

Boston College

Carroll School of Management

Work-Based Learning Laboratory (WBLL) 2004-2005 Syllabus

Facilitator

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Overview of WBLL

Most of us have come to associate explicit learning with the classroom: knowledge is captured in textbooks, packaged and presented by teachers and professors. The Work-Based Learning Laboratory (WBLL) is based on a complementary premise—that learning can emerge from and within the setting of the “real world” of work.

Learning within this paradigm is concerned with the surfacing, in the safe presence of trusting peers, those social, political, psychological, and even emotional reactions can both enhance and inhibit operating effectiveness. The work-based learning process is based on three premises:

- 1) Action is an excellent source of learning dedicated to the task at hand
- 2) Knowledge is created and used by groups, so learning is everyone's job
- 3) An aptitude for learning-to-learn enables transformational action

Objectives of WBLL

- Participants embrace a paradigm of learning that extends beyond the classroom
- Participants develop skills of self-reflection
- Participants develop skills of collaborative learning, facilitating the learning of others and helping others become better learning facilitators
- Participants become more “present,” aware in real time of their own assumptions and their impact on learning
- Participants recognize opportunities for learning in their work environment

Required reading

You will need to purchase the following book, which will provide the majority of the assigned reading for the second half of the WBLL. It is available from vendors such as Amazon.com or Barnesandnoble.com (we've had good luck with buying used copies!):

- Douglas Stone, Bruce Patton, & Sheila Heen. 2000. *Difficult conversations: How to discuss what matters most*. NY: Penguin.

Optional: Joseph A. Raelin. 2000. *Work-based learning: The new frontier of management development*. Upper Saddle, NJ: Prentice Hall.

WBL Structure and Strategy

Just as a laboratory allows a chemist to experiment in a controlled environment to test their ideas, the Work-Based Learning Laboratory represents a space for participants to practice vital learning skills. While chemists use such resources as beakers and Bunsen burners, in the WBL your primary resources are each other and your collective experiences. The centerpiece of the WBL, therefore, is the regular meeting of your learning team. Meetings will include regular “check-ins” about you and your work; discussion about assigned readings; and dialog to help participants work through learning challenges. Your team will meet ten times during the WBL, with each session lasting approximately three hours.

Your learning team is staffed by a trained facilitator whose role is to observe the team and provide feedback both to individual members and to the team as a whole on their interpersonal processes. Your facilitator is not the team’s designated leader, nor the team’s only instructor. Rather, the facilitator—through process consultation—seeks to ensure that the members of the team maintain ownership of their own learning and increase their capacity for reflection on their actions and experiences. (Process consultation entails the facilitator’s offering interventions aimed at increasing the effectiveness of how the team interacts.) In the beginning of the laboratory, your facilitator will provide you with readings, general frameworks, and tools to use in the WBL. At other times, your facilitator may suggest further readings that will allow you to explore a topic more deeply. Also, your facilitator might lead a discussion or reflection session or, if requested by the team, deal with a particular issue the team has not been able to resolve on its own (e.g., a repeated absence of a member, a theoretical question, an unproductive pattern of interaction). Ultimately these issues will gradually fall upon the team itself to manage collectively.

While much of the content and the issues the learning team will deal with will emerge organically as the WBL develops, it may help you to have an initial idea of what types of things we may end up discussing, including:

- Mental models about “team work”
- Individual Differences
- Organizational Culture/Socialization
- Receiving performance reviews
- Dealing with difficult clients
- Working long hours
- Work politics
- Ethical concerns
- Emotions at work
- Performing menial tasks
- Nomadic nature of a 1st-year
- Work-Life Balance
- Re-assessing career choice
- Asking for time off

As mentioned, one aspect of the facilitator’s role is to provide you feedback, which will come in many forms. You will receive feedback in the form of “in the moment” interventions addressing the effectiveness of your interpersonal interactions. You will receive feedback at the end of each learning team meeting addressing the effectiveness of your learning strategies. You will also receive feedback in the form of comments and grades on WBL requirements. These requirements are described below:

Laboratory Participation. Since the laboratory is first and foremost a setting for you and your co-learners to learn a *process* of learning, there is a fundamental expectation that you participate actively and thoughtfully during learning team discussions. Participation is not equivalent to talkativeness; rather it is based on thoughtful comments during laboratory discussions, especially those based upon critical commentary on the journalizing, reading assignments, and integrating your experiences with those of your fellow participants. Your participation will compose 35% of your WBLL grade. A fundamental philosophy of the WBLL is that the team learns from itself, so participation is core to everyone's learning. Consequently, everyone's attendance is critical to the team's success. We will set the times for our meetings as far in advance as possible in order to ensure everyone's attendance.

Laboratory Facilitation. In addition to participating in each laboratory meeting participants will be required to take the 'lead' as the facilitator during one meeting. The facilitator will determine how the assigned topic is addressed and may distribute any additional readings/materials prior to the meeting they deem appropriate. As noted previously in this syllabus, the role of the facilitator is fluid, and the level of intervention and feedback will be dependant upon each particular meeting. At the end of the meeting the facilitator will provide feedback to the rest of the team at the end of the session. Your facilitation will compose 20% of your grade, 10% of which will be based on facilitating the meeting itself, and 10% will be based on a journalized reflection on your experiences as facilitator.

