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ABSTRACT

Many students, especially those with little international experience seem to lack a true appreciation for the challenge faced by expatriates as they prepare for an international assignment. This exercise will introduce a quiz game developed to provide students with an increased sense of the magnitude of knowledge an expatriate may need. The game is designed to provide flexibility in it's final design to allow for it's use in diverse settings.

INTRODUCTION

As our economic system becomes ever more globalized it seems logical that more of today's students may face the challenges of international assignments in their careers. Virtually every business text now contains a chapter or unit on international business and many programs are implementing international business courses and majors. Some programs are even affording the opportunity to study or travel abroad as part of the curriculum. However, my experience teaching international business and international management courses has presented a consistent challenge. Students are frequently overwhelmed by the mass of information needed to truly understand much of the content. When the discussion of social, technological, economic, political, legal, cultural, and geographic issues related to international operations begins many students start feeling completely overwhelmed, at least if one takes them at their word when they express such feelings in course evaluations and comments to the professor. In the abstract environment of a classroom it is often difficult for students to appreciate the real value of a comprehensive understanding of those issues for practicing managers. The exercise described here is intended to help students gain a deeper

appreciation for the magnitude and scope of what a person undertaking an international assignment needs to know to be socially competent and professionally successful.

This exercise is designed to be flexible and adaptable to diverse situations. I teach classes that are typically less than 40 students. However, recognizing that many faculty have very large classes, the exact design of the exercise will vary according to individual needs. It should also be adaptable to varying preferences for the kind of learning one wants to occur--i.e. factual knowledge, etc. In this session the participants will become the students and experience one version of the expatriate assignment quiz game.

INTERACTIVE SESSION

This workshop will present a tool that is useful to supplement a unit on expatriate assignments. It is intended to be used after a lecture or discussion on the role of expatriates, the kinds of information/knowledge they need to be socially and professionally competent in their host country, and what organizations do to prepare employees for international assignments in terms of providing language, culture, and other training.

Prior to beginning the game it is important that each participant understand the roles, expectations, and requirements for a successful expatriate assignment. Topics such as what expatriates need to know for success in a foreign country (customs, culture, economic system, government system, business practices), how they are oriented, and what the content of a good expatriate orientation should contain should be reviewed in advance. The game should serve as a means to reinforce the concept that expatriates should have a broad and comprehensive

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knowledge of the country or region to which they are being assigned.

This interactive session will involve the participants as “students” in an exercise used to illustrate the depth and breadth of knowledge a successful expatriate needs about their country of assignment. The session is intended for anyone who does expatriate orientations or teaches international business, international management, or international human resources. It is a flexible exercise with the specific “rules” left loose enough for adaptation to diverse settings. While the workshop will present the exercise as used by the presenter, it will also allow participants to discuss ways to adapt it for diverse settings and situations.

FORMAT

The exercise is conducted as a quiz game. The contestants assume the role of someone who is just completing his or her orientation for an international assignment. It is assumed, for the purposes of this exercise, that the final activity of their orientation is a quiz game to test their mastery of the customs, culture, geography, language, political system, economy, and technological environment of their assigned country or region. This workshop will use a format modeled on the popular television quiz show Jeopardy™. This particular format works well in smaller classes (less than 30-40 students) and provides a good mechanism for providing hints to the correct response. The presenter’s experience teaching international business courses suggests students need hints since their familiarity with the international macro-environment is generally limited. One drawback to this format is its limited applicability to large classes unless the “contestants” compete as teams. I use the format used in the game show for its tournaments. Three teams of 2-3 students compete in a series of first rounds with the winner from each round progressing to the next round until a final winner is determined. This approach, while not fully satisfactory, makes it possible for the game to

progress quickly.

The first contestant to choose a topic category is randomly selected. The contestant who last gave a correct response then picks a topic category and a point amount. The greater the points the more difficult the question. The “contestant” will be given an answer. The contestant who signals first has the opportunity to give the question for which the answer applies. A correct response, in addition to earning the assigned points, gives a contestant the privilege of choosing the next question category.

After experiencing the exercise as used by the presenter, the workshop will allow participants to react to the exercise, and discuss ways it can be modified for different settings. Specific topics will include how to adapt the exercise to large classes, how to maintain interest and involvement of all students, and different formats for the quiz game. The discussion will also focus on sources that can be useful in preparing questions. Some of the sources discussed will include Axtell (1993), Morrison, Conaway, and Borden (1994), and Ricks (1993).

REFERENCES

- Axtell, R. E. (1993). Do’s and Taboos Around the World. New York: John Wiley and Sons.
- Morrison, T., Conaway, W. A., and Borden, G. A. (1994). Kiss, Bow, or Shake Hands: How to do Business in Sixty Countries. Holbrook, MA: Bob Adams, inc.
- Ricks, D. A. (1993). Blunders in International Business. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell Publishers.