Class Activities

# Chapter 4: Understanding Philosophy and Styles

## Guide to the Class Activities

Each activity is designed based on Fink’s Learning Taxonomy and is tagged with the following tags under the taxonomy’s learning and assessment structure:

1. Foundational Knowledge (F)
2. Application (A)
3. Integration (I)
4. Human Dimension (H)
5. Caring (C)
6. Learning How to Learn (L)

These activities may be used in either small-group or large-group settings, depending on class size and time available. Some may also be suitable as homework.

## Activities

### Password (F)

This is a fun exercise with which to begin class. It helps students learn the terms from the chapter and how to explain them to someone else. Divide the class into two teams. Make two sets of cards; one for each team. Each card has a term or concept from the chapter. Round 1: A member from each team receives an identical card from the instructor. Team A goes first, with the representative giving a one-word clue to his/her team who try to guess the word or concept from the clue. If Team A doesn’t guess the word from the first clue, then Team B has a turn, with its representative giving a second, one-word clue. The process continues until the correct word is guessed. Team members can work together, but only one person can speak for the team in a given round. Round 2: Team B starts with the first clue, and so on. Terms:

Leadership style

Philosophy of leadership

Theory X

Theory Y

Theory Z

Authoritarian style

Democratic style

Laissez-faire style

Abusive leadership

Douglas McGregor

William Ouchi

Outcomes of leadership

Leader influence

### Paying It Forward (A, H, C)

“Paying it forward” refers to passing on a kindness to a stranger (or acquaintance) without expectation of return, only that the receiver then passes on a kindness to another. This can involve gifts of time, money, service, verbal affirmation, etc. In small groups have students brainstorm ways they can make a difference to one or more people in the coming week. Each group becomes an accountability group, holding members responsible for following through on the task. At the next class period groups should discuss the choices individuals made and why. Discuss: How did students feel paying it forward? What were the challenges involved? What personal traits did this exercise call on? Does acting generously or sacrificially toward another, change our feelings about that person or people in general? What are the implications for leadership research and practice?

### Event Planning (A, L)

One of the ways students can develop their leadership skills is by contributing to the content of the class. Assign small groups of students one or more of the following tasks: (a) Planning the final class of the term, with clear learning objectives; (b) Planning a field trip that takes place within one class period. The site should be related to leadership and there should be a clear learning objective for the experience; (c) Planning a social event for the class, outside of the class period; (d) Planning an ice-breaker or other fun activity for each class period during the term. This activity involves group development, role development and leader emergence. At the completion of the project ask students to write a 5 page paper assessing the group’s process, group roles, leadership challenges, who emerged as leaders, what styles of leadership were used, how the leadership style affected group climate, and suggestions for improvement for next year’s class.

### Style Overlap (A, I, H)

Post several sheets of newsprint around the room, each sheet listing two or three leadership beliefs or behaviors associated with a particular style of leadership (without labeling the style). Ask students to stand by the sheet that best describes their own leadership views. Have them share with each other what is enjoyable about leading this way. What are the shortcomings? Some students may identify with more than one set of behaviors. What does this suggest about the overlap of styles? Can some behaviors be exhibited by more than one style of leader? If leadership style expresses our philosophy of leadership (attitudes about the nature of people and the nature of work) then how easily can it be changed? How much is our leadership behavior affected by the context and by our relationships with subordinates? Sample newsprint statements:

Most people I know work for the money, not because they love the company

Most people need incentives like bonuses to work harder

I often need to remind the people I work with about our goals

Ultimately it’s my responsibility to make sure the job gets done

I trust my employees to work independently without my constant supervision

I think my co-workers really enjoy their jobs

I like matching the right employee with the right job

I’m confident most employees can solve problems on their own

I pride myself on being efficient

To do a job well you really need to follow the rules

I solicit others’ opinions about a project

I’d rather not give orders to people

I hire the right people and trust them to do a good job

I always learn something new from my co-workers

As long as they finish the job, I give the staff free rein on how to do it

If it ain’t broke, don’t fix it

### Leadership Building Blocks (F, A)

Break the class into four teams; three will be task teams and one will be an observation and judging team. Take the observation team outside the room and explain their two tasks: (1) to evaluate the leadership behaviors within the task teams and their effect on group productivity and climate; and (2) to judge the final products on three criteria – completion (were all the blocks used?), novelty of the design, and attractiveness - choosing a winner from the 3 task teams. Observer-judges should not reveal their purpose to the task teams. Observer-judges can be assigned to different task groups, but should also move around the room to compare how the different teams are functioning.

