Web Exercises

# Chapter 6: Developing Leadership Skills

## Dialogic Leadership

Ask students to read the article “Dialogic Leadership” by William Isaacs (*The Systems Thinker,* *10 (1),* February 1999), available at <http://dialogos.com/files/7313/4825/5466/dialogic_leadership.pdf>. Have them complete the study guide below and bring it to class in preparation for discussion.

* Identify the four players and their roles.
* What is the difference between dialogue and discussion? When have you experienced true dialogue?
* What are the four practices of dialogic leadership?
* How would you be able to tell if one of these practices was missing in a situation?
* Which one of these practices is most difficult for you?
* What’s one step you can take to practice developing that area?

## Beyond the Business Suit

Ask students to find and read the article “Beyond the Business Suit” by David Bornstein (January 28, 2011) in the *New York Times* (<http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com>). The article explains the value of mastering cultural norms and how fitting into the professional culture allows workers to “act on several stages.” The article generated numerous reader posts, which can also be assigned for students to read. Class discussion should center on cultural awareness as an interpersonal skill for leaders. Are the expectations of cultural competence different for leaders? If so, how?

## What We Learn from Play

Ask students to watch Stuart Brown’s presentation on the neuroscience of play at *TED talks* (<http://www.ted.com/talks/stuart_brown_says_play_is_more_than_fun_it_s_vital>). Have them reflect on the following questions, in writing or in small group discussions:

* What lesson are we to take away from the polar bear story?
* What are the different types of play? Which do you engage in most?
* What does play do for the brain?
* What is neoteny? How can it enhance one’s leadership skills?

As an extra assignment ask small groups of students to develop a game or play activity for the class. How might it enhance student learning?

## Skills Coaching

Have students look up the various coaching articles at Marshall Goldsmith’s website <http://www.marshallgoldsmithlibrary.com.> Clicking on the “articles” link will pull up free articles, which are recommended to be read in sequence. All are useful, but if time is limited, choose “Coaching for Behavioral Change.” Assign the following questions for written reflection or class discussion:

* How do Goldsmith’s eight steps of coaching fit with your experience of performance reviews?
* Do you agree with Goldsmith on the two reasons why managers back off from asking people to change? Can you think of other explanations for this reluctance?
* Where in the coaching and evaluation sequence are things most likely to get off track?
* What skill sets are harder to evaluate – administrative, interpersonal, or cognitive?
* Do you agree with Goldsmith’s criteria for which subordinates are not worth investing in?

## Problem-Solving 101

The skill of problem-solving can be developed by learning to think differently about the situation. Michael Milchalko authored a column that provides 101 tips that can help you change your thinking patterns and identify alternative solutions. Ask students to read the column, which can be found here: <http://www.creativitypost.com/create/101_tips_on_how_to_become_more_creative>. Then have them select several tips that they would consider implementing the next time they need to solve a challenging problem. Finally, ask students to report back on their experiences with these tips to see if they helped and if so how.

## Forecasting

Developing one’s skill in futuristic thinking is a challenge. It involves going beyond given information and planning, to imagining possibilities and anticipating trends.

Option 1) Compare the following websites and their recommendations on how to develop futuristic thinking skills:

* 1. <http://www.clearvisiondevelopment.com/where-futuristic-thinking-can-take-you/>
  2. <http://communicationworksinc.com/focus-on-futuristic-thinking/>
  3. <http://yourtalentatwork.com/blog/46/Want-to-Distinguish-Yourself-Develop-Futuristic-Thinking/>

Which recommendations or tips do students consider most useful? Which can they start practicing now as students?

Option 2) Have students read this article on futurist thinkers profiled in the Huffington Post: <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/05/12/futurists-next-10-years_n_7241210.html>

Which predictions are surprising? Exciting? Are there commonalities in how these thinkers from different professions see trends and potential outcomes of current scenarios? How much credibility do futuristic thinkers have? In what ways are they leaders?

Option 3) Have students do online research on a futuristic thinker of their choice, such as Elon Musk, Alvin Toffler, or others. How did the person develop this ability to think futuristically? How influential are they or their ideas? Students can share their findings in class or a 1-2 page succinct summary.

Option 4) Have students do online research on futuristic thinking about a current world phenomenon they care about such as climate change, medical research, terrorism, space exploration, digital media, and so on. Which futurist thinkers on that topic are most credible? Which future projections are most plausible? What are the leadership issues involved in moving toward that desired future, or preventing an undesirable future?