OBTC 2016 at Walsh University
June 8th – 11th, 2016

Submission Template

SUBMISSION GUIDANCE

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Only one document should be submitted

1) Title, Abstract & Keywords

SURE: A Four-Step Pedagogy for Transforming Relationships

This session explores how we can better equip our students to understand and respond effectively to relationship difficulties in organizations. It uses a short case example of a manager's first meeting with a new boss ("The New Boss" in Appendix) to develop a four-step model built around the acronym SURE.   After developing and illustrating the model through the case discussion, the presenters will facilitate a discussion of the model's content, the case discussion experience, and the model's usefulness and teaching implications. The session also offers opportunity for participants and presenters to explore their own teaching experiences and methods for teaching about people issues at work. Participant takeaways include the SURE model, exposure to a method for using case discussion as a vehicle for presenting and applying conceptual material, and new ideas for teaching about people issues.

2) Format
 _xx_ Activity or exercise
 __ Roundtable discussion (60 minute only)
 _xx_ General discussion session

2a) For activities and exercises only, is yours best suited for
 _xx_ A traditional classroom
 __ An online class
 __ Either

2b) For activities and exercises only, is yours best suited for
 __ Undergraduate students
 __ Graduate students
 _xx_ Either

3) Time Requested:
 __ 30 Minutes
 __ 60 Minutes (*Roundtables must select 60 minutes*)
 _xx_ 90 Minutes

4) Planning Details:
Each room contains a white board with markers, computer (PC) with DVD capability and computer projector. Does your session require any other equipment?

No other equipment needed.

5) Teaching Implications:

What is the contribution of your session to management pedagogy/andragogy? Specifically, please include your learning objectives, and describe what management and/or teaching topics are relevant to your session, and why. Also, include theoretical, disciplinary, or theoretical foundations that will help reviewers understand how your ideas fit within the broader field of management.

Troubled relationships, people problems and problem people are a ubiquitous challenge of social life – in relationships, families, groups, and organizations of every kind. Failed relationships produce angst and wasted effort; they often leave us feeling frustrated and helpless, wishing we knew better ways to respond to a chronic source of workplace distress. At work, it could be a problem employee, a bully boss, or a chronically complaining coworker. Beyond work, it might be a mean-spirited neighbor or a troublesome relative. We, our students, and our clients all have stories to tell. The central question for this session is how we can help students (and ourselves) better understand and respond to such issues? How can we help them increase the odds of making relationships less frustrating and more functional? How can they learn to engage difficult people rather than withdrawing in resignation?

An impetus for developing our model was reader feedback to an earlier book in which we had included a chapter on managing difficult people. Many readers told us that chapter was one of their favorites.   As we explored the literature on the topic, we found that many of the how-to books asked readers to become amateur psychologists by diagnosing which syndrome or psychopathology they were encountering in a boss or co-worker. Is s/he a paranoid or an obsessive-compulsive?   A narcissist or a histrionic?   An exploder or a staller? A sniper or a know-it-all? We see several problems with this way of framing the issue. One is leading readers to make superficial judgments about troublesome people, labeling others rather than doing real diagnostic work. Second, this approach typically leads to a diagnosis that cannot be shared or publicly tested. If you believe that someone is, say, a paranoid, you will likely keep that diagnosis to yourself, so it becomes undiscussable. This leads to to what Argyris and Schön (1974) call Model I private testing.   Moreover, this way of framing the issue reinforces the comfortable assumption that problems lie in something that is wrong with the other person. That makes it easy to feel, "I'm OK and don't need to change; I just need to find a way to shape up the other."

Following Harry Stack Sullivan's argument that personality and psychopathology manifest themselves only in interpersonal relationships, we believe it is more fruitful to see people problems as embedded in relationships. That increases options by broadening the problem from unilateral-change-the-other-person to bilateral-change-the-relationship. Our approach focuses on a few basic interpersonal processes that are designed to produce learning and improvement across a broad range of dysfunctional relationships.

