



**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.

Title: Using Metaphors and analogies to plug students into currents which will light up interest and understanding of OB course concepts.

This session will help management educators recognize the value of using metaphor and analogy for understanding and clarifying the experience of awakening students to the body of information OB offers. Both metaphor and analogies inform our approach to the various currents we face; our existing knowledge of one type of current can help us carry that wisdom into new territories. This session will drive a conversation about the phenomena of metaphor and analogy as powerful teaching tools and those who participate will be better equipped to develop future students because they will have gathered more navigational tools.

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.

As educators, we work to translate a body of information to our students so that they can navigate that body of information in a way that enables them to understand where they are and how they can get to where they want to be. Well used metaphor and analogy assists in making the necessary connections between the concepts we teach and a useful understanding of those concepts for the purposes of navigation. Students need to make a leap of understanding from these conceptual words to meaning. What do these concepts really mean to the student? Much of the meaning students assign to OB concepts comes from direct accumulated experience; as management educators one of our challenges is to integrate the direct individual experience students bring to the classroom so that everyone can share in a new understanding of the OB concepts. OB courses have sometimes been described as just a bunch of vocabulary, suggesting that these concepts have not been properly translated into meaning for the students. So, if a

student has no direct experience with what is being taught, then little more than rote memorization occurs, and these rich concepts which can assist in navigating organizational life are simply lifeless.

There is neurological evidence to suggest that we understand words we encounter by simulating in our minds the experience the language describes. The process our brain uses to simulate abstract concepts is one of manipulating such concepts to ascribe physical, spatial properties to the concept. (Bergen 2012). For example, we lose our *grip* on reality, or, we might fall through the *trapdoor* of depression.

Learning is a process of making sense, but it seems that we assimilate new information only in terms of things we already understand. Consequently, we rely on comparisons. These comparisons inform our behaviors and our foundational philosophies. For example, if life is like war, then we are subject to battling our way through, so that we can win, in which case, everything can look like an assault, and we may need to keep our guns loaded. If life is like a card game, we can play our hand or we have the option of holding until the next round to see if our position improves. Both of these perspectives, informed by metaphor lead to different actions and different policies. One foundational metaphor might lead to a combative and defensive set of behaviors, the other might lead to patient and analytical behavior. A well-used metaphor can create new options.

By becoming aware of the powerful tools of metaphor and analogies, management educators can both recognize what is naturally going on in the sense-making process and be more intentional about harnessing the influence of that process toward developing and empowering students. This session will be founded in the neuroscience of learning, and it will be focused on the direct impact metaphor and analogy have on sense making in order to build insight and learning.

Bergen, B. K. (2012). *Louder than words: The new science of how the mind makes meaning*. New York, NY: Basic Books.

Pollack, J. (2014). *Shortcut: How analogies reveal connections, spark innovation, and sell our greatest ideas*. NY, NY: Gotham Books, Published by Penguin Group.

Mlodinow, L. (2012). *Subliminal: How your unconscious mind rules your behavior*. New York: Pantheon Books.

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 could be conducted in 60-90 minutes.

The session will begin with 15-20 minutes of focused instruction and interaction on how educators can think about metaphor and analogy as a means of building connections to OB material. Rich examples of metaphors for OB concepts will be provided.

The session will use 20 – 40 minutes on having participants engage in an exercise where they work with a small group of others to create metaphors/analogs that are applicable to various OB concepts.

This session will use 15-30 minutes to report out small group work and expand as a whole on the collective work of the small groups.

The session will use 5 minutes to capture and summarize the general learnings from the session.

Time can be adjusted based on what is assigned for the session.

This session will be highly interactive, but also structured so that it begins with a clear focus on how these tools are transformative. In order to set such a tone, examples will be given that have successfully been used in the past for teaching an OB course and for driving effective learning connections to OB material.

Goals for this session include awakening participants to the power of how analogies and metaphors inform sense-making and future behavior for all people. Additionally, it is the goal of the session to expand the tool kits of the participants by gathering the metaphors and analogies of other educators that have been used successfully in the past to help students in navigating changing currents.

4) Application to Conference theme:

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

This session fits the theme because developing students who can navigate changing currents requires a type of teaching that enables students to see and read the current. In order to both clarify and explain navigating a changing current, artful use of both metaphor and analogy are essential navigational tools. Whether we are talking about river currents, ocean currents or electrical current, a focus on these tools of metaphor and analogy will support the development of student sense-making.

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?

This will be a new presentation, it has not been submitted anywhere in the past. This presentation will be very much in the spirit of OB as it will be highly interactive, and engaged. Additionally, it will be focused on empowering the participants by having them recognize powerful tools that they are no doubt already using, but that they might not have been using intentionally. This presentation intends to capture existing wisdom and make sure that the session allows participants to experience a multiplier effect for their own wisdom by sharing it.