

TIP #28 – JUNE 2008
LEADERSHIP ART
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Leadership Art

If beauty is in the eyes of the beholder, so are many other things associated with art. I am fascinated by the way people interpret drawings, paintings, sculptures—and inkblots. In this activity, we use alternative interpretations of graphic art to explore elements of leadership.

Purpose

To identify characteristics of effective leaders

Participants

Minimum: 2

Maximum: any number

Best: 10 – 30

(Participants are divided into groups of 4 to 6)

Time

20 to 45 minutes

Supplies

- Blank pieces of paper
- Boxes of crayons
- Whistle

Flow

Form teams. Divide participants into equal-sized teams of four to six members each. Seat team members around a table

Distribute supplies. Place sheets of drawing paper and boxes of crayons in the middle of each table. Ask each participant to take a sheet of paper and to share the crayons.

Time to draw. Invite each participant to draw an abstract picture that captures the characteristics of an effective leader. Discourage participants from focusing on artistic quality and encourage them to flow with their intuitive thoughts and feelings. Prohibit the artists from using any words, letters, numbers, or symbols found on a computer keyboard. Also advise participants not to look at each other’s artwork. Announce a 5-minute time limit for this activity.

Time to stop. At the end of 5 minutes, blow the whistle and ask the artists to stop their activity. Reassure them that it does not matter if their artwork is not yet complete.

Interpret other people’s pictures. At each table, ask participants to take turns holding up their pictures. While doing this, ask each person to perform the difficult task of keeping his or her mouth shut. Invite other participants around the table to treat the picture as a symbolic depiction of effective leadership characteristics and report what

they see in it. It is not necessary that participants take turns in presenting their interpretations. Anyone may call out insights whenever he or she feels inspired. **Interpret your own picture.** After all pictures have been interpreted, ask each participants to repeat the process of holding up the pictures. This time, however, each participant should describe what leadership characteristics the picture is intended to convey.

Debriefing

Encourage a debriefing discussion at each table. Use questions similar to these to structure this discussion:

- *What leadership characteristics were most frequently mentioned?*
- *What leadership characteristics were unexpected and unique?*
- *How accurately did the others interpret your drawing?*
- *How accurately did you interpret other people's drawings?*
- *Which leadership characteristic is your strongest point? Did you include this characteristic in your drawing?*
- *Which leadership quality do you lack? Did you include this in your drawing?*

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