Journal Writing and Presentation. Journalizing represents a written record of your reflection which, in turn, is thinking about what has happened or what is likely to happen and why. Hence, it can become a critical part of your becoming self-aware and of your developing effective learning capability. Keeping a journal can help you integrate learning from your experience, readings, learning team, and class discussions, and become aware of patterns in your own and others' behavior. You will be expected to keep a regular journal throughout the term of the WBLL, and that journal—if kept faithfully—will greatly assist the writing of your final reflection paper (to be described next).

Your journalizing can also provide material to spur the learning of the other members of your learning team. Sharing your experiences may help others to imagine situations they will soon face and to imagine their constructive handling of those experiences; your reflections may show others different and creative ways of interpreting and making sense of readings and experiences. As such, you may be expected to share some journal entries with other team members both verbally and in writing during the WBLL. At two to three points throughout the laboratory, you will receive in-depth feedback on your journalizing from your team facilitator. The evaluation for this component of your grade will be made based on the completion of the journalizing requirements, the depth of your reflection, and the use of journalizing in preparation of in-class sharing and collaboration. Your journalizing will compose 25% of your WBLL grade.

Final Reflection Paper. As a capstone reflective exercise, you will write a 10-12 page paper concerning your learning from the WBLL. The content of the paper will be entirely self-directed. You may want to focus on how the readings have impacted your learning, the role of journalizing on your learning, or the ways in which discussing your experiences with your teammates changed your learning. Alternatively, you may want to write about how you have learned from interactions with your peers, your supervisor, or your clients, or some combination of these. You are actively encouraged to cut-and-paste from your journals.

The evaluation of this paper is primarily a function of the explicitness of your reflection on your experiences and your ability to integrate the concepts surfaced in the team meetings into your learning. An excellent paper will show evidence of surfacing and testing assumptions about how to learn and how to be effective at work. It will leverage several concepts from our meetings and demonstrate how they affect your ability to learn effectively. It will evince your willingness to expose your vulnerabilities and become open to different ways of seeing and understanding. Your final reflection paper will comprise 20% of your WBLL grade.

Additional Characteristics for Evaluation:

1. **Integration and synthesis** of your own learning* themes from the laboratory
2. **Depth of engagement**- in terms of *personal reflection* and description of any new *behaviors* you developed in or outside of the lab.
3. **Quality of expression**-*Originality* of thought, *critical*, and *creative* thinking
4. **Concrete** details for examples and illustrations
5. **Quality of writing**-the writing should be clear, well structured, and free of grammatical, spelling, and typographical errors

So, what do I write in my final paper? Consider the following...

1. Before writing, review the syllabus and your journal.
2. Review what concepts, theories, authors, articles, or books were significant to you, what skills and knowledge were gained, and what application or demonstration of learning was involved.
3. Reflect on how the various activities interrelate. Identify and discuss integrating themes that ran through the various learning activities during the WBLL. Perhaps some aspects of the readings, your experiences during busy season, or a pattern that developed in the WBLL sessions (or journals) piqued your interest.
4. Consider the personal significance of the learning for you, its impact on your values, beliefs, assumptions, attitudes, and behaviors. Feel free to draw broadly from relevant experiences in your professional or personal life.
5. Think about areas for future learning the WBLL has encouraged you to consider.

*Learning can included but is not limited to:

- Models, theories, skills, authors, activities etc. discovered in a learning experience
- Self awareness (1st person) and understanding others (2nd person)
- The meaning you gain from learning the above
- The change these produce in your understanding and behavior

Preliminary Topic Schedule

Meeting	Topic	Reading
1	WBLL Overview, Individual Differences, Culture, Socialization	Syllabus
2	Introduction to the WBLL concepts	Raelin, "I don't have time to think! Versus the art of reflective practice"; Rogers & Farson, "Active Listening"; Torbert, First and Second Person Practice and Research excerpts from <i>Action Inquiry</i> .
3*	Reflective practices; Journalizing practice	MacFarlane: "Developing Reflective Students"
4*	First-person WBLL: Mental models	Senge: "Mental models"
5*	First-person WBLL: Emotional intelligence	Goleman: "What makes a leader?"; Drucker: "Managing oneself"
6*	Second-person WBLL: Learning through dialogue	Stone, et al.: Chapters 1 & 2
7*	Second-person WBLL: Learning through dialogue	Stone, et al.: Chapters 3 & 4
8*	Learning with/from/through emotions	Stone, et al.: Chapters 5 & 6
9*	Learning ethics	Bazerman, et al.: "Why good accountants do bad audits"; Badaracco, "We don't need another hero"
10	WBLL Wrap-up: Transition to sustainable WBL practices	Final paper prep

These meetings will be facilitated by members of the learning team. You will sign up for facilitation during the first session.