

Learners to Leaders Faculty Guide - Communication

Practical guidance for teaching leadership skills

Why Teach Leadership Skills?

Higher education uniquely positions students to broaden their knowledge base and hone skills pivotal for both professional and personal success. Leadership stands out among these skills, equipping individuals to influence, motivate, and guide others, amplifying their impact.

Effective leadership shapes an organization's vision, priorities, and culture, directly influencing employee engagement, satisfaction, and overall success. Given these benefits, embedding leadership training within academic programs is advantageous and essential.

This guide specifically focuses on communication—a cornerstone of effective leadership. Communication manifests in many ways: internal communication with teams to instill a vision, describe a pathway, and manage progress; external communication with stakeholders to make sense of data, present findings and recommendations, and chart the next steps. Students can simulate real-world communication challenges through structured assignments, offering a platform for practice, feedback, and skill refinement.

Outcomes:

Upon completion of this multi-phase team assignment, students will be able to:

- Effectively articulate a clear vision and set explicit expectations for team projects.
- Allocate roles and responsibilities within a team context efficiently.
- Demonstrate the ability to manage and oversee initiatives, ensuring alignment with the project's goals.
- Engage confidently with external stakeholders, securing their support for initiatives.
- Convey the organization's mission, needs, and impact persuasively to various audiences.
- Produce comprehensive reports that detail an organization's objectives, accomplishments, and strategies for addressing future challenges and opportunities.
- Deliver presentations with clarity and confidence, effectively communicating key messages to diverse audiences.
- Conduct impactful interviews, extracting and synthesizing valuable insights from conversations.
- Design and implement visual aids and infographics that effectively complement and enhance the storytelling aspect of presentations and reports.
- Engage in constructive feedback exchanges, providing and receiving insights that contribute to personal and team growth and improvement.

Assignment:

In teams of 4, research a local nonprofit, write a grant report, and deliver an impact presentation for fundraising. The best team presentation will “win” a (hypothetical) \$250,000 grant.

Deliverables:

- A team working agreement, signed by all members (see template)
- A completed Business Model Canvas for the nonprofit (see template)
- A summary of an interview with a leader at the nonprofit
- A 4–6-page grant report
- A 7–10-minute presentation to the class using a slide deck as a visual aid
- Completed feedback forms on your teammates’ and your own contributions to the project (see template)

Week 1: The Working Agreement

For the working agreement: what is the focus of your presentation? How will it stand out from the others? What information will you need to gather on budget, impact, and population served?

Week 2: Interview and Business Model Canvas (BMC)

The interview can be in person, by phone, or by video call. Still, it should focus on better understanding the organization’s goals, challenges, and success measurement.

BMC should include a brief overview of all 9 areas of the nonprofit’s operations.

Week 3: Grant Report

This 4–6-page report must include the following sections: (a) overview of the nonprofit; (b) impact statement covering the past 1-3 years showing how funds are used; (c) summary of interview describing challenges and goals; (d) a plan for expanding impact with the use of the \$250,000 grant. Include the BMC as an appendix.

Week 4: Presentation

The team will deliver a 7–10-minute presentation on their chosen nonprofit to the class. Each team member must present a portion of the content. The teams will use a slide deck illustrating each Grant Report section.

The audience of classmates will vote on their choice for the grant winner (they must vote for another team, not their own).

Week 5: Feedback

Using the template, provide candid feedback on your contributions, strengths, and areas for improvement, then complete the form for each of your teammates.

TEAM WORKING AGREEMENT

Assignment: Nonprofit Grant Competition

Team Members:

Team Expectations:

Chosen Nonprofit Organization: (Brief description of organization, location, purpose)

Tasks and Deliverables: (Achieving these constitutes a successful project. Typically include: description of responsibilities, guidelines/templates/tools, etc.)

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Timeline: (⇔ key milestones, decisions and deliverables)

Milestone/Key Decision/Deliverable	Person Responsible	Date

Assumptions: (If incorrect, these may have an adverse impact on project success.)

- 1.
- 2.

Risks: (Threats to project success. What should be done to avoid or mitigate the risks?)

- 1.
- 2.

Critical Success Factors: (Includes potential barriers to success.)

- 1.
- 2.

Project Monitoring and Meetings: (Describe how project status is going to be monitored, including when and how the team will meet.)

Team member signature

Date

Team member signature

Date

Team member signature

Date

Team member signature

Date



BUSINESS MODEL CANVAS



Key Partners

- What are the company's partners?
- Who are the company's suppliers?
- Which Key Resources is the company purchasing from partners/suppliers?
- Which Key Activities do partners perform?



Key Activities

- Your business model calls for a number of Key Activities. These are the most important actions your company must perform to operate successfully.



Key Resources

- Physical resources, such as raw material, buildings, vehicles, transportation, storage facility, machines and factory.
- Human resources, or staff, such as a talented engineer or marketing experts.



Value Propositions

What is the benefit the company offers to the client? What are the pain points it relieves?



Customer Relationships

- Aggregating essential customer info
- Tracking customer interactions
- Keeping up with sales performance goals
- Making customer info available throughout an organization



Channels

In what ways does the company deliver its value proposition to the customer segment?



Customer Segments

Describe the different populations that the company serves or the different segments that use its services.



Cost Structure

Describe the different expenses involved with running the business.



Revenue Streams

Where do the funds come from to operate the business?

Feedback Form

Self & Group Member Contributions

A. Grant Report Assignment

After reflecting on your role and contributions to the group project, keeping the team working agreement in mind, please assess your participation and contributions in the three categories below. Discuss evidence that supports your assessment, particularly if you believe you exceeded expectations.

Your Name:	
Assessment	Evidence to support your assessment
Opportunity to improve	
Meeting Expectations	
Exceeding Expectations	

Please provide a similar assessment of the contributions of your group members, also keeping the group contract in mind. You are welcome to provide comments in each category, or to focus on the category that best summarizes your evaluation of the individual's contributions. Use the "evidence" column to support your assessments. *Important:* indicate what manner you used to share this feedback with the respective group member.

Name of group member:	
Assessment	Evidence to support your assessment? How did you share this feedback with your group member?
Opportunity to improve	
Meeting Expectations	
Exceeding Expectations	

Name of group member:	
Assessment	Evidence to support your assessment? How did you share this feedback with your group member?
Opportunity to improve	
Meeting Expectations	
Exceeding Expectations	

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