2005; Roberts, Dutton, Spreitzer, Heaphy, & Quinn, 2005).

### **Professional importance**

Networking is a highly powerful activity because it brings students into greater contact with their professional peers and involves them in their industry's most contemporary discussions. Through networking, students gain greater practical competence with the hope of increasing their chances for gainful and sustainable employment (Reid, Dahlgren, Petocz, and Dahlgren, 2008; Smeby, 2007). Despite its importance, advancing student networking competence has been difficult not just because networking itself is so complex, but because institutional support can be limited and unfocused. Various sponsors - campus career centers, student clubs, and professional organizations – may host events and the occasional workshop. In reality, the communication, relationship-building and personal development skills that support networking probably demand the type of attention currently provided by speech and writing courses that are institutional standards at this point. So we warn students that they should spend time networking if they want to be successful in their careers but we typically do not provide institutional support consistent with that message. We also express worry that our students graduate and head into their job interviews unable to articulate past experiences, provide clear arguments as to their professional value, or speak with confidence that demonstrates competency in their fields. Online professional networks, like LinkedIn, have not simplified matters. But they have, along with their challenges, provided new opportunities.

*In reality, instructors can easily design interactions with a professional social network – especially one as vast as LinkedIn with its 300+ million members – that require students to understand and*

*apply course concepts in a way that is professionally grounded as well as more greatly relevant to students as young professionals.*

### **Professional networking focus**

In-person networking often focuses on physical detail like greeting others with a firm handshake, looking others in the eye, listening carefully, remembering others' names, using proper posture, and holding oneself in a manner that conveys confidence. We overlook what we assume "should" be there already – professional knowledge and competence. According to networking experts (Misner & Donovan, 2008; Misner, Alexander, & Hillard 2009; deJanasz & Forret, 2008) most networking involves network vocabulary, profession types and their duties, and membership needs/wants. Gerard (2012) recommends that instructors help students to recognize, appreciate, and managing eight professional networking factors which include identity management, discussed below, and reciprocity.

Networking activity can be used to support discipline-specific discussions that help students to better articulate concepts in a way that resonates with the professions we expect them to enter. If we use professional networking correctly, we may be able to better align what we do in the classroom with the realities of the discipline as it is practiced while at the same time advance student career goals (de Janasz & Forret, 2008; Kryder, 2011; Osborn & LoFrisco, 2012) within a relevant context.

*For an instructor, introducing students to reciprocity management or "give and take" within the network is as simple as asking students to identify challenges within their professional environment, begin discussing these, and consider solutions to those challenges. In marketing, this may involve dealing with a lack of control or structure when using social media tools such as Twitter. In human resources, current discussions involving Title IX, gender equality, and compliance raise important challenges and are part of many professional discussions. In LinkedIn, there are 30,725 open marketing groups and 1,936 open human resources groups that students can join to expand their networks. There are 1,436 open groups dedicated to Twitter and four open groups dedicated to Title IX. An instructor can help a student engage in professional discussions by having them explore their interests, connect with relevant groups, find discussions within those groups, and become more active and increasingly valuable member of their profession. Instructors often bring up relevant and contemporary cases, such as this, to guide learning and create meaningful experiences for students. In this instance, the instructor can involve students directly in exploring their professional interests while dealing rigorously with concepts covered in their course. Authors deJanasz and Forret (2008, Gerard (2012, 2013), and Kryder (2011) all provide support for the use of professional social networking in creating discipline-specific and personally meaningful student learning.*

### **Professional identity management**

Because they lack depth and breadth in their experiences, one of the most difficult things for students to develop is a professional identity because that identity is crafted by immersion in the vocabulary, topics, critical thinking, and culture of their target profession. If an instructor is conscientious in guiding students through a more active engagement with their professions – as can be done with class discussion, activities, and other exercises common to course work – they automatically enhance student awareness, self-perception, description, and presentation (Dutton et al., 1994; Ibarra, 1999; Snow, Duval, & Silvia, 2004; Roberts, 2005; Roberts, Dutton, Spreitzer, Heaphy, & Quinn, 2005).

*Instructors can reinforce the creation, maintenance, and ongoing exploration of professional self (Archer, 2008; Nixon, 1996; Reid, Dahlgren, Petocz, & Dahlgren, 2008) by providing ongoing feedback on the use of concepts, theories, and frameworks and their relationship to individual students' sense of professional self. They can discuss how various exchanges within the PSN played out, how interaction did or did not conform to parallel coursework, and how their exploration of the network informed topics of interest to the course. Not only does this help students answer the "Who am I?" and "What do I do?" questions, as they become more integrated members of their professional network, they cease thinking of themselves as intruders hoping to break in to a profession but as current members of that professional community. They build the vocabulary, the confidence, and the legitimacy that comes from actual membership of the networks they spend time in.*

## **9) Session Description and Plan:**

*What will you actually do in this session? What activities will you facilitate, how long will they take, and how will participants be involved? Reviewers will be evaluating how well the time request matches the activities you'd like to do, and the extent you can reasonably accomplish the session's goals. Reviewers will also be looking for how you are engaging the participants in the session. Include a timeline for your session.*

[NOTE: This is the new, more detailed outline; a copy from my response to reviewers.](#)

05 minutes – Introduction

- Presenter's experiences w/ student networking
- Brief intro to LinkedIn online professional social networking
- Segue with students' extremely underdeveloped professional identity.
- Activity workshop outline.

25 minutes – Identity management exercises.

- Elevator pitch exercise (10 min)
- Johari Window (10 min)
- Reflective discussion; record w/ flip chart (5 min)

20 minutes – Network management exercise (1).

