

WHEN PLAY AND WORK COLLIDE: AN INTERACTIVE PANEL SYMPOSIUM EXPLORING THE USE OF GAMING IN MANAGEMENT EDUCATION

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Paper
Games to Play Track

ABSTRACT

This panel symposium brings together management researchers with experience of the gaming industry, and industry professionals to explore the use of gaming in management education. We focus on how educators can use board games and role-playing games to increase student engagement and highlight the use of specific games in several different management courses including Leadership, Organizational Behavior, Human Resource Management, Entrepreneurship and Strategic Management as experiential learning activities. Guided by the facilitators, and through active participation, attendees will use commercially available games such as Dungeons and Dragons, and Forbidden Island to illustrate management course material. We give participants a hands-on experience of some of the games we have successfully used to creatively illustrate management material.

Keywords: *management education, games, experiential learning*

The purpose of this symposium is to discuss the theoretical and practical implications arising from the use of tabletop gaming in management studies, education, and practice, through the perspective of game industry professionals and academics. The symposium will include an interactive panel discussion about games and simulations, a brief history of gaming, and the use of gaming in scholarly activities. Attendees will experience firsthand gameplay using a variety of games supplied by the facilitators. Panelists will demonstrate adaptations to commercially available games that have been used to creatively reinforce concepts and terms commonly found across a wide variety of management courses.

Board games were first developed over 4000 years ago (Wolfe, 1993), and business simulation games date back to the early 1930's. Multiple organizations now rely on tabletop games to simulate organizational challenges and to model various human behaviors. For example, The Defense Academy of the United Kingdom has a course in war-gaming used to increase decision-making capability and to model response behavior (Mouat, 2018). All three branches of the US military rely heavily on the use of games and simulations within their respective organizations (Mueller, 2016; Alkire, Hanser & Lingel, 2018). The medical field has relied on games in the training of both clinicians and administrators for several years (Feron, Lehmann & Josse, 2014; Wang, DeMaria, Goldberg, Katz, 2016; McIntyre & Yeoman, 2015). Accordingly, practitioner focused journals are becoming increasingly aware of using games within organizational settings (Innes, 2015). Despite this, the exploration of gaming within the field of management studies and education remains limited. Psychology scholars have considered the impact of gaming, particularly video gaming, on multiple psychological constructs including moral disengagement (Gaddiadini, Andrighetto, & Volpato (2012), moral sensitivity (Gizzard et al., 2014), and moral intuitions (Boyan, Bowman & Grizzard, 2015). Criminology scholars have explored how videogame play offers open environments in which players can exhibit a range of behaviors from the deviant to the pro-social with varying lasting effects following cessation (Denham & Spokes, 2019). Armstrong (2001) has suggested that role-playing style games can produce a realistic simulation of interactions among groups. Others, (Yusoff, Rias & Yusoff, 2014) suggest that games can be used in the treatment of mental health issues.

From an educator's perspective, experiential learning theory (Kolb, 1984) has been used to explain how knowledge is acquired through experiences. With widespread application to a variety of learning styles, experiential activities have had powerful influences on management education (Bevan & Kipka, 2012). We suggest tabletop gaming are ideal mechanisms through

which to increase students experiential learning and knowledge acquisition (Mercer, Harris, & Swab, 2022; Mercer, Swab, Harris, Johnson, Tomczyk, & Morningstar, 2021).

We therefore suggest that management scholars need to consider the more widespread use of tabletop gaming in management studies and education and, drawing from related fields, now explore the more widespread use of gaming in management research, practice and education.

With such limited scholarly activity, the panel will discuss many of the questions and issues raised, including:

1. A brief review of gaming.
2. Concepts of flow and the typology of game players.
3. How can gaming be used to highlight aspects of diversity and individual difference?
4. How can we use tabletop games in management education?

Organization of the Symposium and Format

This symposium will be split into two halves. The first half will focus on an interactive panel discussion and the second, on hands on game play experiences for attendees.

General Overview

- Introduction: Brief introduction to the topic and the panelists
- Each panelist will discuss the topic from his/her perspective (Part 1)
- Attendees will be break into small groups to play suggested titles. (Part 2)
- Questions / comments/ discussion with the audience (10 minutes)
- Concluding statement

Part 1

The panelists and facilitators, who all have knowledge of management studies and the gaming industry at large, will each discuss their individual take on gaming and how it impacts scholarly research, education, and practical takeaways in general, as well raising any additional insights. The primary focus will be on what constructs can be explored using gaming, how gaming can be used in management education, and the importance of understanding the typology and psychology of students as of players. We will explore the concept of flow and the benefit to learning that it brings. We wish this discussion to be fluid in nature and envisage interaction between each panelist and the audience. Audience participation will be actively encouraged. We hope that the discussion will continue beyond the session and serve as a generator of future research ideas and collaboration.

Part 2

The panelists will also lead the attendees through several brief practical examples of gaming experiences that can be used to highlight, explore, and manipulate human behavior with a view to impacting their use within management studies and education. This second half of the session will focus on actual gameplay for attendees. This session will have stations provided each with a facilitator and a different game. All panelists have experience of demonstrating and teaching using games in a physical and virtual setting. Attendees will be given the option of which table (and experience) to partake in depending on their own needs and interests. It is our hope that attendees can experience at least two different stations during this part of the symposium.

