Transforming People Problems

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Professor

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Assignment #4 – Course Learning Journal

The journal is a written reflection of your learning journey while working in each course. The

Learning Journal integrates the essential elements of the course within your professional field of

interest. The objective of the course journal is to produce a degree of acculturation, integrating

new ideas into your existing knowledge of each course. This is also an opportunity to

communicate with your professor insights gained as a result of the course. The course learning

journal should be 3-5 pages in length and should include the following sections:

1. Introduction –Summarize the intent of the course, how it fits into the graduate program

as a whole, and the relevance of its position in the curricular sequence.

2. Personal Growth - Describe your personal growth–how the course stretched or

challenged you– and your progress in mastery of course content and skills during the

week and through subsequent readings – what new insights or skills you gained.

3. Reflective Entry - Add a reflective entry that describes the contextualization (or

adaptation and relevant application) of new learning in your professional field. What

questions or concerns have surfaced about your professional field as a result of your

study?

4. Conclusion – Evaluate the effectiveness of the course in meeting your professional,

religious, and educational goals.

 This present course, Transforming People Problems, immediately pulls the otherwise academic, sociologic, and theological exercises of prior courses into practical reality asserting the “why and for whom” these endeavors are meant to interact. It is for people. Us and them. The focus, the goal, of the academic endeavor must apply the best learning toward the betterment of people and the relationships that abound. Naturally, whenever people are the focus, so the problems of humanity which resist change and transformation. Herein lies the strategic advantage of this course at this stage of the DSL curriculum.

 The course essential elements concerning leadership styles, interdisciplinary perspective on human behavior, motivating change, and communication and conflict resolution seek to establish the relationship necessary between the academic exercise and the purpose for which these exercises are intended. Our course title, Transforming People Problems, can be read in two principal ways. First, the emphasis can be placed on the transformation of *People*, primarily. This involves the implementation of quality leadership necessary to assist people in the journey towards a transformed perspective or lifestyle. Two dominant styles of leadership emerge: an authoritarian variety and a come-alongside style. Both approaches have their effectiveness, but the emphasis and current readings from the course favor a less authoritarian style in favor of leadership styles that lead from alongside or, even, from behind, allowing for the fuller expression of each person, their emphasis, and their likes and dislikes, to inform the transformation more organically.

 Leaders desiring this style of assisting people must be equipped across a wider range of interdisciplinary perspectives related to human behavior. Each person, making up a group of people, will have nuances and uniqueness requiring finesse from “alongside” leaders that can better assist the struggles associated with transformation, be it personal or interpersonal or corporate.

 The second emphasis of the course is found in the third and fourth essential elements. By focusing on the motivation of change and the valuable tools of communication and conflict resolution, this course can be viewed as transforming *Problems*. The assessment of problems afflicting society, culture, corporate groups, or individuals, necessarily finds an outlet in the motivation of change. The correction of people problems requires the skillful motivation of change so that the core inputs contributing to the propagation of problems finds a reset and a resource for people existing together in new ways.

 When problems are present between people, the overwhelming need to the motivation of change will hinge on people’s ability to communicate and eventually resolve conflict that otherwise inflames the conditions needing transformation. The alongside leader can be a toolbox of skillsets enabling a variety of methods to assist people to confront and communicate that which has proven to be an impediment to change, and thus provide the best path forward for re-solving the needs of their shared environment together allowing for the transformations, i.e. the better way forward, that this course intends to address.

 In my sphere, I regularly gather folks from my community, both young and old to discuss relevant hot topics within our shared culture. There are many differing experiences, backgrounds, and points of view in any given gathering. To assist the thought architecture of the group, each participant is asked to read a certain exert from a book or article before attending. The first hour of the sessions centers on mutually understanding the terms used in the reading, in hopes of gaining a shared vocabulary that can be utilized throughout the remainder of the evening to begin to drill down on individual perceptions, fears, misunderstandings, etc. The simplicity of shared vocabulary gained from the common reading source assists in more clearly defining problems related to the topic at hand. Likewise, as problems become clearly articulated, the desire (motivation) for change can become palpable in the participants. Open communication, active listening, and a general respect for each person’s experience opens a genuine path for not only communicating on a deeper level, but often provides an open pathway towards resolution, whereby the group of individuals, equipped with shared vocabulary and understanding, can effectively re-solve the problem in group discussions.

It is quite remarkable to see in practice. Although I have called it Thought Architecting, it is far deeper experience than thoughts alone. Dare I say we encounter spiritual architecture once shared vocabulary can be employed to convey the needs of the heart. Needless to say, the essential elements of this course have been wonderful to identify afresh in the practice of leading my own transformational sessions with people.

I suspect we will never graduate from the need to periodically refresh ourselves as leaders who engage people (and their problems) with the tools, paradigms, and relevant skills necessary to continually serve those with whom we interact in business, ministry, and all walks of life. This course finds it perch perfectly nestled within the academic and scholastic pursuits necessary to grow as educated leaders. But, as the placement of the course suggests, we must never forget for whom these acquired skills are intended to assist.