

How to Become an Effective Leader

LEADERSHIP AND ORGANIZATIONAL SKILLS FOR OFFICERS OF STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS

Student organizations offer students the opportunity to become involved and hold responsible leadership positions in various organizations. They also offer activities, which enhance the quality of life at IU Kokomo. Student organizations encourage participation in co-curricular activities and recognize their importance to the personal and educational development of the students.

Organizations are formed because their members share common interests and goals. As a leader, you will help your group move towards realizing its goals. The following are some ideas to consider when thinking about taking on leadership roles.

LEADERSHIP

Successful organizations will most likely be those with effective leaders. Leadership can be described as a process of influencing other's behavior towards achieving certain goals. Recent theories regarding effective leadership skills seem to be in agreement that there is no one best style of leadership. Rather, leadership style should vary depending on the situation, maturity level of the group, and the difficulty of the task. Accurately assessing what the members of the group need and altering your leadership style to fit those needs should result in goal attainment.

Leaders can emphasize TASK behavior or RELATIONSHIP behavior. TASK behavior is directive and the leader is involved in organizing and defining the job to be done. RELATIONSHIP behavior stresses personal interaction, positive feedback, and emotional support.

The following are some examples of different leadership styles.

You are the chairperson of a new committee that is organizing a fund-raising activity for the first time. Your members are fairly young and inexperienced. The best leadership style would probably be HIGH TASK, LOW RELATIONSHIP because of the low maturity level of the group. The chairperson would probably need to assign tasks, describe what needs to be done, and follow up. Building a relationship may not be too important here.

On the other hand, if you are the president of an organization sponsoring its annual dance, and the vice-president for programming is in charge, probably a LOW TASK and LOW RELATIONSHIP approach would be appropriate. The vice-president can carry on with little interaction with the president because he/she knows what needs to be done and how to do it.

Appropriate leadership styles depend on the maturity level of the group and the difficulty of the task. If a relatively easy task needs to be accomplished by an inexperienced member, perhaps all that may be needed is some moral support from the leader and positive feedback for job well done.

LEADERSHIP AND ETHICS

Students on today's campuses encounter a variety of complex situations for which they are often ill prepared by experience or individual development. The relationship between students' attitudes and values and the environment that supports or challenges them creates an ongoing struggle between confirmation and rejection that affects the ethical positions and choices of both the individual and the institution. The distinctive nature of IU Kokomo affects the values and interests manifested in the campus climate and the overall effect on the college experience on the student.

Issues facing higher education, such as racism, sexism, homophobia, substance abuse, and academic dishonesty, argue for the pursuit of an ethical environment that consistently asserts the importance of human dignity, nourishes growth and achievement, and insists on respect, interpersonal communication and relations. Student leaders are called to a higher standard in recognizing and upholding these ethical dimensions.

MANAGING AN EFFECTIVE ORGANIZATION

MEETINGS: A well-organized meeting will give members a sense of purpose and accomplishment and the feeling that their time was well spent.

- ~ Arrange for a time most people can attend.
- ~ Arrange for a meeting place and room.
- ~ Publicize meeting- notify members and advisor.
- ~ Start and end on time.
- ~ Ask questions to start discussions and bring out different points of view.

INITIAL MEETING: Your first meeting should orient members to your organization. Introduction of members is important along with an introduction of the officers and their roles. Some other important areas to cover at your first meeting:

- ~ The goals of the organization.
- ~ Role of organization within the University.
- ~ Discuss budget.
- ~ Any specific plans that have already been made.
- ~ Role of the advisor.

MINUTES: It is important to record what occurs at your meetings. A secretary should be appointed to take minutes. People who attended, important discussions, and decisions the group made should be included. If a task was assigned to someone or a date decided upon, it should be recorded. These records can serve to inform new members and officers about the activities your organization was involved in during the past year. In addition, it can help to solve questions concerning what was decided upon at your past meetings.

AGENDA: It is a good idea to prepare a written agenda. If the group is small enough, distribute it to members. A carefully thought out agenda will help your meeting be orderly and will stimulate group discussion. Don't overcrowd your agenda. Anticipate how much time you will need for each item. **LONG MEETINGS BECOME TEDIOUS.**

Arrange items in logical sequence. The last item should be arrangements for the next meeting.

