

### **Butterfly Film Festival**

The distinction between transactional and transformational leadership styles are typically reviewed in Organizational Behavior courses; however, undergraduate students may have a limited understanding of how these leadership styles may be enacted in the workplace.

The Butterfly Film Festival is an experiential learning exercise requiring students to revise a transactional leadership script through role-playing. The role play is filmed, then shared and analyzed in class. It is a structured student-led activity that develops students' critical thinking by analyzing and synthesizing key concepts about leadership while working in small groups. The activity may be used at the undergraduate or graduate level.

**Keywords:** Role play, Transformational leadership, active learning

## **Introduction**

The distinction between transactional and transformational leadership styles are typically reviewed in Organizational Behavior courses; however, undergraduate students may have a limited understanding of how these leadership styles may be enacted in the workplace. Moreover, while transformational leadership is considered a universal ideal leadership, managers often fall back on a transactional style of leadership, which may not be as effective depending on the situation. It is important then for students to be able to make a clear distinction between transformational and transactional leadership styles.

The Butterfly Film Festival is an experiential learning exercise requiring students to revise a transactional leadership script through role-playing. The role play is filmed, then shared and analyzed in class. This activity promotes active learning and engagement in a traditional learning environment. It is a structured student-led activity that develops students' critical thinking by analyzing and synthesizing key concepts about leadership while working in small groups. The activity also cultivates innovation and the use of technology. The activity may be used at the undergraduate or graduate level in leadership-centric courses that are taught face-to-face.

## **Theoretical Foundation/Teaching Implications**

This activity is grounded on the predication that leadership can be both learned and taught with the caveat that some techniques are more successful than others (Doh, 2017). As highlighted in Doh's (2017) interview of leading management scholars, experiential learning is one approach that offers traction for both students and educators. Although students may acquire some familiarity with leadership attributes and

characteristics in the traditional classroom, the actual development of leadership skills require a practical, experiential educational program. A management scholar reflected that “[w]hat it takes for the learning to happen is experiences for them to practice what they have heard” (Doh, 2017, p.63).

This activity has two aims. The first is to teach students leadership skills through an experiential activity. Svinicki and McKeachie (2014) state that experiential learning methods enhance student engagement, especially when the activity has ‘real life implications.’ Additionally, active learning is particularly effective in small groups. This approach facilitates application and retention by students. In such a setting, students are also given the opportunity to develop interpersonal and cognitive skills (Svinicki & McKeachie, 2014) that will benefit them outside the classroom.

The second aim is to help students identify the specific behaviors associated with transactional and transformational leadership. Judge and Piccolo (2004) provide a useful comparison between the two leadership styles. Transformational leadership is comprised of four dimensions: charisma or idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. The three dimensions of transactional leadership are contingent reward, management by exception—active, and management by exception—passive.

Bass (1985) argued in his theory of transformational leadership that the best leaders use both approaches. In a meta-analysis that examined trait and behavior theories of leadership, DeRue and coauthors (2011) found that transformational leadership was positively associated with four effectiveness criteria: leader effectiveness, group performance, follower job satisfaction, and satisfaction with leader. On the other hand,

transactional leadership was positively related to overall leader effectiveness when it included both initiating structure and contingent reward (DeRue, Nahrgang, Wellman, & Humphrey, 2011), which suggests that both leadership styles may be useful in the workplace.

### **Learning Objective**

1. Students will practice foundational leadership concepts (e.g., self-awareness, motivation and influence, individual and group decision making)
2. Students will be able to distinguish between transactional and transformation leadership styles.
3. Students will draw parallels between real-world experiences and course material.

### **Exercise guidelines**

Beginning with a video that demonstrates three situations (scenes), students first analyze the transactional behaviors of the leader, next they will revise the script such that the leader demonstrates the four I's of transformational leadership through words, tone and body language, and then lastly act out the revised script, creating a new video. The entire assignment may be completed in one 75 to 90 min class or broken up into two parts for 60 min or less class times. The instructions below are based on a 75 to 90 minute format.

### **Materials**

- Copies of script (see Appendix A). Last page includes a brief summary of the four I's.
- A 2-minute video of three people acting out the roles in the script. Basically, the video portrays a leader exhibiting transactional behaviors.
- Reserved break-out rooms for each group (optional)

Students work in groups of four or five. Begin by drawing on the board a large picture of a butterfly titled, Butterfly Film Festival. In each of the four sections of the wings write one of the I's of transformational leadership (e.g., Intellectual Stimulation). Instructor then describes the purpose of the exercise, hands out script, and plays the "before" video. Students are asked to identify the transactional behaviors. Next, students are asked to re-write the script in their small groups so that the rest of the class will be able to identify all four I's of Transformational Leadership in the "after" videos. Students are asked to record their short (2-3 minute) videos on their smart phones.

Students are directed to go to break-out rooms or find a quiet spot in the building to act out and record their role plays. This generally takes approximately 20 to 30 minutes. Each group will then upload their video to You Tube and email the link to the instructor. The videos are then shown in class. After each video is shown, the class is asked "How specifically did this leader demonstrate the four I's?" If it is difficult to tell, the group who filmed this video is asked, "What were you attempting to have the leader demonstrate in scene x?" Comments about tone of voice (e.g., helping) and body language (e.g., sitting next to new employee) should come up in class, but if it doesn't, ask probing questions.

After 3 or 4 (randomly chosen) videos are shared with the class, instructors have the option of taking a deeper dive into the process of revising the script and creating the short video. Examples of question prompts are below:

- What were the main take-away lessons from the activity?
- What were any new issues/questions/thoughts that were raised as a result of the activity?

