



Teaching Conference for
Management Educators

**OBTC 2017 at Providence College
June 14th – 17th, 2017**

Submission Template

SUBMISSION GUIDANCE

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**Submission Template for the
2017 OBTC Teaching Conference for Management Educators**

Supermindfulness: Presence and Flexibility for Developing Creative and Resilient Leaders

1) Title, Abstract & Keywords

In your abstract, please include a brief session description (not to exceed 100 words), and three to four keywords. If your proposal is accepted, this description will be printed in the conference program.

Supermindfulness: Presence and Flexibility for Developing Creative and Resilient Leaders

Being an effective leader requires the capability to understand ourselves and our interrelationships with those around us in creative, deep and nuanced ways, despite the turbulence we face in all organizations today. In this dynamic, experiential session we introduce, explore and demonstrate the concepts and practices of *Supermindfulness* as a leadership development initiative. We adapt and extend traditional mindfulness techniques (that increase awareness and decrease reactivity and stress) in combination with flexibility exercises (that increase our mental and emotional agility, adaptability and perspective) to enhance our understanding of the body and mind connections for greater resilience and improved leadership effectiveness.

Key Words: Leadership, Mindfulness, Self-awareness, Adaptability, Resilience

2) 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.

Developing leaders today is a considerable, complex challenge in our “VUCA” world that is defined by volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity (Johansen, 2009). Organizations in all domains and sectors face an unprecedented pace of change and intense competition, where creativity and innovation must be cultivated simultaneously with operational excellence and high performance (Hill et al., 2014). Given this punishing, unpredictable environment, what are the capabilities needed and how can we as management educators create programs and initiatives to foster and instill more relevant, effective leadership development? These are core questions that plague business schools, corporations, institutions and training and development professionals around the world.

This session combines emerging research and effective practices in the neuroscience, mindfulness, and creative practice domains with established, successful approaches and

frameworks in the leadership development arena. We will demonstrate these practices, which we frame as “supermindfulness,” in a dynamic workshop-style format as a guided teaching demonstration. Learning goals for the session include increased understanding and clarity of the leadership meta-competencies of presence (identity, self awareness) and flexibility (adaptability, openness to change) as a foundation for successful leadership development (McCarthy, O’Connell & Hall, 2005). From this conceptual foundation, grounded in scientific and traditional leadership frameworks, we creatively explore mindfulness and flexibility as practices to enhance reflection and discovery.

Being an effective leader requires the capability to understand ourselves in relationship with those around us in more creative (Wladawsky-Berger, 2014), deep, and nuanced ways (Barsade & Gibson, 2007. Judge & Larsen, 2001), despite the increased complexity, volatility and uncertainty we face in all organizations today (Bailrom, Matzler, & Mooridian, 2007). As noted by Davidson (in Tlalka, 2016), “Our brains are constantly being shaped wittingly or unwittingly—most of the time our brains are being shaped unwittingly...and we have an opportunity to take more responsibility for the intentional shaping of our own minds.” At OBTC we will explore this through a series of interactive exercises.

Our research and approach for Supermindfulness extends from the work of Jon Kabat-Zinn and Ellen Langer. Many people have been exposed to Kabat-Zinn’s Buddhist-inspired form of mindfulness (Kabat-Zinn, 2005), but awareness of the Langerian (Pagnini & Langer, 2015; Langer, 2000) form of reappraisal-based mindfulness is as vital to resilience (Bishop, et al. 2004; Shapiro, et al, 2006) because effective mindfulness is not only characterized by “engagement in the present moment” but also by “high levels of novelty seeking, novelty producing, context sensitivity, [and] awareness of alternative perspectives.” (Littman-Ovadia, et al, 2013). In our session, we first place these two forms of mindfulness within the neuroscience, organizational behavior and leadership frameworks, and, through hands-on exercises, make these theories come alive for OBTC participants, through easy, clear, fun, and highly-approachable practices.

3) 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.

This session is fully interactive and would be attractive to faculty members of all experience levels. This model has been successfully used with undergraduate and MBA students as well as with business executives. The session is engaging, dynamic and

could be successfully run at OBTC for a small discussion-style class session of 20-30 people as well as for a larger group audience of 60+ participants.

We would provide an overview of the design and teaching approach in a classroom-style format, accompanied by experiential exercises and movement pieces that engage everyone in the audience and provide specific examples that demonstrate the power of the approach in a workshop format, followed by a debrief of lessons and recommendations. Teaching notes and presentation slides would be displayed and provided for participants' follow up and subsequent use. The session would employ a PC/LED projector with PowerPoint to introduce the topic and frameworks, display slides and short video clips to explain and demonstrate the model, approach and outcomes. But the majority of the session would be conducted in the form of a participative, fast moving workshop.

A general flow of the session would be as follows:

- Leadership and Neuroscience Frameworks for Supermindfulness: We briefly define the challenge of leadership development today and will link and explain how our mindfulness-based practices in Presence and Flexibility work to increase both agility and integrity for improved leadership effectiveness.
- Short, varied awareness practices will be demonstrated in dialogue with fast, varied flexibility practices, all of which are designed to be easily integrated and applied in every day life and can be embedded in leadership development curriculum and programming. Exercises in breathing, presence, mirroring, mindset, and physical movement will be demonstrated and led for OBTC participants.
 - We facilitate a series of do-anytime practices designed to increase awareness and decrease stress such as body scan practices, attention practices, and breathing practices, (Benson, 1974, Meland, et al, 2015, Zeiden, et al, 2010, Zinn, 2005), and also exercises that facilitate flexibility of disposition and cognition for greater agility and creativity. (Allen, et al 2015, Barsade & Knight, 2015, Cuddy, 2010, Ekman, 1989, Iacoboni, 2000, Kiverstein, Levenson 1990, Miller, 2015, Teeters, et al. 2007). We emphasize active participation and we present a menu of different practices to appeal to different learners.
- Discussion will be facilitated during and in between segments and exercises to capture learning, respond to questions, obtain feedback and explore integration to OB teaching and leadership development curriculum.
- Debrief, lessons learned, and recommendations for improvement will be distilled.

All materials will be provided; participants do not need to bring or prepare anything. A 60-minute session is proposed, in order to explain the approach, describe the model, facilitate practices, and discuss outcomes.

4) Application to Conference theme:

How does your session fit with the overall OBTC theme of *Navigating the Changing Currents*?

This session fits especially well with OBTC 2017 in that we will examine the critical success factors for leaders today who operate in the face of great complexity, specifically in concert with the OBTC 2017 Conference theme. The workshop will demonstrate proven, replicable approaches for building the necessary capabilities to perform more effectively in navigating these changes that leading and performing in our VUCA world entails.

We will provide a dynamic and fast-moving teaching demonstration in a hands-on, interactive format that will creatively integrate contemporary leadership development frameworks with mindfulness and agility building practices. Management educators from all levels would benefit from the framing, demonstration and lessons.

5) 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?

We have used this work successfully in our teaching at the undergraduate, MBA and executive levels. It is not currently under review elsewhere. The proposed session's strength is in the ways in which it creatively and uniquely blends an interactive discussion of contemporary leadership development with hands-on mindfulness practices. Mindfulness or other non-western-based techniques, despite their great popularity with the general public, will sometimes face resistance or skepticism in business schools and corporate environments by those who feel that these approaches may lack rigor, fit or relevance. This session demonstrates the value and power of integrating mindfulness techniques and lessons from emerging neuroscience research with leadership development in a fast moving, real-time and practical way. Our goal is not to long-windedly convince anyone of any practice's efficacy, but, instead, to provide accessible frameworks that explain the neuroscientific and social effects of awareness and flexibility, and to facilitate a broad menu of practices that OBTC participants can experience and take with them to enhance and improve their own pedagogy and teaching practice.

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