It is the President's job to make sure the members follow the agenda so that meetings run efficiently. You may have to bring people back on track by stating something like, "I THINK WE NEED TO GET BACK TO THE ISSUE WE WERE DISCUSSING."

Make sure important issues are discussed thoroughly. Introduce each item, explaining why it is there, and what the group is supposed to do with it.

SAMPLE MEETING AGENDA

Name of group

Place

Date

Time

- I. Attendance
- II. Minutes
- III. Review Correspondence (itemized)
- IV. Officers' Reports (itemized)
- V. Committee Reports (itemized)
- VI. Old Business (itemized)
- VII. New Business (itemized when possible)
- VIII. Announcements
- IX. Closure- Plan for next meeting

(You may want to include an advisor's report.)

MEETING EVALUATION: You can evaluate your meeting from two perspectives: 1) content and 2) process.

CONTENT: Content refers to what was said and accomplished at the meeting. Were discussions relevant? Were tasks goal-related? Was the agenda helpful?

You need to intervene if there is a problem with content. **EX:** "Last week we spent 20 minutes reading and correcting the minutes. You all received a copy of the minutes. There is no need to reread them. Let's quickly make any corrections."

PROCESS: Process is the way members relate to each other. It is the behavior you observe at the meeting. Does someone always monopolize? Is someone usually left out? Are there power groups? Evaluate how communication is affecting your meetings. You may have to intervene if there is a problem with process. Look for non-verbal clues. **EX:** "Joe, from your expression it seems as if you disagree with that's being discussed. Could you tell us how you feel about this plan?" Spend some time evaluating what has occurred at your meetings in order to address any problems and concerns you have. Remember to recognize a successful meeting. A statement such as, "I think we really accomplished something today" can be a good motivator.

PROGRAM PLANNING

Most organizations will sponsor a program or event during the year. Planning for your program will help insure its success. First decide on its purpose: social, recreational, service, entertainment, educational, fund-raiser, other.

You will need to decide your program goals and then plan toward them. This is a good time to appoint a committee with a chairperson. A committee can be an efficient way of planning and making decisions. When planning a program consider:

- ~ A date and place that doesn't conflict with other University programs.
- ~ What has to be done, who will do it, and when will it be done?
- ~ Cost - How much will it cost?
- ~ How will you finance it?
- ~ Publicity
- ~ Who will attend? How many do you expect?
- ~ Food served
- ~ Security

REMEMBER: Give thanks and recognition to everyone who worked on the event. Follow up and evaluation are important elements of any program. This is where you review what worked and what you could do better next time. Some things to consider are:

- ~ What went well?
- ~ What didn't work?
- ~ How could you have done it easier or better?
- ~ What have you learned?
- ~ Was your goal accomplished?

REMEMBER: Go to Student Activities Office, pay bills, keep receipts, deposit money collected.

BRAINSTORMING

Brainstorming can be used in many instances, particularly when you're stuck for ideas for a new project or program, or are looking for a solution to a problem. This is a method where members share thoughts and ideas to generate a list of suggestions in order to eventually choose one that will be implemented.

STEPS:

1. Each member generates a list of ideas concerning the topic at hand.
2. Go around the room. Recorder records all ideas on newsprint until there are no more ideas left. Remember - no criticism or discussion of ideas. All ideas are welcome.
3. After all ideas are collected - analyze.
4. Combine several ideas to make a realistic suggestion.
5. Discard impractical ideas.
6. Vote on the three best ideas and discuss. Think about money, manpower, time, etc.
7. Pick strongest suggestions and implement.
8. Brainstorming can be a useful tool to help your organization generate new ideas.

MOTIVATION

One of the most common complaints we hear from student leaders is that their members aren't motivated and that only a few exert any effort on behalf of the organization. Some things for you to consider are that most people:

- ~ Need opportunities for growth and self-development.
- ~ Will respond to opportunities for challenge, responsibility, and interesting work.
- ~ Need their efforts recognized.
- ~ Want to belong and to develop relationships within the organization.
- ~ Want to be informed about the group and feel involved.