If you search on the internet (or Amazon) for "bad bosses," "managing difficult people," or " people problems at work," you will encounter an almost endless list of books, articles, and blogs (examples are listed in the references section). It takes only a few minutes to verify this is a topic that has garnered an enormous amount of attention. Much of the work consists of opinions, advice, and descriptions of personal experiences. Empirical research is harder to find, though there has been some scholarly attention to the issue of bad bosses (e.g., Kellerman, 2004; Kets de Vries, 2003; Lipman-Blumen, 2006) and difficult relationships (e.g., Kahn, 2015) .

Even though the problems are ubiquitous, these relationship challenges often receive little attention in management education. Our session will offer both a conceptual model and a teaching method for approaching these issues in the management classroom.

6) Session Description and Plan:

What will you actually do in this session? If appropriate, please include a timeline estimating the activities will you facilitate: how long will they take, and how will participants be involved? Please remember that 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.

I.   Introduction and case discussion (60 minutes)

We will introduce the general topic and how we came to develop the SURE model as an organizing concept for a book due to appear in Spring, 2016. We'll develop the four steps in the SURE model:

1. Stop, look – and learn.
2. Unhook.
3. Revise the script.
4. Engage – or exit.

We will then introduce a brief case ("The New Boss," appended below), which depicts the conversation in an initial meeting between a manager, Vicky, and her new boss, Michael. Vicky arrives knowing that Michael is reputed to be a domineering bully. Research (e.g., Twale and DeLuca, 2008) suggests that the case is illustrative of an experience likely to be familiar to many of the participants. We will walk through the case one exchange at a time, asking participants in small groups (dyads or triads) to use the SURE ideas in generating what they believe Vicky

should say at each point in the dialogue. We will lead a discussion in which the small groups can share their response and rationale, and compare notes. Then we will move on to the next exchange.

We expect that this will be an involving, and challenging discussion for all in attendance. We expect that the dialogue will surface differences in frames and interpersonal strategies among the participants, leading to lively discussion and debate.

    II.   Discussion of teaching implications (30 minutes)

In the final part of the session, we will ask participants to respond to two questions:

1. What teaching implications do you see for using the model and the case approach

2. What other approaches have you found effective in teaching similar issues.

Those questions are probably all we need to generate a lively discussion, but we can follow up with more specific prompts if necessary. The discussion will explore how participants teach about these kinds of issues and ways that the model supports or complements their current strategies and frameworks.

7) Application to Conference theme:
How does your session fit with the overall OBTC theme of *United in Service*?

Fractured and frustrating relationships make it difficult for people to unite for service or anything else. Providing individuals better ways to deal with those challenges (a) improves their ability to work together, (b) reduces costs in burnout and emotional exhaustion and (c) helps to sustain teamwork and viable partnerships.

8) 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 proposal builds from a presentation the authors did at OBTC 2012. In the intervening years, we have developed a new and tighter model and have embedded the ideas in a book to be published in Spring, 2016. The case that we plan to use is new, as is our approach to using the case.

References

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The New Boss (A)

Vicky has just been transferred to a new management job, and she is about to meet with her

new boss, Michael. The job is a promotion and it's potentially a career-enhancing opportunity.

Vicky's biggest concern is Michael's reputation as an extremely demanding and difficult boss.

Michael's side of their conversation is below. How should Vicky respond?

Michael: "So they put you in the job? Dropped right at my doorstep. Well, I *am* surprised. On

somebody's hot list?" His tone was cool, yet menacing. "We needed someone with experience.

Someone who knows something about our products."

Vicky:

M: "That operation is the weak link in my division, and I *hate* weak links. If I didn't have so much

on my plate, I'd have fixed it myself a long time ago. So get it fixed. Fast!"

V:

M: "The last two people in the job didn't work out. I can't say I'm optimistic, but you'll have to

do a hell of a lot better."

V:

M: "Oh, you'll need help all right."

V:

M: "The team you're inheriting is more like a motley crew. Bad attitudes. Big egos. Hiring mistakes. Some of 'em should have been fired long ago. Figure out how to fix that. And just make sure you make your numbers."

V: