



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

Submission Template

SUBMISSION GUIDANCE

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Submission Template for the 2016 OBTC Teaching Conference for Management Educators

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.

Reframing Revisited: The State of the Art

Bolman & Deal's four-frame model of organizations and leadership first appeared more than 30 years ago and has since become a durable and widely-used approach to teaching topics in leadership, OB and related topics. Building on decades of experience, this session will discuss the strengths of the reframing model and the state of the art in teaching reframing, including teaching materials, designs and best practices.

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.

One of the basic questions facing every instructor is what topics to cover and how to organize a course or teaching unit into a coherent whole. In many cases, the answer is partly determined by the choice of textbook. Bolman & Deal's *Reframing Organizations* (Bolman & Deal, 2017), and *How Great Leaders Think* (Bolman & Deal, 2014) each offer a distinctive choice among many possibilities. The conceptual framework in both books emphasizes the process of reframing and a four-frame model as a way of organizing the content of courses in OB, leadership, management skills, and related areas.

The idea of reframing puts sense-making at the heart of effective practice, and emphasizes cognitive flexibility and the capacity to shift perspectives and see things from more than one angle. The four-frame model argues that organizations are simultaneously machines, families, jungles and theaters, and that leaders can be viewed as architects, servants, warriors, and magicians.

The four-frame model has proved over the years to have several pedagogical advantages:

1. Each of the frames is coherent and powerful in its own right as a way of thinking about and understanding important dimensions of organizational and social life.
2. Collectively, the frames encompass much of contemporary practice and research in management, leadership, organizational behavior, and organizational theory.
3. The four-frame model is intuitive and easy to remember; students often report years later that they still remember and use the frames on a regular basis.
4. Bolman & Deal's *Reframing Organizations* has been very popular with students, who often describe it as accessible, educational, and fun. (In the words of one OB professor: "The reason I like Reframing is that my students like it and it makes me look really smart.")

3) Session Description and Plan:

What will you actually do in this session? If appropriate, please include a timeline estimating the activities you will 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.

The presenters will be mindful throughout of the multi-level nature of the session: our *how* is as important as our *what*. We will be discussing ideas and concepts, demonstrating teaching approaches, and reflecting on our collective experience.

I. **Reframing and 4-frame model: presentation and discussion** (45")

1. Introduction (5")

We will briefly introduce the idea of reframing and the two Bolman & Deal books that are currently available to teach it.

2. Name your frame: *self-rating instrument* (15")

We will ask participants to complete a brief self-rating instrument on the frames, and then discuss it in small groups (dyads or triads). The instrument can be completed and scored quickly.

2. Reframing via video (30")

We will use four short clips of leaders in action, each tied to a specific frame, to illustrate the frames in practice (the clips range from 1 to 5 minutes in length). We'll trigger discussion with questions such as: Can you see yourself in this leader? Is this good leadership? Why, or why not? The conceptual material will be more familiar to some than others, but the discussion should be accessible and engaging for everyone.

II. Methods for Teaching Reframing (35")

Our goal is to develop an inventory of teaching approaches that are particularly relevant to reframing. We will bring our own list, and solicit ideas from members of the audience. We'll first collect ideas, then take a few minutes each to discuss as many of the ideas as we can squeeze into the available time. Our own list will include: reflective personal cases, reframing local context (for example, the business school, the course, the role of the instructor), and organization study projects.

III. Reflection on the Session (10")

We will invite discussion of the session's teaching approach, using questions like: What was your experience of this session? How could we have made this session more useful for you?

4) Application to Conference theme:

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

The old French phrase, "Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose" reminds us of the paradoxical nature of change. In the 21st century, everything seems to be changing at a prodigious rate. Yet when we look at many of the things that trouble us most about management and human affairs, it often seems that nothing we try makes much difference, and there is nothing new under the sun. We have known for many decades, for example, that there are better and worse ways to manage people, yet much of the business world fails to put what we know to good use. The four-frame model has proved durable and adaptable since it was originally developed almost 40 years ago. At the time, frames and framing were not a major element of the organization studies conversation, but have since become much more prominent and central. Reframing is critical to navigating change for several reasons. One is that it is a way to enhance creativity and see new possibilities – the essence of reframing is changing how you think. In addition, reframing and the four-frame model are a powerful tool for making sense of turbulent, fast-changing circumstances; it is hard to know how to change something, or what changes are worth making if you don't really understand what you're up against. Third, each of the frames offers a

distinctive perspective on the issues, challenges and strategies involved in change efforts. Fourth, the framework has been a stimulus to pedagogical innovation, because of its emphasis on integrating sense-making and action, ideas and experience, micro and macro.

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?

The reframing model first appeared in published form in 1984; it is widely-known and many OBTC participants have used it in their teaching. Bolman did a presentation on the model and its pedagogical implications in the 1984 OBTC at Boise State (“An OT/OB, Micro/Macro, Conceptual/ Experiential Approach to Practically Everything”). Marx and Bolman did a session in the 1985 conference at the University of Virginia (“Four Frames for Viewing Organizations: an Innovative Design for Teaching Management Skills”), which was lively and well-attended. That session opened by asking participants to choose one of the four frames that they wanted to practice and to use it to approach an organizational crisis. The presenters followed with video clips to show how the frames view the world in very distinct ways.

In the 30 years since, we and others have developed or discovered a wealth of new materials (cases, video-clips, etc.) and teaching approaches. We have learned much from graduate and undergraduate students and from participants in management development programs. The proposed session would emphasize the current state of the art.

References

Bolman, L. G., and Deal, T. E. *How Great Leaders Think: The Art of Reframing*: San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2014.

Bolman, L. G., and Deal, T. E. *Reframing Organizations: Artistry, Choice and Leadership, 6th edition*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, expected summer, 2017.