

Assignment 2: Synthesis Paper

by  
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Leadership Simulation

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## **Introduction**

Teamwork is now a part of today's work culture and everyone should be prepared and expected to understand the basic dynamics of how to work in a team. The leadership simulation course was my first experience in working in a simulation with a team, but not the first experience that I've had working in teams. My experience in this course was very engaging and required a lot of time, effort and teamwork. Having previous experience working in teams, I was able to maximize my group experience in the social service sector and I was able learn a lot through this simulation.

My simulation group dynamics was interesting and included different personalities, leadership styles, and roles. The ability to take on various roles allowed each team member to equally place value in what each team member had to do and support each other collaboratively for the subsequent periods. Despite our differences, my simulation experience was realistic to what occurs in the workplace and each period enabled me to draw a new conclusion of how to engage with my team as well as how to troubleshoot some incidents. As I further discuss my experience in the simulation, I will also compare it to my current workplace environment and how I will take lessons learned and apply in to future group work and leadership roles.

## **Vision, Mission and Goals**

The vision and mission of the social service sector was created during our first online meeting. We began by discussing the goals of the social sector and how it would impact the city in the simulation. We collaborated with each other in order to tie in each piece that we thought should be incorporated into the vision and mission of our sector.

## **Strategic Planning and Strategic Thinking**

As a group we strategically planned how to make this virtual simulation work in our

favor. After every group member shared their schedule, we all agreed to have weekly online meetings to stay on schedule and debrief on tasks and decisions. Lencioni (2004) explains the importance of structure in meetings and how there are different types of meetings which play an important role for each situation. Our team had two meetings per period. The first meeting was to a strategic meeting where we would review the period, brainstorm and discuss our rationales. The second meeting during each period was tactical, were review what happened in city council, ensure all data was entered, update data and set goals for the next period.

The social sector simulation group created a rotation schedule with the responsibilities equally divided amongst group members. The schedule included alternates for each week just in case someone was unable to complete their part enabled the group to prevent any confusion in the future. This strategic plan worked favorably for our sector because we thought about various scenarios and planned with our team's success in mind. This strategic plan allowed us to be successful through constant and clear communication.

Our thinking and action came into play after strategically creating a well thought out plan on how to work collaboratively throughout the semester. Clawson (2009) describes an effective leader as one who thinks strategically and plans ahead. He explains how strategic thinking requires thought and intent. The social service sector strategically planned for each team member to come prepared for every meeting by having reviewed the period and by providing rationales and support for our ideas. At each meeting, we began with an agenda and discussed as a group each agenda item along with our selections for the period. We would review each other's proposal and decide as a team which ones aligned best with the goals, vision and mission of the social service sector. We also strategically plan to make our decisions not only based on the current period, but by reviewing the next two periods and evaluating the impact they would have

on our sector. This strategy worked in our favor by ensuring that all our decisions and rationales were supported by our vision for the city and allowed us to continuously instill a clear understanding of our goals to our team.

### **Culture**

The culture of the social sector group was a working culture where we shared the same objectives and goal. Our group's culture grew overtime as we each became more knowledgeable of our sector, what each period entailed, and how the simulation worked. With the team's comfort level with the vision and with simulation, we became more efficient in coming up with our decisions. Our meetings went from one and a half hours initially, to being about forty-five minutes long. By the end of the semester our team had come full circle and shared some key characteristics described in *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team*. Lencioni (2002) states that a high functioning team has trust, engage in conflict, commits to decisions, hold each other accountable, and focuses on results.

I believe this culture was fostered into our group due to the experience each team member and I brought. Personally, I have experience working in both a dysfunctional and high performing team and think each person's contribution has a huge impact on the team as a whole. Two specific leaders in our simulation took the lead in ensuring that certain principles like accountability and commitment were always present. We all worked hard and despite barriers and conflicts that we came across, we focused on the end result and held each other accountable for what we did.

### **Leadership Styles**

#### **Emerging Leader**

Every group has leaders, emerging leaders, and followers. My experience with leadership

in the simulation varied. As we progressed into the semester different team members took initiative and lead the group when it was their turn in city council. The city council experience allowed each member of the team take turns in the role of a leader and the simulation as a whole allowed us all to take on every role each team member experienced. Most of us were successful and some of the members clearly lacked listening and leadership skills. After my experience in this simulation I can see I have the qualities of an emerging leader. I listened to my team, understood each role, communicate consistently, held each member accountable and cared about the overall goal for the group. Hopefully these skills that I demonstrated are reflective in my workplace and will give me an opportunity to eventually get a leadership position.

### **Leadership Styles Assessment**

I was able to assess various leadership styles come to light in our team meetings and discussions as we progressed through each of the periods. In the first period, while everyone was getting acquainted and wanted to get organized I saw everyone pitch in and take the collaborative & participative role by working together with everyone's schedule and information. I also identified some organizational leadership skills in team members that took initiative to organize our final schedule and contact information. As we continued through the second to fourth period, I was able to identify a couple of team members that lacked leadership qualities. This led for the team dynamics to change a little and during different periods I was able to see certain team members take on other types of leadership roles.

