

# Impression Management: A Key Leadership Tool in DNP Graduates

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It was recognized that at least half of our Doctor of Nursing (DNP) students did not truly see themselves as future leaders nor did they understand the difference between their unique personality preferences and the role requirements of a leader. For example, their personality preference may be avoidance of conflict, but in their role as a leader they are required to hold people accountable for the clinical outcomes. Our goal was to communicate that there are visual, vocal (pitch, tone, pace), and verbal cues of leadership and that these effect their credibility as leaders. In leadership, the role responsibilities must overshadow personality preferences when there is a difference.

First impression counts, especially when we know it takes 8-10 experiences to alter this first impression. With only 20% of this impression being the content of what is said, the DNP student needs to learn how to also manage the other 80% of the impression they leave. You cannot discuss impression management without discussing self image, as it lies at the heart of the elements of leadership development. One's view of self profoundly affects all components of the impression matrix- perceptual, cognitive, behavioral and emotional.

Therefore, our college provided a two-hour seminar on professional role development during our summer residency week for 21 doctoral students. We utilized the Kaufman Partnership, a nationally recognized firm that understands the need for impression management skills in the leadership role. Six principles underlie the impression matrix and are the foundation of the Kaufman Impression Management System assessment tool. This system consists of a matrix which gives a theoretical overview, a profile for assessment, and a development plan which reviews appropriate action strategies intended to increase one's ability to create good impressions.

This seminar allows students to look at their present assets and needs for change in a non-threatening environment by using a valid and reliable assessment tool. They assess themselves on 24-factors known to create positive or negative impressions. They learn how to use their assets to overcome their problematic areas by acknowledging what they will start doing, stop doing and continue to do on the worksheet planning tool. We have received permission to display the Kaufman Impression Management System assessment tool with the poster.

The evaluation of the seminar was unanimously positive. Examples of student listed learning are "impression profile profoundly increased my level of self-awareness," "have a more accurate view of myself and what I need to change," "I have strategies on how to increase my presence for a leadership role," "now I know why professional dress matters in a leadership role," and "I see how my impression can affect people's willingness to trust what I say." All students listed the need for more time to increase the effectiveness of the program. For next year, the time allotted will increase by an hour to allow for more dialogue time. We will also show some before and after images of students presenting. The authors believe that this nontraditional curricular approach is a necessary component of leadership development that should be imbedded in all doctoral programs. ***We need to see ourselves as leaders to have others see us as leaders.*** This seminar assisted students to understand that the impression they will make as future leaders begins with image development.

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