

Around the World in 60 Minutes: Experiencing Leadership One Country at a Time

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ABSTRACT

Teaching leadership through experiential learning in a way that is fun, exciting, and active was the focus of the leadership workshop, *Around the World in 60 Minutes: Experiencing Leadership One Country at a Time*. Based on the work of Rich Katt, the workshop was adapted to meet the age appropriate needs of students attending the 74th Florida FFA Convention. From Kenya to Thailand, costumed facilitators took students on an hour-long journey around the world where they learned about leadership at each stop. Students processed the information as a team, and reflected on their experiences as well. This paper describes the workshop, but also discusses some of the feedback from the participants and facilitators. According to the feedback and our observations, the right mixture of structure and fun led to loads of leadership learning among the participants.

INTRODUCTION

The question in leadership development used to be, “Are leaders born or made?” As leadership educators, we believe that leadership, or at the very least, some aspects of leadership can be “taught.” This notion is supported by the works of Bass (1990; 1998) and Kouzes and Posner (1995). So the question in the minds of most leadership educators’ today is “How can I teach leadership?” There are many ways that leadership can be learned, but we discuss the use of *activities*. According to vanLinden and Fertmen (1998) activities allow people to learn more about their leadership skills while being guided by support and structure.

The Around the World in 60 Minutes: Experiencing Leadership One Country at a Time Leadership Workshop provided FFA members with several short, yet powerful activities to develop their leadership skills. The Experiential Learning Model of Kolb

(1984) and Bloom's (1956) Taxonomy were the theories guiding the development of the leadership development activities. The Kolb and Bloom theories claim that the best learning is constructed through experience, information processing, and reflection.

THE SETTING AND AUDIENCE

The Around the World in 60 Minutes: Experiencing Leadership One Country at a Time Leadership Workshop was conducted at the 74th Florida FFA Convention held in Kissimmee, Florida during June, 2002. This activity was designed for Florida FFA members in both high school and middle school chapters.

The time and location of the workshop were included in the convention book. The workshop was also highlighted in daily convention handouts, as well as announced at the teachers' meeting the first night of the convention. A total of 79 Florida FFA members attended and participated in the workshop.

THE PROCESS

The Around the World in 60 Minutes: Experiencing Leadership One Country at a Time workshop was based on a workshop developed by Rich Katt (personal communication, February 20, 2002) for the Cargill Experiential Leadership Night conducted at the 74th National FFA Convention held in Louisville, KY in October, 2001. Minor adaptations were made to accommodate a smaller time allotment and more limited resources. Minor modifications were also made to ensure age appropriateness of activities so as to include middle school participants.

As participants entered the room, they were given a "Passport to Leadership" that had a group number printed on the back. Participants were asked to sit at the table with their group number. As their table filled, they were asked to introduce themselves to and get to know their "traveling companions."

After a brief welcome from a workshop coordinator, participants were introduced to their "tour guide" for the workshop. The "tour guide" explained that there were eight "countries" each team had to visit as a team in one hour. At each country they would receive instructions about the task they were to complete from the station facilitator. After completing the task, each team member must get his/her passport stamped by one of the station facilitators prior to traveling to a new "country."

After receiving instructions from the tour guide, teams were given one hour to visit each of the eight stations. Table 1 summarizes the activities participants were asked to perform at each station. Table 1 also includes information about the materials participants needed to complete each task and the decorations, including facilitator costumes, used at each of the "countries."

As teams finished their trip around the world, the experience portion of this activity, they returned to the tour guide for further instructions. Each team was asked to think about the tasks they performed at each "country" and what they learned about leadership in the process. This was the information processing portion of the activity. Teams were each given a piece of flip chart paper and a marker and asked to write their own definition of leadership based on their experience. After all teams finished their definitions, the tour guide facilitated a discussion on the definitions as each team

Table 1. Florida FFA Convention Experiential Leadership Workshop

Country	Activities	Materials Needed	Decorations	Costume	Facilitator
Thailand	Create a list of fun activities that "tie a chapter" together	Paper ties Yarn	Thailand Poster	Monk robes Woven hats	
Iceland	Team must work together to create a list of 10 best icebreakers for workshops	Paper	Iceland Poster Snowflakes	Velvet robe	
Nepal	Two teams compete to build the tallest tower from gummy worms and straws	Gummy Worms Straws	Nepal Poster	Hat Cape for warmth	
Kenya	Make tribal mask that represents the strengths that each member brings to the team. Answer questions about how to use the strengths.	Paper Markers	Kenya Poster	Safari hats Leopard cloth	
Morocco	Interpretive belly dance about leadership --- two or three should dance and the rest make music and interpret the dance.	Finger cymbals Drums Maracas	Morocco Poster	Fez hats Arabian outfits	
China	Use chopsticks to see how many jelly beans they can pick up and put in a container. They must come up with one leadership skill people need for each jelly bean they pick up	Jelly Beans Containers Chopsticks	China Poster Paper Umbrellas Lanterns	Ninja costume	
Fiji	Limbo in pairs. Two teams limbo against each other.	Limbo sticks Radio	Fiji Poster Limbo music Hawaiian table cloth	Saraongs/grass skirts Shell bras	
India	Everyone gets on a carpet square and recites the creed	Carpet square Copy of the Creed	India Poster	Cloth wrap	