SOME TIPS FOR MOTIVATING MEMBERS:

- ~ Be enthusiastic.
- ~ Delegate authority. This helps to get your members involved and limits burn out.
- ~ Tell people what you expect of them.
- ~ Give constructive criticism privately.
- ~ Be honest.
- ~ Encourage opinions and suggestions at meetings.
- ~ Respect others' opinions.
- ~ Don't monopolize (or let anyone else monopolize) the meeting.

- ~ Encourage discussion about controversial issues in order for the organization to reach an informed decision.
- ~ Make use of members with special talents, skills, etc. Have a party or social event to generate interest.
- ~ Reward and recognize member's work.

REMEMBER: If the members are motivated and involved your job will be easier.

CONFLICT RESOLUTION

If, during a group discussion, consensus is not reached and dissent rather than decision occurs, you may need to meet to resolve these conflicts.

- ~ Meet with those people involved in the conflict.
- ~ Ask yourself if this is a personal problem between members or a split within the organization.
- ~ Don't try to resolve personal problems in an open meeting.
- ~ Draw people into discussion, encouraging them to give their point of view.
- ~ Discuss the problem, not each other.
- ~ Discuss its effect on members and the organization.
- ~ Do not allow smart remarks, slurs, etc.
- ~ State facts and observable behavior. **EX:** "I never heard from you regarding the cost of the invitations." **NOT** "You are irresponsible. You can't be trusted."
- ~ Don't talk about irrelevant issues. Discuss the present. Stay on the subject.
- ~ Suggest alternatives.
- ~ Leave the meeting with everyone understanding what was accomplished.
- ~ Bring closure to the meeting. State any actions which will be taken. **EX:** "It seems there was miscommunication. We agreed that from now on each committee chairperson will call the president once a Week to give a status report."

REMEMBER: A problem within your organization will probably not automatically disappear. If you confront the problem and work to resolve the issue, the atmosphere of the group will most likely improve.

Publicity Tips

- ~ Your group, its events and programs need to be publicized in order to attract people.
- ~ Information needs to be easily understood, attractive, and informative.
- ~ Include the name of the event, date, time, place, contact person, cost, name of sponsoring organization, etc.

- ~ Be creative.
 - ~ Allow enough time for the publicity to reach your potential audience.
 - ~ Use more than one method to advertise (newspaper, mail, radio, posters, etc.)
 - ~ Decide whom you want to reach, and use different techniques to reach your target group.
 - ~ Word of mouth is good publicity.
 - ~ Publicity should be tasteful. Make sure no one is offended.
- REMEMBER: Check posting policies.

FUND-RAISING IDEAS

There are several ideas which can be used to help raise money for your organization.

- ~ Selling ads to include in a program or newsletter
- ~ Car wash
- ~ Commission sales: you sell a product and receive a percentage of the sales
- ~ Collect dues
- ~ Donations- either money or materials
- ~ Charge admission to an event
- ~ Cash ballots- (people vote for a contestant in some event with nickels, dimes, etc. and the winner is the contestant with the most money.)
- ~ Sell T-shirts, hats, buttons, posters, etc.
- ~ Coupon book sales

REMEMBER: Fund-raising activities can help motivate members and generate publicity for your organization.

LEADERSHIP TRANSITION

Leadership transition is an important part of your responsibility. Outgoing officers need to take the time to orient new officers to their jobs. This consists of turning over your organization's materials, its documents, policies, and procedures to them. It is also the time for reviewing the officers' responsibilities and sharing the year's goals, the group's successes and failures.

A policy of training new officers will encourage members who have potential but lack the self-confidence to seek responsible positions. The opportunity to work with outgoing officers will help insure a smooth transition.

Be sure to review your organization's resources, financial procedures, financial situation, and its relationship with the advisor with the incoming officers.

It is a good idea to go over the officer's responsibilities at a meeting several weeks prior to elections. This will give people a chance to think about seeking office and to ask questions of current officers.

It is suggested that new officers be elected in the beginning of spring semester so the remainder of the semester can be used for transitional activities.