Web Exercises

# Chapter 13: Overcoming Obstacles

## Frame Talk in Films

An important leadership task that helps people overcome obstacles is frame talk. This is speech by a leader that identifies what is important to an organization or group, that interprets the meaning of events to followers, and unifies followers’ varied experiences and hopes. Ask students to find film clips online that show leaders using frame talk to overcome obstacles for followers. These can be shown in class and discussed. Apart from the media effects (background music, close-up shots, camera angles, and so on) what makes the speeches effective? See the recommended film list for ideas. Example: Captain Miller’s speech in *Saving Private Ryan,* where he acknowledges the high cost and seeming futility of the soldiers’ mission to find Private Ryan, but frames it in terms of enabling him to return home sooner once the mission is complete.

## Complex or Complicated?

This exercise can be done in class or as homework. Ask students to watch the 3 ½ minute presentation by Eric Berlow on how complexity leads to simplicity, at *TED talks* (<http://www.ted.com/talks>). Berlow uses the model of a food web to show how to analyze parts of a system. Discuss: What is the difference between complexity and complicatedness? What are Berlow’s three suggestions for how to simplify a complex problem? What are actionable factors? Critical factors? In small groups, have students select a social problem they all have some familiarity with and draw a web of contributing factors and outcomes. Using Berlow’s three steps, what are the closest and most influential links to the problem that should be focused on first during problem-solving?

## 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 path-goal theory, motivation, or employee engagement. 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?

## Whose Responsibility Is It?

Ask students to look up the Oxford University Learning Institute site at <http://www.learning.ox.ac.uk/supervision/>. These resources are provided for doctoral students as they navigate their exams and dissertation processes. Have students locate links for three documents: “Clarifying expectations,” “Expectations questionnaire,” and the “MOU template.”

* Option 1: Have students adapt the “Clarifying expectations” document for one of their college classes. What new headings would be appropriate? In what ways could the expectations for students and instructors be clarified? Should these be in the syllabus or elsewhere? This could be written up in a 1- to 2- page paper, with ideas shared in class as well.
* Option 2: Have students read the “Expectations questionnaire” and adapt the questions listed there to the assignments in their leadership course. Overall, what do they consider to be the instructor’s responsibility and what is their responsibility? These should be turned in as written assignments. The instructor can compile results and report back to the class what he or she learned, and agrees or disagrees with. Discuss: How does shared responsibility for learning involve leadership?
* Option 3: Have students apply the concept of the MOU “Memorandum of Understanding” to their workplace. What aspects of their jobs have clear expectations? What aspects are less clear? Have them design an MOU for their particular job and assess how well they and their supervisors are doing in a 3 page paper.

## Survival Guide for Leaders

There are many websites and blogs that address the problem of leader motivation. When a leader is required to monitor, assist and motivate subordinates all day, it is easy for him or her to become physically or emotionally drained. Assign one or more of the articles or links for the class to read as starters; students should also do a web search on their own. In class, each student should report the three suggestions he or she thinks are most helpful. Have a student type up all the responses (eliminating duplicates) and format them as a “Survival Guide for Leaders” which can then be emailed to all class members. Discuss: How do a leader’s traits and personality affect how the leader best “recharges” his or her “batteries?”

<http://ezinearticles.com/?Leadership---3-Keys-To-Staying-Motivated-As-A-Leader&id=561484>

<http://www.myarticlearchive.com/articles/9/232.htm>

## Humor as a Leadership Strategy

In recent years, the use of humor in the workplace has become been more popular. Have students research this idea, beginning with the following article by Paul McGhee: <http://www.laughterremedy.com/articles/25_ideas.html>. Ask them to consider how some of these ideas might assist leaders in helping group members overcome obstacles. In what other ways might leaders use humor to overcome obstacles? How would this fit into the strategies discussed in the chapter?

## How to Make Work Fun

Assign students to look up the following websites to find ideas for making work fun. Some examples:

<http://www.gethppy.com/employee-engagement/10-ways-to-make-work-more-fun-and-increase-productivity>

<http://www.snacknation.com/blog/fun-office-activities/>

<https://daringtolivefully.com/have-fun-at-work>

Assign groups to use one suggestion to teach a segment of an upcoming class using this method. Debrief the class: Was the activity or method “fun”? Did it help students learn the material better? Look forward to coming to class? Feel genuine? Would it work well in other contexts? What work obstacles can be overcome through fun?

## The Good Obstacle

This chapter focuses upon obstacles that prevent employees from achieving personal and organizational goals. However, individuals often learn from obstacles and difficulty. Ask students to research ideas that leaders might use to create “learning opportunities” through obstacles.