Examples of games to be used include:

- “Dixit”, an abstract style game relying on pictorial interpretation and use of participants imagination.
- “Escape: Curse of the Temple” (Queen Games), a cooperative game with time sensitive scenarios which highlights the importance of leadership style, communication, and teamwork, that can be adapted to highlight material in both a strategy and OB setting.
- “Dungeons and Dragons” (Wizards of the Coast), a role-playing game in which participants take on the role of characters, determine their characteristics, traits and abilities, and experience different scenarios.
- “Forbidden Island,” a cooperative game that has been used to encourage tem leadership skills.

- “Lost and Found Gaming system” (Mousehole Press), a legacy role-playing story telling system that the facilitators have adapted to teach family business concepts.
- “I am John.” A sand box style role-playing game in which players have hidden objectives to complete while working towards on overall goal.

Attendees will be able to experience games that may be suitable for their area of research and education. As this is a hands-on session, audience participation is highly encouraged, and each panelist will encourage questions from attendees. At the conclusion, the panelists will ask participants to identify insights and takeaways they gained from the session.

EXPLANATION OF INTEREST TO ABSEL ATTENDEES

As we explore underpinning theoretical issues of tabletop games in academic studies, education, and organizational practice, we believe this symposium will be attractive to a wide variety of ABSEL attendees. Previous presentations of related material have been received well at regional Academy of Management meetings and also gaming industry conferences. A previous panel presentation symposium concerning games (organized by the same facilitators) in the classroom featured during the 2021 Academy of Management Meeting and received a Best Symposium Award. In broadening the range of games demonstrated, drawing from the psychology of gaming, and highlighting interpersonal constructs that gaming can be used to examine, we believe this symposium will be of particular interest to attendees seeking to increase experiential learning within their classrooms. The panelists have all successfully implemented gaming in various undergraduate and graduate levels management classes and/or are industry professionals assisting in the design of games that are useful to educators. They have also all introduced or adapted commercially available games and afford a degree of expertise in this area. We sincerely believe that this comprehensive session will attract a diverse audience of scholars’ keen to examine a novel and innovation approach to education and who seek to foster new relationships.

PARTICIPATION ASSURANCE

I have received signed statements from all intended participants agreeing to participate in the entire symposium.

PANELISTS

Ian S. Mercer is an Assistant Professor of Management at the Silberman College of Business. He received his Ph.D. from Auburn University where he studied identity integration in multiple job holders. He was a former Barrister at Law and Royal Navy Intelligence Officer. Ian’s research interests include moral decision-making, ethics, leadership, spirituality, and the use of gaming in management education. He is actively involved in the gaming industry as a lead developer for 25th Century Games. He assists and advises game designers on eliciting behavioral and emotional responses during the gaming experience. He has spoken at various national conferences within the gaming industry including Gen Con and Proto ATL.

R. Gabrielle "Gabby" Swab is an Assistant Professor of Management at Georgia Southern University. She received her Ph.D. from the University of Mississippi where she studied the interplay of competition and cooperation in new venture teams. Gabby's research focuses on a multilevel look between individual differences and motivations in entrepreneurs, and how it influences their team dynamics and firm outcomes. She frequently conducts her research in the tabletop game industry, where she co-founded the Association of Gaming Academics, a resource for academics and gamers to connect and share knowledge. She has spoken at various national conferences within the gaming industry including Gen Con and Origins. Prior to academics, Gabby worked in sales, technology and project management.

John N. Harris is an Assistant Professor of Management in the Parker College of Business at Georgia Southern University. He received his Ph.D. in Organizational Behavior and Human Resources from Florida State University. His research mainly focuses on leadership, organizational politics, work relationships, and social effectiveness. He regularly incorporates gaming principles into his research and teaching, and together with R. Gabrielle Swab and Ian S. Mercer, he co-founded the Association of Gaming Academics. He has spoken at various national conferences within the gaming industry including Gen Con and Origins.

David A. Tomczyk is an Associate Professor of Entrepreneurship and Strategy at Quinnipiac University. David received his Ph.D. from The George Washington University where he studied the relationship between long-term video game playing and entrepreneurial traits and intent. His research has considered entrepreneurial values, entrepreneurial intent, crowdfunding and agile game development. He teaches board game design, classes in the business of games, and creativity and innovation. He regularly speaks to gaming industry professionals at multiple conferences and professional events.

Adam Hnatkovich is the operations manager and lead games designer at Tunnel Monster Collective, an organization focused on bringing together community groups, educators, and businesses to stimulate critical thinking and inspire creativity. Adam was involved in the successful creation of “Regenerate” a cooperative board game that teaches players about sustainable development and systems thinking.

Ryan Bruns has extensive experience within the gaming industry, having served as the President of Mayday Games, Program Manager at Elf Creek Games, and worked with additional companies including with Queen Games and Floodgate Games. He also started his own online business within the industry. Ryan has worked with Ian and Gabby on projects to introduce game design to management students.

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