Each task team will receive a bag with an identical number and type of Lego blocks (the more blocks, the better). Give a set of instructions to one member of each group, who then becomes the leader for that group. The leader should follow the instructions on his or her sheet completely, without reading them to the group. Each group has 10 minutes to complete its project (depending on the amount of blocks). It’s acceptable if groups don’t use all their blocks in time. Instructions:

* Team 1: You are the leader of this group. Your task is to build a house using the Lego blocks. You must decide on your own what to build. Instruct each member of your team which block goes where. Make sure every team member does some of the work. Discourage talking among team members; ask members to only communicate with you. Freely express what you like and don’t like about how the house looks (e.g. I like the red blocks better) or how the building is progressing.

* Team 2: You are the leader of this group. Your task is to build a house using the Lego blocks. With your team, decide on what you want the house to look like. Make suggestions but don’t give orders. Encourage team members to listen to *all* ideas that are shared. Let everyone take part in the building process. Ask quieter members for their feedback. Give objective praise (e.g. we’re right on schedule) and objective criticism when warranted (e.g. there are too many yellow blocks on one side).
* Team 3: You are the leader of this group. Your task is to build a house using the Lego blocks. Give your team the blocks and tell them to build a house, but do not give them any other directions. Do not give them feedback. Do not give them praise. Do not even watch closely; find something else to do (read a book, check your text messages).

Debrief, Part 1: At the end of the 10-15 minutes, ask the observer-judges to report their findings on leadership behaviors in the task groups, and group climate. Ask task group members how they felt working in their groups. Ask assigned leaders how comfortable they were enacting their roles. Was it clear which leadership style was used in each task group? Can everyone in the group be leading? In the laissez-faire group, how long did it take for new leadership to emerge?

Debrief, Part 2: Now ask the judges to choose one winner from the three houses, explaining the three criteria used to judge them. Which group completed its project first? Which group had the most novel design? Which house is the most attractive? As a whole class discuss how productivity, creativity and quality were affected by the leadership style of their respective groups.

## Writing Assignments

### Write as Another Person (A, I)

As a creative writing assignment, ask students to assume the role of a Theory X, Y, or Z leader. Have them write a one page description of:

* What the leader believes about how the world works and what motivates people,
* What life experiences have led to the leader’s feelings and beliefs; and
* Why these assumptions make more sense to them than the two other theories.

### Sketch-noting (F, A, I)

Sketch-noting is introduced in the Class Activities of chapter 1. It is a way to think visually about an issue. Making sketch notes is not about drawing, or artistry, but about making marks on paper (or a white board) to help oneself think. There is no right or wrong way to do this. Everyone will do it differently.

Have students reflect on the quote from Victoria Ransom, cofounder of Wildfire Interactive, on how to ensure the leader’s values spread throughout a company: “You might think that because you are projecting our [company] values, then the rest of the company is experiencing the values…”

Then ask students to sketch out (on paper you provide, or a page of their own) how they envision the process of how values are actually transmitted within a group of people or an organization. For example, students may begin by drawing a row of stick figures with arrows going from one person to the next. Ask: what is going on in the arrows? Are people talking, role-modeling, being persuaded, giving feedback? What makes values “stick” to people? Are there other influences that affect whether values are supported or incorporated (e.g. company policies)?

After a time of drawing have students post their sketches around the room and look at one another’s ideas. What are some similarities in how people see this process? Differences? What are we seeing about a leader’s influence process here?

### Tracking My Leader Behaviors (A, I)

Have students track their leader behaviors over a 24 hour period. How often did they:

Offer constructive criticism

Pay a compliment

Offer advice

Listen actively

Avoid work

Seek more work

Remind others of their tasks

Explain a rule

Tell someone what to do

Ask someone to do something

Seek the advice of others

Make a negative comment about a co-worker or classmate

Make a negative comment about their job or class

Learn a new skill or way of doing something

Practice a skill

Set goals

Solve a problem

Did the actual behaviors match up with the students’ perceptions of their leadership styles? Why or why not? Have students appraise their behavior in a 2-3 page paper.

### New on the Job (A, I, H)

Ask students to consider the following situation: you have just been hired as the new manager for a customer service department of 25 people in a growing cellular telephone corporation. This growth has not been without its problems, including poor customer service. You have been asked to improve the performance of this department and are about to meet your employees for the first time. Devise a strategy that you would use to get to know your employees better so that you can determine the best style of leadership to use in this new job.

### Current Events (A, H, L)

Have students write a 1-2 page paper about a current leader in their community. Which of the leadership styles previewed in this chapter best describes this leader’s effectiveness? How consistent is this leader’s style?

### One Minute Paper Topics (F, A, I)

If I could have any job in the world…

How are leadership and responsibility related?

The best example of an effective laissez-faire leader I have ever seen was/is…