

Leadership Communication Exercise: Not An Ordinary Cup

Facilitator Guide

Purpose: The purpose of this exercise is to teach students to develop and communicate ideas to others, and to listen to the ideas that others present.

Materials: one disposable plastic cup per group (or similarly generic, ordinary item); paper and pens for all students.

Method: Students will be challenged to create a list of ideas for use of a plastic cup, then discuss those ideas in groups to create a group list of possible uses.

As facilitator, it is your responsibility to introduce the exercise, to supervise during the individual work period and the small-group discussion period, and to lead a concluding discussion.

Goal: The goal of this exercise is to prepare students to effectively develop and communicate ideas and to listen to the ideas of others.

Timeline

Introduction: Five (5) minutes

Individual reading and response: Five (5) minutes

Small group discussion and response: Fifteen (15) minutes

Large group discussion of leadership: Five (5) minutes

Introduction (in your own words): Leaders must be able to develop ideas and then communicate those ideas to others. Leaders must also be able to listen to ideas others bring to them and evaluate those ideas; leaders must even be willing to accept ideas from others in place of their own ideas for the accomplishment of shared goals.

In this exercise you will each receive a sheet of paper and a pen. On the table in front of you is a plastic cup (or similar generic, ordinary object). You will spend the first ten minutes creating your own personal list of potential uses for the cup. Each use must be distinct: drinking water, drinking milk, drinking juice, and drinking beer are all the same single use. Your goal will be 25 distinct uses.

At the end of the ten minutes, I will ask you to move to the second part of the exercise. As a group, you will discuss potential uses for the cup, and create a group list of 50 distinct uses. You may use ideas from any individual list. As a group, you will need to select a leader to guide your

discussion of these potential uses; the leader should, in turn, select someone else to record your group answers.

Conclusion (in your own words): Leadership requires ideas. As a leader, you will encounter a difficult situation and be forced to create a new way forward. At the same time, leaders must learn to listen to the ideas of those around them. If you are the owner of Plastic Cup, Inc., you will need to explore every potential market for your product. Some will work, some won't, but until you learn to communicate your own ideas and listen to the ideas of others, you probably won't find the best possible market and everyone associated with the company will suffer. Leadership requires communication every single day.