

15.S63: Discovering and Developing Your Leadership Signature

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Location: E62-223

Days/Time: January 10 & 11, 2024. 8:30 to 11:30 and 1:00 to 4:00

Course Description:

The aim of this course is to help you understand your own unique way of leading, or what we call your Leadership Signature. The focus is first on answering the questions: “What kind of leader am I?” and “How can I tell my own leadership story?” We will then move to a focus on how you can further develop as a leader, with exercises to experiment with at work. In examining identity, change, and storytelling, we will pull on theory from the leadership literature, family systems, developmental psychology, personality psychology, and organizational change. The course is a mixture of lecture, cases, reflection, exercises, and storytelling.

Specific Course Objectives:

1. Expose you to a variety of perspectives on leadership identity and development.
2. Assess your own leadership signature: how it developed, where you stand now, and how it can be enhanced.
3. Develop and tell your own leadership stories.
4. Learn from the leadership experiences of others.
5. Create and enact a plan for change.

Core Assumptions:

1. There is no one way to be a leader. You must understand yourself and find a style and mode of change (your leadership signature) that fit your values, competencies, and influence style.
2. Great leaders can articulate what kind of leadership they practice, including their values, skills, and modes of operating.
3. When you appear on the front page of a major newspaper, we at Sloan want to be proud of what we read. How can you be a principled leader who makes a difference?
4. You can further develop as a leader: theory supports the notion of adult learning and development.

Course Format:

This course is designed to create an understanding of leadership using theory, exercises, and self-reflection. Thus, active involvement in class exercises and assignments is very important. To take this into account, class participation and active engagement in the reflective process, including taking risks when exploring your leadership identity, are counted heavily.

Texts:

The class will use a digital course packet that will be available on Canvas and Study.net.

Course Evaluation: This is a Pass/Fail Course

1. Class Participation: 30% of the final grade

Since this is an experiential class, participation involves more than doing the readings and speaking up in class. Participation involves using the material from class to better understand your leadership abilities and those of others, and working to create productive discussion groups. Participation will be monitored in Zoom.

You cannot learn in this class if you do not attend. Failure to attend class without permission will result in a penalty of one half-letter grade for the course.

2. One Leadership Reflection Paper: worth 70% of the final grade

The paper should include two parts: 1—a summary of your Leadership Signature based on day 1 and 2-- a summary of your plan for your own development based on day 2. Papers are due a week after class ends. Each paper should be 6-8 pages (papers over 10 pages will not be graded) and should be posted on Canvas.

The **first half of the paper** should include:

1. Your leadership signature in words and images.
2. Your “child of the past,” including your “ghosts” and the impact of your ghosts on your leadership today.
3. How have you moved from your “child of the past” to your developed self? Include your crucibles, and 4CAPS+.
4. Your story of self.

The **second half** should include:

1. What is the one aspect of your signature that you want to change going forward?
2. What is the “immunity to change” that prevents you from changing? Be specific, what are your fears of change and competing commitments? What does this analysis suggest about how you can change?
3. How might you reframe your improvement goal and assumptions so as not to set off your immunity and break your cognitive distortions?
4. What provisional selves do you want to take on? How will you do this?

Note: Please do not spend the bulk of the paper summarizing the models. Instead focus on showing you understand the models by applying them. Careful application of the material to self-assessment, self-reflection, and implications for change will be rewarded. Creativity and insight will move you ahead, as will a discussion of the follow-up exercises.

Sessions:

1. Leadership Signature: Identifying Multiple Developed Selves and Child of the Past— January 10, am

Readings: “Possible Selves” from *Working Identity* by Herminia Ibarra. Harvard Business School Press, 2003. pp. 23-39.

“Family Ghosts in the Executive Suite,” HBR, 2023, Ancona & Perkins

“How to Find Out Who You Are,” *The New York Times*, July 28, 2022.

Skim: “Structural Balance in Teams [4-Player Model]” by Deborah Ancona and Bill Isaacs. in *Exploring Positive Relationships at Work: Building a Theoretical and Research Foundation*, Jane Dutton, Belle Rose Ragins, eds. Lawrence Erlbaum, 2006. pp. 225-242

In this session we will lay out some of the core models that will guide the class and do some early mapping of your leadership signature. We will do a picture exercise and begin to create a leadership story. We will also do several exercises examining how childhood experiences find their way into adult leadership identities. This class brings family systems theory, self-concept, and the four-player model to the analysis of your leadership signature.

2. Your Developed Self—Jan. 10, pm

Readings: *Crucibles of Leadership*, by Warren Bennis and Robert Thomas. HBR 2002 R0209B

“Using Great Storytelling to Grow Your Business,” *Fast Company*, March 5, 2012:

“Storytelling in the Boardroom” parts 2 & 3 by Bruce Gabrielle

Skim: *In Praise of the Incomplete Leader*, by Deborah Ancona, Thomas Malone, Wanda Orlikowski, and Peter Senge. HBR, 2007.

We will start the session examining your developed self through the lenses of the readings and the leadership signature. We will move to reflection and your story of self.

3. Immunity to Change—Jan. 11, am

Readings: “Diagnosing Your Own Immunity to Change” by Robert Kegan and Lisa Lahey, in *Immunity to Change*, pp. 227- 251, Harvard Business School Press, 2009.

Teammates will act as coaches in this process of thinking about what you want to do going forward and how to avoid immunity to change.

4. Starting to Transition—Jan. 11, pm

Readings: “The Authenticity Paradox” by Herminia Ibarra, HBR, Jan-Feb 2015.

Video: Ledgerwood, A. (n.d.). A simple trick to improve positive thinking TedTalk.
https://www.ted.com/talks/alison_ledgerwood_a_simple_trick_to_improve_positive_thinking?language=en (Links to an external site.)

In this class we will focus on your own change process and how to begin the work you need to do. How can you be both authentic and different? We will also work on moving ahead. How can you create a vision for your future self? What is your story of change?