

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* factsheet
- Print scenarios (Learning Activity 1).
- Make role play cards (Learning Activity 2).
- Copy the Good Followership Characteristics Matching Activity (Learning Activity 3).
- Arrange for resources to show video (Learning Activity 4).

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 leader. 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: 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 a chairman and a secretary. Plan the following activity.

The “Make a Difference Volunteers” develop a pretend store every December to enable limited resource youth to shop for their family members. Gifts must be obtained, facility reserved, transportation arranged, workers scheduled, event days planned and wrapping materials organized.

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Bring all groups back together and talk about leader activities (i.e. leading the meeting, setting the agenda, calling for votes) and follower activities (i.e. sharing ideas, volunteering for committee assignments).

Finish the discussion with the following questions:

- What happens to the group if the leaders don't effectively perform their activities? Or if they are doing the follower activities?
- What happens to the group if the followers aren't performing their activities? Or if they try to take over the leader activities?
- How would you set up/explain the expectations for both the leaders and the followers within your group?
- Why is it important that everyone within the group understands the role they play?

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

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 as a follower, will be more effective with an understanding of why people follow.

Learning Activity 2:

List the five reasons to follow on individual note cards.

- **Fear of retribution**—"If I do not follow, I may lose my job!"
- **Blind hope**—"We must do something, and I hope this works!"
- **Faith in leader**—"What a great person. If anyone knows the answer, he or 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 them with one of the five reasons to follow. Each group's assignment is to develop a 30-second dialogue from that point of view. The group should present the dialogue to the entire group and the audience should try to identify which reason to follow was portrayed.

Objective 3: Identify qualities of good followers

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 and focus, in addition to courage.

Learning Activity 3:

Ask participants to use the Good Followership Characteristics Matching Activity sheet and draw a line matching the good follower qualities with the descriptions.

Learning Activity 4:

Have participants view the Followership video (a link can be found listed directly under the links for the fact sheet and facilitator's guide) and identify when the follower qualities (listed under the *Essential Qualities of Good Followers* section in CLD1-5) are demonstrated.

NOTE: It would be useful for the facilitator to view the video beforehand and identify a couple of comments for each person that illustrates their "role". I.e. Teran Ransom mentions the word "confidence" often – this can be noted as demonstrating her follower quality of *confidence*; Christie Honaker "makes fun" of others in the group a few times – this can be noted as demonstrating her "know-it-all" follower quality (which is negative)

The scenario: The committee is planning the development of a new community cooking show concept. Laura Holt is playing the role of county Extension Homemaker foods and nutrition chairperson (the leader) and the other agents are committee members (the followers). Each of the committee members are demonstrating one of the *Essential Qualities of Good Followers* (you can find this list in the CLD1-5 fact-sheet). Two of the meeting participants are taking the follower qualities too far and making them negative; refer to the list of participants below to see who these individuals are.

Role play participants (in order from left to right):
Lora Lee Howard (green argyle sweater) – meeting participant – demonstrating *self-management*
Christie Honaker “Christie Homemaker” (black sweater, glasses) – meeting participant – demonstrating *knowledge and focus* in a negative way (she’s being a know-it-all)
Laura Holt (pink sweater) – meeting leader
Teran Ransom (white shirt, scarf) – meeting participant – demonstrating *confidence*
Audrey Myers (short, dark hair, black sweater) – meeting participant – demonstrating *knowledge and focus*
Denise Wooley (long, dark hair, black/grey sweater) – meeting participant – demonstrating *confidence* in a negative way (she’s self-centered)
Running time: Approximately 5-7 minutes

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 means a healthier leadership relationship for the most successful collaborations.

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Good Followership Characteristics Matching Activity

	Working well without supervision
Self-management	Using lifelong learning to consistently improve performance
	Not acting as a “yes man”
Confidence	Thinking independently
	Building knowledge for maximum impact
Knowledge and focus	Growing from a follower to a leader
	Having moral courage
	Illustrating commitment to the mission
Courage	Buying into excellence