Web Exercises

# Chapter 4: Understanding Philosophy and Style

## Pass It On

Victoria Ransom, profiled in chapter 4, built Wildfire Interactive on values of hard work, leading by example, and humility. How are these values passed on from one person to another? Check out this website with a selection of TV commercials that show how people can inspire and help others: <http://www.values.com/inspirational-stories-tv-spots>.

One or two of these can be a good opening exercise for class to introduce a topic, discuss related research (such as how leaders prime feelings in others), as well as opportunities for media critique.

## An Undivided Life

Ask students to check out the Center for Courage and Renewal website and listen to the podcast by Parker Palmer on “An Undivided Life” (<http://www.couragerenewal.org>), which takes about 5 minutes. In class, discuss: How do we identify our true selves? How does one’s true self relate to one’s leadership philosophy and leadership style? What are the forces that tend to cause internal division? What does it mean to “phone in?”

## Leadership Styles and Social Media (A, I, L)

The article, “How Social Media Will Change Your Leadership Style” is an excerpt from a new book on work and social media. [http://fcw.com/articles/2010/07/12/feat-excerpt-open-leadership-charlene-li.aspx](http://fcw.com/articles/2010/07/12/feat-excerpt-open-leadership-charlene-li.aspx%20%20%20) It focuses on changes in the government and for-profit sector, but raises good questions regarding open sourcing and other benefits of social media. Ask students to read the article then discuss in class how innovation and early adoption of technology relate to leadership. Is the democratic leader better equipped than other types of leaders to exploit social media? How do social media shape our philosophy about the nature of work?

## The Responsibility Project

This project ([www.responsibilityproject.com](http://www.responsibilityproject.com)) is sponsored by Liberty Mutual and seeks to explore “what it means to do the right thing.” Good videos, articles and links to resources are interspersed with product promotions (which can easily be avoided). Five assignments are included here.

* Ask students to watch the video of musician Josh Ritter and his creative process. Discuss in class how well musicians fit the definition of leadership in our textbook. How are they influencing people? What is exchanged between the musician and the audience? How does an artist’s creativity benefit the audience? What musicians have inspired the students in the class? Why?
* Ask students to watch a segment of the “Our World” program called “Slice of Life” that features Diane Latiker. Discuss in class what motivates someone like Diane to combat a social problem like gang violence. What leadership traits does she exhibit? What leadership style does she seem to use? What might be Latiker’s underlying belief about the nature of people? As an extension of this assignment, students can be asked to research gang violence in their own communities. What efforts have been made so far by individuals, law enforcement, schools, church groups and other civic groups to address the problem, either as prevention or intervention? How do these efforts involve leadership? What are the challenges of leading on this issue? What styles of leadership have been most effective? This assignment can employ interviews and archival research as well. Research and analysis may be written up in a longer paper (10 pages), with objectives and specifications supplied by the instructor.
* Ask students to watch the 17 minute *TED talk* by Sugata Mitra (a professor at the University of Newcastle in the U.K.) that is linked to this site. Mitra reports the results of several experiments involving children’s learning styles and the role of teachers. Assign as written homework and/or discuss in class: What is Mitra’s belief about the nature of people? How does this shape his research? What is the grandmother effect? What style of leadership is modeled by the “granny cloud?” What is a self-organizing system? How is leadership related to group emergence?
* Ask students to watch the 4 minute animation short that follows the talk by Sugata Mitra. What is the moral of the story? What explains the behavior of the old man? The office workers? How does the medium (animation) affect the message? How can animation be used to teach leadership? What are its limitations?
* Have students peruse the entire Responsibility Project website. Discuss in class: How is responsibility connected to leadership? How useful is a site like this for developing individual and group responsibility? Is there a conflict of interest since the site is sponsored by an insurance company?

## 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 democratic leadership, leadership outcomes, or Theory X. 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 leadership impact group outcomes?

## The Surprising Science of Motivation

Have students listen to Dan Pink’s talk on “The Puzzle of Motivation” at *TED talks* (<http://www.ted.com/talks>), which is about 18 minutes long. Pink makes the case here for why humans perform better under intrinsic motivators than extrinsic motivators, which is central to the Theory X vs. Theory Y debate. Discuss in class:

- What is the candle problem?

* What do we learn from the candle problem for dummies?
* What are the students’ own versions of the candle problem?
* What are the three parts of Pinks’ proposed solution?
* Under what conditions *do* extrinsic rewards work?
* Discuss how applicable the ROWE model or the FEDEX Days model are to the students’ workplaces (or intended careers).
* What do we learn from the Wikipedia model?
* If Pink’s case is valid, why are many modern business practices still based on old assumptions about the nature of people and the nature of work?

## What if We Don’t Come to Work to Work?

Jason Fried gives a provocative *TED Talk* on the obstacles to productivity created by managers (<http://www.ted.com/talks/jason_fried_why_work_doesn_t_happen_at_work.html>). Ask students to watch this video and then to consider the following questions:

* What assumptions does Fried make about workers? Does he appear to be a Theory X or Theory Y manager?
* Do you agree with Fried’s analysis of workplace distractions? Is it primarily an “M & M” problem?
* Would Fried’s recommendations work in most settings? Why or why not?
* What alternative recommendations would you make to deal with work place distractions?

## Tweets about Leadership Style and Philosophy

If you’ve asked students to follow a thought leader on social media (Twitter, blog, etc.) throughout the academic term, ask them to report on how the leader’s style is expressed in a digital environment. What is authoritarian, democratic, or laissez-faire about their message, their tone, and the way they respond to followers? Is it possible to discern the leader’s assumptions about human nature and human behavior from how they communicate in an online environment?

## The Bully Boss

Ask students to find and read an online article on abusive managers, such as this one from Forbes magazine: <http://www.forbes.com/sites/alicegwalton/2013/02/07/the-dark-side-of-leadership-the-impact-of-a-bad-boss-can-go-viral-though-the-office/#5466d4134265>

Then have them do their own web search for an example of an abusive authoritarian leader, such as a coach, business executive, influential celebrity, teacher, politician, etc. How did this person cross the line into using influence for selfish reasons or to coerce followers to engage in unethical activities? If students report their findings in class, what are the similarities in the leaders’ stories? How can followers effectively resist destructive leadership like this?