- A *self-reflective* component in relation to the group work experience:
  - What leadership skills did you apply? In what ways can you apply this activity to your group classwork? Or team work in your jobs?
  - What were the challenges and/or frustrations from this experience?

The instructor is responsible for drawing parallels between the groups' discussion points and real-world experiences.

### **Session Description**

We are requesting a 60 or 90-minute format. The material can be made to accommodate either. A 90-minute session would provide enough time to complete the experiential activity, while a 60-minute session would include a higher-level look at the activity.

We will begin the workshop with introductions and a welcome to the session, followed by a brief explanation of the purpose, expectations, and agenda. Following our introduction, we will explain the activity, how the activity was used in the traditional undergraduate classroom, and the reactions of students to the activity. This will last approximately 10 minutes.

Next, workshop participants will participate in the Butterfly Project experiential learning activity. This is an interactive way for instructors to work in small groups and learn from the perspective of the student. Participants will form small groups, then they will be given a copy of the script. We will play a 2-minute video illustrating transactional leadership. Each group will work together to revise the script. This will take approximately 20 minutes.

Participants will then be invited to record their group's role play to experience the

## Activity: Butterfly Film Festival 6

potential technological challenges in recording a short video. Given time constraints, only one “I” will be re-enacted. Participants will then be invited to share their videos via YouTube and engage in a discussion with their peers on how they enacted the 4 I’s of transformational leadership. This will last approximately 20 minutes (for a 60 minute session and 30 minutes for a 90 minute session).

To conclude our workshop, the remaining allotted time will be spent debriefing and summarizing take-aways. Participants will also be asked to share their own ideas and recommendations. This allows participants to come away with an activity that can be tailored to their own classrooms (10 minutes for a 60 minute session, 30 minutes for a 90 minutes session. A sample of group videos can be shown and discussed).

<b>Time allotted</b> <b>60m/90m</b>	<b>Total time</b> <b>60m/90m</b>	<b>Section</b>	<b>Description</b>
10m/10m	10m/10m	Welcome	Agenda and Introduction to Butterfly Project
20m/20m	30m/30m	Revise script	Form small groups and revise transactional leadership script
20m/30m	50m/60m	Film short video	Film the revised script to illustrate one of the four I’s; upload to YouTube
10m/30m	60m/90m	Debrief	Summarize take-aways and suggestions

## References

- Bass, B. M. (1985). *Leadership and performance beyond expectations*. New York: Free Press.
- DeRue D. S., Nahrgang J. D., Wellman N., Humphrey S. E. (2011). Trait and behavioral theories of leadership: An integration and meta-analytic test of their relative validity. *Personnel Psychology*, 64: 7–52.
- Doh, J.P. (2003). Can Leadership Be Taught? Perspectives From Management Educators. *Academy of Management and Learning Education*, 2(1), 54–67.
- Judge, T. A., & Piccolo, R. F. (2004). Transformational and transactional leadership: a meta-analytic test of their relative validity. *Journal of applied psychology*, 89(5), 755.
- Svinicki, M. D., McKeachie, W. J. (2014). *McKeachie's Teaching Tips: Strategies, Research, and Theory for College and University Teachers*. Wadsworth, Cengage Learning: Belmont, CA.

## Appendix A

Prime Time Events is a small public relations/event planning company. It opened its doors two years ago and has planned some of Philadelphia's big events, particularly fundraising events for non-profit organizations. Prime Time Events will be planning a fundraising event for Jefferson Headache Center, one of the few such centers in the country devoted to migraine research. Jefferson sponsored a "Miles for Migraine" walk/run last year and wants to build awareness in the Philadelphia area.

**Scene 1:** *Chris (a new employee) is sitting at a desk, reading a brochure. Boss walks in.*

Boss: Chris, right?

Chris: Yes, nice to see you again.

Boss: Glad to see you are settled in and ready to get to work. We are a small company, but we do some pretty high-end events. We've got an event coming up in six days for Jefferson. The first thing I'm going to have you do is a mail merge for guest badges – get that to me by noon, ok?

Chris: Ok

Boss: Then I'll give you the vendor contacts and you can start calling them to confirm for the date of the event. Sam is handling the music. Pat is handling the catering. You'll have the rest. With only 6 days, this is tight, so you've really got to dive in, ok?

Chris: Ok.

**Scene 2:** *Pat (who is in charge of catering contracts) is working. Boss walks in.*

Boss: Pat, have you got everything nailed down with catering for the Jefferson job?

Pat: I'm glad you stopped by. Actually, I just got off the phone with the caterer – apparently, there is an occupancy limit of 375 in the room, so the caterer says that the max number of guests for us is 375. We gave them an estimate of 390, remember?

Boss: Well, there's no way anyone's going to be able to count that many people at a cocktail reception. Plus its hors d'oeuvres - Just tell the caterer we expect 375. Thanks. (walks out)

Pat: Ok.

**Scene 3:** *Chris and Pat are talking together. Boss walks in.*

Boss: I'm heading out – make sure you get the vendors confirmed – last thing we want is a screw up with Jefferson. *Knocks table twice, Walks out*

Pat & Chris: Bye.

**Team Goal:** Re-write the script so that the boss demonstrates Transformational Leadership behaviors. Then act out and record the new script. Upload your 2-3 minute video to You Tube, then email your instructor the link.

### **Four Key Transformational Leader Behaviors**

- Inspirational Motivation

- Use of charisma
- Attractive vision of the future

- Idealized Influence

- Sacrificing for the good of the group
- Being a role model with high ethical standards

- Individualized Consideration

- Pay special attention to needs of followers
- Find ways for people to develop and grow

- Intellectual Stimulation

- Encourage creativity, innovation, and problem solving