Note: Based on an activity created by Rich Katt for the Cargill Experiential Leadership Night, National FFA Convention,

presented their definition to the entire group. As the tour guide concluded the discussion, participants were asked to reflect on what they learned during the workshop and think about how they could take what they learned back to their own chapters. One participant provided the following comment:

"I enjoyed the creativity in the workshop. The workshop opened my eyes to what my chapter needs to work on."

The workshop was concluded when several reflections were offered and after the participants thanked all of the workshop coordinators and facilitators.

PARTICIPANT EVALUATION

Prior to leaving the workshop, participants provided feedback on the workshop. They were asked to identify what they liked and disliked about the workshop as well as what they learned about leadership. On a final note, participants were asked to identify which of the "countries" they visited was their favorite and why.

The feedback provided by the workshop participants was overwhelmingly positive. When asked what they liked about the workshop, several major themes emerged. In general, participants enjoyed meeting new people, working together as a team, the variety of activities included in and the interactive nature of the workshop, and the fact that they had fun. Some comments about what participants liked about the workshop include:

"Mostly everything: using teamwork, having fun, doing all of the activities & meeting people."

"That at every station we had a fun activity that had a lesson with it."

"We got to 'travel around the world' and complete tasks that require teamwork and leadership."

"The ability to move around & do things hands on not just listen to a speaker."

"Learning leadership skills in a fun way while being able to meet new people."

The feedback from participants was generally positive, and few participants identified any aspect of the workshop that they disliked. Of those who indicated a dislike, the major criticism of the workshop, as identified by the participants, was the limited space available in the room and hallway. Also, since teams were allowed to visit the "countries" in any order they chose, some teams had to wait at a particular country while other teams finished the task. Some participants indicated that they were uncomfortable with some of the activities that required them to do something "crazy". By far the most reported dislike of the workshop was that it began at 8:00 am. Some comments about what participants disliked about the workshop include:

"Was not a lot of room."

"The time. Was too early."

"There was a backup at many of the countries."

"Some things were slightly embarrassing."

When asked what they learned about leadership from the workshop, responses varied. Many participants recognized the value of teamwork and indicated that there was more to leadership than they originally thought. Some of the participant comments include:

"No matter what - you can't do it on your own. You have to be well-rounded and honest & fair."

"It is all about teamwork, determination, honesty, responsibility, & communication & most of all it's fun."

"I learned that you can't have a team w/o a leader and you can't have a leader w/o a team. Everyone has to work together to accomplish tasks."

"You have to listen to everyone to be a good leader."

"Leadership can't come from just one person everyone has to be a leader."

These responses are in-line with what many leadership theorists and educators have been espousing for years. This was a great indicator of the effectiveness of the workshop and the *activities*, in particular, as a method of teaching leadership to students.

FACILITATOR EVALUATION

The station facilitators also provided feedback on their experience with the workshop. Similar to the participants, facilitators were asked what they both liked and disliked about facilitating their station. Station facilitators also provided feedback on what aspect of the workshop they believed to be most beneficial to participants in terms of their learning about leadership.

In general, facilitators indicated that they liked the fast-paced nature of the activity, the ability to interact with the FFA members, and the opportunity to have fun and role-play. The biggest dislike about facilitating a station reported was that because there was always a team at each country, there was no opportunity for facilitators to observe what was going on at the other stations.

Station facilitators were generally positive in their comments about the most beneficial aspect of the workshop in terms of what participants learned about leadership. Many comments indicated that the facilitators believed it was good for

participants to have to work together as a team at many of the stations and saw the fact that teams were composed of individuals from various chapters around the state as an asset of the workshop. Perhaps the following comments by two of the station facilitators sum up this workshop best:

"There were so many good aspects to the workshop. Probably having the students formulate their own definition of leadership was one of the best things."

"They were up on their feet and this captured their attention. Learning by doing for people this age is the most effective way."

CONCLUSIONS

According to the participant and facilitator comments, the workshop was a success. The question that must be asked, however, is "Was this success due to the fancy costumes and crazy activities included in the workshop, or due to the fact that students actually experienced something, processed it, and reflected on their experience?" Without more detailed evaluation procedures, it is impossible to know for sure, but participant comments suggests that the craziness made it fun, but the structure (experience, processing, and reflection) of the activity is what facilitated the leadership learning.

We realize that many of the activities were specific to FFA members, who had certain interests and were of a certain age group. It should be noted, however that the activities can be modified to fit the needs of any group, team, or organization.

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