

The Value of Using Design Visuals to See Leadership Dynamics

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• **Description of Practical Application:** To make the dynamics of the leadership visible, the authors use a number of design method templates: teams, empathy, coaching, change, leadership & storytelling. Their standardized, easy to understand structure engage students in collaborative conversations – great for an active learning class environment.

• **Abstract.** Leadership is complex. Leading takes place in a system comprised of complex human beings who bring a mix of skills, values, personalities, and perceptions to work. Leaders themselves are complex, and yet leadership requires that they not only lead themselves but also influence others both inside and outside the organization. Engaging undergraduate students in thinking about the complexities of leadership are challenging given the definitional, discrete theoretical models [e.g. motivation, conflict, changes], and chapter focus of textbooks. To help make the dynamics of the leadership concepts visible, the authors have been using design method visual tools related to organizational interactions. The standardized, easy to understand, and visual tools engage students in collaborative conversations. The structure has been helpful in fostering engagement in classes with a mix of students from different cultural backgrounds.

Framework: The focus draws from design and innovation methods and tools and the value of visualization in learning. It also utilizes Human-Centered [HCD] design philosophy. HDC encourages one to think about people's experiences in a situation in order to understand their needs, behaviors, feelings, and the situational context.

Design methods [DM] are structures to foster conversation to come up with better solutions. They allow users to 'see' relationships and to revise and sequence factors based on the problem that they are trying to understand and solve. DM consist of table structures, mapping layouts, special research methods, and canvas templates [visual chart of key spaces associated with desired application].

Visualization draws on gaining understanding through developing mental images about the dynamics that are playing out in a situation. It is an effective communication method for both abstract and concrete ideas. Taken together, the design tools, an HCD perspective, and the visual nature of the elements of the framework provide an engaging pedagogical application.

Practical Application: The authors have used several DM tools: A.E.I.O.U framework that helps look at the interactions of activities, environments, interaction, object, and users, team canvas, empathy canvas, leadership canvas, ethics canvas, and the culture canvas.

The application has primarily been used to facilitate exploration and conversation in an activity learning environment. Application has been used with cases, current leadership events, and business articles. The visual tool layout is projected to the screen/table TV, passed out, replicated by the students on large sheets of paper, or [for open course canvas templates] printed out on very large sheets of paper and posted on a wall.

When posted to the wall, the class first breaks into small groups to assess the situation and write descriptive elements for each cell of the DM tools on post-it-notes. One by one, each group puts their post-it-notes on the relevant cell, for example on a leadership development canvas. The class then discusses the similarities and differences, agree on how to reposition the descriptors, what to remove, and/or what new descriptors the conversation has generated and where to place them on the template. Discussion then focuses on proposing solutions and how each would address the dynamics displayed on the template.

Team Canvas

Version 0.8 | theteamcanvas.com | hello@theteamcanvas.com

Most important things to talk about in the team to make sure your work as a group is productive, happy and stress-free

Team name Date

PEOPLE & ROLES Who are the people who are involved in this team? What are their roles? What are their strengths and weaknesses?	COMMON GOALS What are we trying to achieve together? What are our shared goals? What are our individual goals?	VALUES What are our values? What are our principles? What are our beliefs?	RULES & ACTIVITIES What are the rules we need to follow? What are the activities we need to do? What are the processes we need to use?
PURPOSE Why are we working together? What are we trying to achieve together? What are our shared goals?			
PERSONAL GOALS What are my individual goals? What are my personal goals? What are my needs?	NEEDS & EXPECTATIONS What are my needs? What are my expectations? What are my goals?		
STRENGTHS & ASSETS What are our strengths? What are our assets? What are our resources?		WEAKNESSES & RISKS What are our weaknesses? What are our risks? What are our challenges?	

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A similar approach can be used by each group working alone using the DM tool template as a guide to their exploration, conversation, and analysis.

Outcomes: The authors have observed that class discussions are more focused and livelier. The structure has helped students to focus on key segments of the overall situation without getting overwhelmed by the complexity. They produce richer, in-depth analysis which has generated multiple viable solutions. Added value comes from the templates fostering discussion of the impact of the solutions and for identifying unintended negative consequences.

Implications- Next Step: The authors plan to expand the types of design tools that are used, specifically: While the tools have been used for in-class discussion and exercises, they were integrate as part of case-based graded assignments in Spring 2020. One of the authors teaches leadership at the graduate level and will use the tools as part of this course Fall 2020 including having students develop their own leadership canvases showing the building blocks of leadership across critical competencies and issues confronting them as leaders in a post Covid-19 environment.