

# What Makes Us Play Follow the Leader?

**Directions:** Why do individuals decide to follow certain leaders? There are many reasons to follow, and this activity is designed to actively illustrate several of these. Ask for five volunteers from the audience and draw them off to the side. Have each individual draw (you should have printed out the rationales below and cut them into separate pieces) a rationale to act out in front of the group. Allow them about 5 minutes to leave the room/area to prepare a 25-30 second role play of their rationale, and then have the audience guess which rationale was acted out. Make sure to tell the actors that if they really “go for it” its more fun for both them and the audience.

NOTE: If this is too intimidating for individuals to role play in front of the large group, have the large group break into small groups of five individuals. Have each person in the smaller groups draw a follower rationale from below and act it out within their small group. This is usually considered a little less intimidating, and allows each person in the group to actively participate in the activity (it also seems more fair when everyone has to do a role play).

**Fear of Retribution**—“If I do not follow, I may lose my job!” Following out of fear isn’t as much following as it is using a coercive type of power. The leader in this case only continues being successful (in maintaining followers) as long as the follower sees no other option. Not a tool of effective (and ethical) leaders.

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**Blind Hope**—“We must do something, and I hope this works!” In this situation, the follower is desperate for some solution and is probably only following due to a lack of alternatives. Leaders should watch out for followers like these, as they are likely to flee and follow others who give them more hope.

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**Faith in Leader**—“What a great person. If anyone knows the answer, they do!” Here, the follower is blind to the solution but follows because they have put faith in the leader. Leaders should also be wary of these individuals, as they believe that by some magic or genius, the leader will provide the answer to the follower’s needs. Disappointment is inevitable, and no leader is perfect.

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**Intellectual Agreement**—“What a good idea, that certainly makes sense!” Logic guides this rationale, and the follower understands the logic of the argument the leader is putting forward. This type of followership is common for educated individuals who need to comprehend why things happen.

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**Buying the Vision**—“What a brilliant idea, I don’t care who thought of it!” When followers buy a vision, they are emotionally identifying with a view of the future that appeals to them in some way. They are not just following a leader or logic; they are focused on the idea of moving toward the shared goals of a group or organization. This is a very useful rationale for leaders to work toward, but only if it can be sustained over a period of time.