

CLD1-5-ANR



Facilitator's Guide

Followership

Understanding the Basics of Teamwork

Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much. —Helen Keller

Rationale:

One cannot be a leader without followers—and some would argue that this requirement makes followers just as important as leaders. It is important to understand why and how people follow.

Program Goal:

To define and examine followership as a leadership concept and basis of collaboration

Program Objectives:

- To explain the important responsibilities followers have in the leader-follower relationship
- To distinguish between negative and positive reasons for following a leader
- To identify qualities of good followers

Pre-Program Preparation:

- Copy *Followership: Understanding the Basics of Teamwork* (CLD1-5) factsheet.
- Bring/set up a flip chart and markers.
- Take notecards and list the **five reasons to follow** on individual notecards (**Learning Activity 2**).

Introduction:

In the discussion of leadership, often the leader is the star. However, one cannot be a leader without followers—and some would argue that this requirement makes followers just as essential as leaders. To reap the benefits of successful teamwork, we must understand why and how people follow.

Introductory Activity:

Simon Says—Designate a Simon and a follower. Begin the activity with the leader doing everything Simon says. Then the leader starts to do different actions than what Simon says. Are people following what is being said or what is being done? Finish the activity by talking about the role a follower plays in the leader-follower relationship.

Objective 1: To explain the important responsibilities followers have in the leader-follower relationship

Followership can be defined as the willingness to go along with a leader. Everyone can't be "out front," but without followers there are no leaders. Followers play a pivotal role in any effort. If you don't believe it, ask anyone who's ever been a political candidate!

Learning Activity 1:

Divide participants into small groups. Have each group designate chairperson and a secretary.

Plan the production and marketing on a 1-acre tomato operation. Have the participants plan this tomato operation from start to finish, from ordering seed to delivering product to market. Give them 30 minutes to make their plans.

Bring the group back together to discuss the leader and follower activities (i.e. leading the meeting, setting priorities, ordering tasks, achieving goals, and

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accomplishing processes). Consider and discuss the following questions:

- What happens when each individual does not perform his or her task?
- Why it is important that everyone within the group understand their role?

Objective 2: To distinguish between negative and positive reasons for following a leader

Good followers have distinct skills, just as effective leaders do. These skills are useful to promote successful collaboration. Qualities that may be developed include self-management, commitment, knowledge, focus, and courage.

Learning Activity 2:

Pull out the notecards you have prepared with the five reasons to follow (listed below):

- **Fear of retribution**—“If I do not follow, I may lose my job!”
- **Blind hope**—“We must do something! I hope this works!”
- **Faith in leader**—“What a great person. If anyone knows the answer, he/she does!”
- **Intellectual agreement**—“What a good idea! That certainly makes sense!”
- **Buying the vision**—“What a brilliant idea! I don’t care who thought of it!”

Break the participants into five groups and provide each group with one of the notecards. Each group’s assignment is to develop an example from the point of view listed on the notecard. Each small group presents their example to the larger group (without giving away their point of view), and the audience tries to identify which reason to follow was portrayed. (Note: If working with a large group—more than 15 to 20 people—break into groups of 3 to 4 individuals and hand out as many index cards as necessary – using a variety of reasons to follow.)

Objective 3: Identify qualities of good followers

We’ve already addressed that being a follower is an important role. There are numerous reasons that leaders attract or discourage a following. Anyone hoping

to be a productive member of any effort, whether as a leader or as a follower, will be more effective with an understanding of why people follow.

Learning Activity 3:

Ag agents are generally viewed leaders in their communities. Often local agriculture producers are considered to be “followers” in agent producer relationship because they look for guidance and recommendations from the agent. Therefore, it is important that local ag producers understand the qualities of a good follower.

On a flip chart, list the following four qualities: *Self-management, Confidence, Knowledge and Focus, and Courage.*

Lead a discussion around the following questions:

- What are some of your personal examples where you or a fellow follower demonstrated any of these qualities?
- How did the situation turn out?
- What effect (as a follower) did you have on the situation?

Finish the discussion by emphasizing that important role a follower plays within a variety of situations.

Summary:

Followers play an integral role in the leadership equation and as a result are also an integral part of any mission or organization. Within leadership development it is important that an individual understands the important role followers play in the leader-follower relationship, various reasons people follow different leaders, and skills that make a follower more effective. A healthy appreciation of followership leads to a better leadership relationship and more successful collaborations.

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