BEGINNING WITH THE END: CREATING AN EXPERIENTIAL EXERCISE FROM ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

A ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION

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ABSTRACT

In this roundtable discussion, the facilitators will first provide an introduction to assessing/evaluating experiential exercises and then share their own experience with a very successful exercise. Next, each participant will share his or her own experience with a successful exercise. After the sharing, a facilitator will record the criteria that participants glean from all these "successes." The group will then create an exercise using the success criteria. The proposers hope that each participant will use the new exercise back home, collect data on its success (as measured by the criteria used for the design), and come together to write an ABSEL paper for 2007 based on these data. **Key words**: assessment, experiential, criteria

DESCRIPTION OF THE FOCAL TOPIC

What makes a great (i.e., successful) experiential exercise? We have all heard professors rave about certain exercises—Barnga, Lost at Sea, the Egg Drop, etc. However, we are often on our own to evaluate and assess how well the exercise might work with our own students when deciding whether or not to use it. We also are on our own to evaluate it after use. Some evaluation criteria are similar to those of corporate training "smile sheets"—was it fun, did it generate excitement, were students engaged? Others are more concrete and measurable—how did students respond to an exam question based on the exercise, do they actually use what they learned in the rest of the semester (or take it to their workplace)?

Over the years, articles in *Simulation and Gaming* (Gosen & Washbush, 2004), books (Gentry, 1990; Roland, Wagner, Weigand, 1995) and ABSEL presentations/proceedings (Sugges, 1981; Patton, Davis & Govahi, 1998; Wheatley, 1995) have addressed the assessment of simulations and experiential learning, but

have not created a checklist of "success criteria." This roundtable has been designed to use an appreciative inquiry approach (Hammond, 1996) to elicit criteria for a successful exercise.

First, the facilitators will briefly introduce the topic of assessment/evaluation. Next, they will each share an experience they felt was a successful use of an experiential exercise. Then the participants will share their success experiences with experiential exercises. The group will then elicit the specific criteria about these successful exercises that led to their success. These criteria will be recorded and discussed. Ideally the group will agree on a set of criteria that need to be included in the design of a successful exercise.

GOALS OF THE TARGET AUDIENCE

Many faculty members would like to have a set of guidelines around which to design experiential exercises. In this roundtable, participants will actually create such a list from dissecting successful exercises. Then the group will create a new exercise, using the success criteria, around an agreed-upon topic (or perhaps several different exercises, depending on the size of the group) to be taken back to our own universities and tested during the year. We will all collect data that can then be compiled and analyzed to become an innovative ABSEL paper for the 2007 conference.

HOSTS OF THE ROUNDTABLE

Jerry Gosen teaches experientially and has written in the field. He uses simulations in his graduate and undergraduate core strategy classes, teaches organizational behavior with a method dominated by an experiential philosophy and uses experiential exercises, some of them graded, in organizational structure and business ethics

classes. He teaches inductively which is the method to be used in this roundtable presentation. His contribution to experiential scholarship includes the following:

As teachers and researchers, where do we go from here? An exploration of game-derived learning in total enterprise simulation. *Simulation and Gaming*, September 2001, Vol. 32 (3), 281-296 with J. Washbush.

Evaluation of experiential learning. In J.W. Gentry (Ed.), *Guide to Business Gaming and Experiential Learning.* East Brunswick, NJ: Nichols/GP 1990.

A course purpose exercise, *Exchange: the Organizational Behavior Teaching Journal,* 1983, Vol. 8 (1)

Active learning, what is it and why should we use it? Presented at ABSEL, the Association of Business Simulation and Experiential Learning, Orlando, March 22-24, 2005 with Sandra Morgan, Barbara Howard and Linda Martin

Research on assessing the effectiveness of experiential and simulation learning approaches, as part of a panel on the effectiveness of experiential and simulation learning approaches. Association of Business Simulation and Experiential Learning, Baltimore March 20-22, 2003

Enhancing classroom learning using experiential activities. Presented at the University of Wisconsin System Faculty Development Summer Institute, (1996) with D. Wagner and C. Clements

Sandra Morgan has used experiential methods in her teaching since beginning her teaching career with a fourth grade class almost 40 years ago. Since then she has used experiential activities with corporate, governmental and non-profit clients as well as with her organizational behavior, leadership, and organization development students. Most of her research publications are pedagogical, with a number specifically focused on experiential exercises, their content, process and assessment. Two of her exercises have been finalists in the ELA (Experiential Learning Association) Track of the Eastern Academy of Management "best exercise" competition, and one of these won the title in 2002.

A selection of these appears below:

Morgan, Sandra and Dennehy, Robert F. (2004). "Using Stories to Reframe the Social Construction Reality: A Trio of Activities," *Journal of Management Education*, 28(3), 372-389.

Fairfield-Sonn, James, Narendar Sumukadas and Sandra Morgan, (2004) "The Power of Process Improvement", *Simulation & Gaming,* Vol. 35, No. 4, December, 517-524.

Morgan, Sandra, "Sandwich Boards: Getting Acquainted", in Silberman, Mel, Ed. *The ASTD 2005 Training and Performance Sourcebook.*

Stork, Diana, Woodilla, Jill, Morgan, Sandra, and Levesque, Laurie. (2005) Turning the Mirror on Ourselves. *Proceedings of the Eastern Academy of Management*, Springfield, MA, May.

Morgan, Sandra, Gosen, Jerry, Martin, Linda, Howard, Barbara, and Mihalek, Paul H. (2005) "Active Learning: What is it and why should I use it?", *Developments in Business Simulation and Experiential Learning (ABSEL Proceedings). Vol. 32,* Orlando, March.

Dechant, Kathleen, Morgan, Sandra, and Finn, Dale. (1999) "Project Adventure: Integrating Outdoor Experiences into Your Business Curriculum," *The Life-Giving Workplace: Unleashing Human Energy*, *Eastern Academy of Management Proceedings*, Philadelphia.

Morgan, Sandra. (1999) "Sharing Best Practices: Teaching Smarter, Not Harder," *Developments in Business Simulation and Experiential Learning*, ABSEL Proceedings, Vol. 26, Philadelphia.

Morgan, Sandra (1995), "Home Community--an Exercise to Build a Positive Learning Environment," in 1995 Annual Conference Proceedings, Northeast Business & Economics Association, Falmouth, MA, September.

Harel, Gedaliahu and Morgan, Sandra (1994), "SHALOM/SALAAM: A Simulation of the Middle East Peace Negotiations," *Simulation and Gaming*, 25(2), 285-292.

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Gosen, Jerry and Washbush, John (2004). A Review of Scholarship on Assessing Experiential Learning Effectiveness. Smiulation & Gaming, 35(2), 270-293.

Hammond, Sue Annis. *The Thin Book of Appreciative Inquiry*, Thin Book Publishing Co., 1996.

Patton, Gregory H., Davis, Daniel Cochece, and Govahi, Gita (1998). Predictive Models of Learning: Participant Satisfaction of Experiential Exercises ion Business Education, *Developments in Business Simulation & Experiential Learning,* Vol. 25.

Wheatley, Walter J. (1995) How Real Should Experiential Pedagogy Be? A Viewpoint from our Students, *Developments in Business Simulation & Experiential Learning,* Vol. 22.

Sugges, Peter R., Jr. (1981). Designs for Research on Simulation—Games, Cases, and Other Experiential Exercises, *Developments in Business Simulation & Experiential Exercises,* Vol. 8.