### **Minority Leadership**

Minority leadership is the unsung hero of organizations and groups at large. With so many things occurring, deadlines approaching and strong personalities around we tend to oversee some key contributors or fail to listen to what might seem as an opinion that is unpopular or

against the grain. A good leader will be cautious to keep an eye out for good contributions and opinion despite what is common. They will also take a stand for what they believe is right and will strive to do what is best not only for their team, but for the organization as a whole. I was able to identify minority leadership through an experience in the simulation where one of our team members took a stand to hold someone accountable for what they did despite the rest of the team wanting to just correct the issue at hand.

### **Barriers**

Barriers surround us and being able to demonstrate confidence and commitment to your vision and values is difficult, but not impossible. A good leader is able to clearly see the end result they want and with support of their team can overcome any obstacle. In my experience with the simulation this semester, the only barrier that I faced was one that dealt with an ethical issue. Maxwell (2001) discusses how a weak link can create a negative impact on a team.

Our team had one specific weak link that at a specific time caused a huge strain on the entire team. She plagiarized a part of her paper and this situation was brought to the team's attention by the professor. This lack of commitment and vision from this one particular team member was clearly shown as she did not properly redo her section. Another team member and I addressed her issue and gave her two opportunities to redo her part. Despite the failed attempt to hold her accountable for the revision her section, we took the initiative to overcome this barrier by ensuring that the team's document was done correctly and that the proper revisions were made to ensure we all received a good grade.

As leaders we need to ensure our actions are ethical and when we see something unethical being done, we need to bring it to the individual's attention. In this case the lack of commitment from our team member was demonstrated in her failure to correct her mistake.

Plagiarism is something serious and as leaders we needed to ensure we did not represent anything unethical. In my current workplace, we work in creating instructional design and we always want to ensure that we follow copyright laws and that our work is not plagiarized. Just like the simulation, our team had a person that was caught being unethical when creating instruction. This is unacceptable and was not tolerated by our leadership; this person was held accountable for what they did and was dealt with accordingly.

### **Constraints**

Time constraints might seem minimal in the grand scheme of things, but proper time management and overall project management can be critical for a group. Our group avoided this problem for the most part with the schedule we created which included alternates, but that doesn't mean that when someone did not contribute their part equally that it did not strain and constrain other team member's time. I identified with this situation not only with my experience in the simulation group, but in the group in one of my other classes. As a leader that wanted to ensure the best possible outcome for the group as a whole, time constraints affected my productivity in other areas outside the simulation. This is something that I struggle with at work at times when working with uncooperative or un-collaborative people. Being able to manage and balance my time properly to accomplish all the tasks assigned can be overwhelming. Also, to take the initiative to improve communications, set goals, hold people accountable, and gain people's trust as suggested by Gostick and Elton (2007) in *The Carrot Principle*.

### **Conclusion**

#### **Class Experience versus Real Life**

This class experience mirrored real life experience in many aspects. I was able to identify several communication and collaboration efforts, conflict and resolution strategies that exist and

take place in the workplace. Conflict in the workplace is difficult and can escalate if not quickly addressed. Studies have shown that group members must take a constructive role in finding a solution to the conflict rather than making it personal (Isenhart & Spangle, 2000). Issues that come up within groups should be addressed by members of that group. In the simulation, we quickly addressed an issue that occurred in the middle of the semester with a problematic team member. We knew if we didn't quickly try to hold her accountable for her actions and communicate our expectations to rectify the issue, it could have had a terrible impact on the team as a whole.

The city council experience mirrored my leadership experience in the aspect of how we are always representing our team in the workplace. When in meetings and dealing with internal and external clients, it is just like being in city council, where we need to continuously be thinking about what is the best solution for the team is and how will the decision and actions we take impact the organization as a whole. We all have some type of leadership role even if we don't have a title. As a team member in any organization we have input and our actions impact something, so we always need to be aware of what we say and do and think about the implications of our actions will have on our team and organization.

### **Class Experience and Leadership**

This class experience has shown me the importance of clear communication and structure when working in teams, especially when physically separated. I've also learned the importance of setting expectations from all team members from the beginning. Once a clear understanding is made, it is easier to reach the team's goals. When all team members understand the expectations, accountability and workflow can be expected. Lencioni (2000) explains how fundamentally important clarity and communication throughout the organization is in order to maintain a



healthy organization. This information will be critical as I take on leadership roles in the future. I will ensure that I am able to clearly communicate with my teams and that they understand the vision and mission of our organization and area. We continuously referred to our sector's mission and vision during our weekly online meetings each period in order to ensure our decisions were aligned and on target to attain our overall goal.

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