

Assignment #1: Company Visits  
Leadership Lab Course Material

## COMPANY VISIT

### Purpose

The purpose of the visit is to expose students to interesting leaders, teams, and organizations in the area of social responsibility and business innovation. Through shadowing, observation, and interviews participants learn what practical issues and challenges business leaders face when dealing with triple-bottom-line innovations that create economic, social, and environmental value.

*How do leaders lead triple-bottom-line innovations that generate economic, social, and environmental value?*

- ¶ What success stories exist?
- ¶ What hinders: biggest challenges and stumbling blocks?
- ¶ What helps: useful infrastructures and effective practices?
- ¶ What sort of leadership (context) does it take?

### Preparation (Session 1)

1. Discuss what you know so far about the organization you are going to visit, and what interests you about the organization.
2. Choose a group speaker. The role of the speaker is:
  - ⇒ to confirm the visit with the contact person at the company;
  - ⇒ to thank the hosts at the beginning and the end of the visit; and
  - ⇒ to allocate other jobs among team members (research; travel logistics).
3. Set a time for the next team preparation meeting.

### Preparation Before Visit

1. Use the Internet to gather background information about your company.
2. Develop a list of interview questions.
3. Generate an observation guide (see IDEO handout).
4. Make travel plans and have your group speaker confirm your visit.
5. Review Dialogue-Interview Manual (see Lecture 3.pdf).

## **During the Visit**

1. Record your observations and questions in a journal.
2. Observe: Pay attention to actual leadership practices: How do leaders lead? More specifically, pay attention to how leaders are able to create an environment where initiatives and innovations take place. What works? What gets in the way?
3. Try to elicit real leadership stories. Ask your interviewee to talk about actual instances in which innovations were facilitated or hindered. What did your interviewee learn from those experiences?
4. Access your ignorance: Pay attention to what you don't know.

## **After the Visit: Debriefing**

1. Start the debriefing right after leaving the building. Use the first moments or minutes to reflect in silence. Capture the images that the visit evoked in your mind. Write them down in your journal. And write down what struck you most during the visit. What stood out?
2. With the other group members, read your journal entries aloud. Continue reflecting on your strongest impressions and the images that remain with you. Discuss.
  - ⇒ What stood out?
  - ⇒ What striking stories did you hear about leaders leading corporate social innovation?
  - ⇒ What stumbling blocks and challenges are leaders up against?
  - ⇒ What helping infrastructures and practices did you hear leaders describe?
  - ⇒ What do leaders do?
  - ⇒ What did you see or hear that you didn't expect (surprises or disconfirming data)?
  - ⇒ What seems to make this organization click?
3. Use the results of the debriefing for your presentation the next day. The presentation should convey basic facts about the company you visited as well as the results of your debriefing. Present the results in 5-10 minutes (for each group).