10 minutes – Session Wrap-up

- Summary observations.
- Identity and networking resources.
- Question and answer and small group networking wrap-up.

[NOTE: This is the original outline.](#)

05 minutes – presenter's experiences with student networking on LinkedIn will be touched on briefly, with emphasis on networking and professional identity challenges.

15 minutes – network management exercises w/ reflection.

15 minutes – identity management exercises w/ reflection.

10 minutes – identification of personal challenges associated with participants' students and discipline.

10 minutes – breakout group brainstorming session to address various challenges.

05 minutes – question/answer and small group networking wrap-up.

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

*Attach any materials needed to run the activity and debriefing questions. Evidence for effectiveness may also be included.*

NOTE: This write-up includes details for both a 60 minute and 90 minute session. The 90 minute session with computer lab is preferred and recommended by at least one reviewer.

No special materials are needed to run this series of activities as they currently stand. However, if the reviewers and session chairs felt it worthwhile to make this more directly hands-on using the LinkedIn PSN, then we could provide this if: 1) you can secure access to a computer lab and 2) you can extend the session to 90 min instead of 60.

We have used LinkedIn since 2007 and our use has evolved over time. We use a mix of activities, some which use LinkedIn directly and many which do not. So we do have a range of materials that can support either format.

#### NOTE

Handouts at the end of this submission include:

A plan for the Who Are You exercises (p.8)

A copy of the Professional Identity worksheet (p.9).

A copy of the Identity Categories worksheet (p.10).

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

*What is the contribution of your session?*

Following this session, instructors should feel more confident in their ability to use an increasingly essential professional social networking tool to simultaneously meet course and program learning objectives while also helping them meet one of the main goals of higher education – to help students prepare for and attain meaningful employment. Instructors should also get a sense that they can use this tool in a way that improves the effectiveness of instruction while reducing time spent in assignment design and management.

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

*How does your session fit with the overall OBTC theme of Learning in Community?*

This session is strongly and directly related to the theme in that it uses the largest social network platforms which is expressly designed connect interested professionals to local/global and interest/passion-based communities. The session's activities further support the OBTC theme by focusing on how instructors may leverage these professional communities (using the LinkedIn platform) to enhance learning, make course and program topics more relevant to students, and connect the course, student learning, and the students themselves to a vast and contemporary professional world.

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

*Have you presented the work in this proposal before? If so, how will it be different? Is this proposal under current review somewhere else? If so, please explain. How will your proposal be different for the OBTC conference?*

This has not been presented before.

## 14) References and/or Additional Materials:

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- Smeby, J.-C. (2007). Connecting to professional knowledge. *Studies in Higher Education*, 32(2), 207-224.

## Exercise #1, Who Are You? Professional Identity Session

**Summary** Creating and communicating professional identity is not just difficult for our students. This exercise helps illustrate how difficult it can be for anybody to communicate who they are, professionally, to another.

**Objectives** Recognize the difficulties of identifying professional self. Identify at least one characteristic for at least three categories of self-identity.

**Materials** Worksheet 1: Identity-share; Worksheet 2: Identity categories; Pens, Timer

### Sequence of Exercise

Timing	Learning Event	Instructions	Participants	Materials
1 min	<b>Engagement Question</b> Introduction followed by audience experience.	How many times have you rewritten your resume of LinkedIn profile to try to better explain your professional identity over the past few years?	Facilitator calls on two or three participants.	none
3 min	<b>Activity</b> Share identities	Work in pairs. Describe your professional self in one minute while your partner takes notes. Switch roles. Hand your notes over when finished.	Work in pairs	Worksheet #1 Pens
5 min	<b>Guided Discussion</b> How identities are crafted. What they are based on. Why we find them important. Ibarra (1999).	Self definitions often include: Personal characteristics, occupational roles, personal roles, values, group membership, and demographics (Obodaru, 2012).  What main word types did you tend to use in describing your professional self?	Group	White board, flip chart, or projector
2 min	<b>Activity</b> Reflection and summary.	Use categories. Arrange descriptions. Identify others during discussion.	Individual	Worksheet 2 Worksheet 2
10 min	<b>TOTAL TIME</b>			



## Exercise #1, Who Are You? Worksheet #1

### Professional Identity

#### Summary

In this activity, you work with one other person. Without prior preparation, take one minute to describe your professional self while your partner writes your description in the space provided below. Your partner will hand this back to you at the end of your short narrative. You and your partner will then switch roles and repeat the activity. At the end, we will discuss as a group.

Description of Your Professional Self
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Your partner writes short notes, keywords, or important parts of your description in the box below.
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## Exercise #1, Who Are You? Worksheet #2

### Identity Categories

#### Summary

Professional selves are categorized in a number of ways. This worksheet focuses on a few used by Obodaru (2012) in identity research. By categorizing, we better understand where we pull from when engaging in professional self-definition. While no listed below, these can also come from tasks, interests, and other characteristics as well.

#### Instructions:

1. Use notes from the previous exercise and consider how these might fit some of the categories listed below.
2. Check at least three of the categories that seem most relevant to identifying your professional identity and represent you most clearly.
3. Write three of the checked categories in the chart below and then write at least one example-the notes from the previous are a good starting place.

Personal characteristics  
 Values  
 Other

Occupational roles  
 Group membership

Personal roles  
 Demographics

<b>Categories</b>	
What main word types did you tend to use in describing your professional self?	
<b>Personal characteristics</b>	
<b>Occupational roles</b>	
<b>Personal roles</b>	
<b>Values</b>	
<b>Group membership</b>	
<b>Demographics</b>	

These can be used with your students. You may find the need to alter some categories to better fit your target population.