Web Exercises

# Chapter 1: Understanding Leadership

## The Funny Side of Leadership

Ask students to check out several of the Dilbert cartoons at [www.dilbert.com](http://www.dilbert.com). There are several variations of this activity.

1. In class, choose one of the daily strips and discuss how it relates to the leadership concepts discussed in the chapter, such as traits, skills or behavior.
2. Ask students to register as users on the site (free) so they can participate in the mashups. A mashup combines Scott Adams’ illustrations with students’ own captions. An individual mashup allows a user to write his or her own punch line for the strip of the day. A group mashup allows several users to rewrite all of the frames in the strip. Ask students to rewrite the strip (or frame) using the leadership ideas suggested in the chapter. Examples can be posted online and shared with the class electronically, or printed off and brought to class. Discuss: How is language used to create the humor? What is stated explicitly? What is implied? What makes leadership behavior funny? How is humor a resource that leaders can use? How can humor be misused in a leadership situation?
3. As an alternative to the Dilbert cartoons, find another cartoon strip or single frame showing a group interaction and delete the caption. Ask students to come up with their own captions, referring to one of the leadership approaches mentioned in the chapter.

## The Imperfect Leader

Ask students to check out the Center for Courage and Renewal website and listen to the podcast by Parker Palmer on “The Woodcarver” (<http://www.couragerenewal.org>), which takes about 5 minutes. In class, discuss: What is “the work before the work?” How does it relate to the students’ own life situations? How do personal imperfections and failures contribute to effective leadership? How do personal imperfections and failures relate to the universal negative leader attributes listed in chapter 1? How does the woodcarver’s desire “to free himself from gain or success, praise or blame” relate to students’ own motivations for leadership today?

## Web Search (A, I, L)

This can be done as an individual or group assignment. In addition to the journal articles already provided for each chapter in the ancillaries, you may wish to have students do some alternative research. Ask them to look up the *Journal of Leadership and Organizational Studies* online at <http://jlo.sagepub.com/>. In the search box, students should enter one of the key terms from the chapter, such as authentic leadership, contingency theory or relational approach. Have them read two of the articles that they find and write a short summary of their content. How are these topics relevant for workers today? What is the role of communication in these processes? How does the new information help us better practice leadership?

## Surveying the Leadership Landscape

Ask students to check out various websites featuring “Global Leadership Assessment Tools.” Many will belong to for-profit companies wanting to sell books or consulting services. However, some self-assessment tools are free. Have students find survey questions relating to global leadership and bring them to class. Have the class compile a complete list and then discuss: (a) how well these competencies correlate with the universal leadership attributes listed in chapter 1; (b) which universal attributes aren’t covered in the surveys; and (c) how students would measure the missing attributes using survey instruments like these?

## Corporate Leadership Training

Many corporations offer leadership training programs to employees. Ask students to find five such programs on the web and to examine the approach that each one takes. Which conception of leadership (trait, ability, skill, etc.) is used? How do they select the individuals who will participate? What conclusions might one draw about corporate leadership?

## Keyword Search

Using Box 1.1 as a starting point, ask students to choose one of the “New leadership” or “Emerging approaches” and use their library databases to track the spread of ideas concerning this topic from its first appearance in Figure 1.1.. This can be done individually or in teams.

1. First, determine what kinds of publications you want students to research: peer-reviewed? Scholarly journals only? Newspaper articles? Magazines?
2. Second, students need to test keywords related to the topic that will give them the most specific results possible. Example, for spiritual leadership, terms such as calling, transformation, or workplace will limit the research results.
3. Next, students should look for articles across the time period indicated in Figure 1.1., to get an understanding of what researchers are concerned about today. Example: searching spiritual leadership keywords from 2000 to today.
4. Students should try combining keywords using “and or “not” terms to see how the leadership approach applies to various contexts. Example: “spiritual and leadership and hospitals”, or “spiritual and workplace and job satisfaction.” They can ask for help from the reference librarians on generating the most useful results.
5. At this stage you may not require students to read any of the articles, but they should track how articles build on one another. Which was the earliest article they found? How often has it been cited in other publications? How have authors’ research questions changed over time?
6. Decide how many articles you want students to find and report on, for meaningful results -20? 100? 1000?
7. Students can report back any of the following (choose what is most central to the learning outcomes for your course):
8. The total number of articles they found per keyword combination
9. A frequencies report on how many articles were published each year using the keywords (e.g. 50 articles in 2000, 70 articles in 2001, and so on). This can be broken down further into sub-categories, e.g. 4000 articles containing “calling and healthcare”, 300 articles containing “spiritual and army.”
10. A summary of findings: What seems to be interesting researchers about this topic today? What are some proposed next steps in the research? This part lends itself to team sharing and evaluation.

This can be a stand-alone assignment, or the first phase of a longer term research project.

## Keyword Search Follow-Up

A simple next step project is to assign students to read the most interesting article they found during the online keyword search, and write a one page annotated bibliography of it.

Another, more involved assignment (and great prep for a term paper) is to ask students to select ten of the most interesting scholarly articles they found on the “new” or “emerging” leadership approach, and read the literature review or “warrant” for each study. What are the social events to which scholars are responding? Why are they curious about leadership in this area? Why do they think people should care about this today? This exercise is a good way of contextualizing leadership research, learning the history of the field, and why people and ideas are constantly changing.