

Developments in Business Simulation and Experiential Learning, Volume 25, 1998
THRESHOLD SOLO COMPETITOR: A MANAGEMENT SIMULATION (V 1.0) A PLAY ALONE,
TOTAL ENTERPRISE SIMULATION & ASSESSMENT INSTRUMENT

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INTRODUCTION

Threshold Solo Competitor: A Management Simulation is a Windows-based computer simulation exercise. *Threshold Solo Competitor* simulates the workings of a small, two-product manufacturing business. It is a play-alone version of *Threshold Competitor* (1998), a management simulation published by Prentice Hall, that allows participants to play the game by themselves, at their own pace. Materials include installation disks, a participant's manual, and an administrator's manual. *Threshold Solo Competitor* is very user friendly, for both the administrator and the participants. The software runs in a Windows 3.1, 95, or NT environment.

Participants make decisions in *Threshold Solo Competitor* that are identical to those found in *Threshold Competitor*. However, rather than compete against other student-managed companies, *Threshold Solo Competitor* uses expert logic to create an environment that places participants in competition with 15 semi-intelligent companies managed by the computer. While these competitors will act rationally, they are not all-knowing "perfect competitors." While efficient at managing individual components of the decisions, the computer is not as adept at managing the interdependencies and subtleties involved in running an enterprise. The program is designed such that, as students work with *Threshold Solo Competitor*, they should be able to apply their adaptive managerial skills to establish a competitive advantage in the industry.

Threshold Solo Competitor has been designed for use in Introduction to Business or Introductory Management courses. It has been used successfully in senior-level strategy courses, in MBA short courses, capstone courses in community colleges, and in distance learning situations. *Threshold Solo*

Competitor's distance learning capabilities are especially valuable, since the participants can operate independent of any need for administrator processing of decisions. Participants can send their results either electronically or by surface mail.

PARTICIPANT FEATURES

Participants operate as general managers making the decisions needed to run a small manufacturing company. The participant's company is one of 16 that are in competition with each other in the same marketplace. Each decision period represents 3 months (i.e., one quarter) of the company's operations. Participants make approximately 30 decisions per quarter, using a personal computer to enter their decisions on a disk that contains all their company files. They can forecast "what if?" scenarios. They can review previous quarters' decisions and results either on the screen or on printouts as they work. When their decisions for a quarter of operations are final, the participants select the "Process Quarter" option. This option processes the current quarter decisions of the participant and the computer-managed companies and moves the companies' operations on to the next quarter. The *Threshold Solo Competitor* program determines the number of products each company sold and also produces a series of operations, marketing, and financial reports for each company. The program also rates the companies and ranks them according to predetermined criteria. *Threshold Solo Competitor* allows students to process their decisions quickly and provides them with reports that show the results of those decisions. *Threshold Solo Competitor* allows students to practice their management skills, by themselves, at their own pace.

Participants can restart *Threshold Solo Competitor* as often as they like. Restarting erases all the

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companies' previous performance records and allows the participant to start replaying *Threshold Solo Competitor* when the company first begins operations in Quarter 1. Each time participants restart, the computer automatically sets up a new competitive environment. The computer determines what the level of demand will be for the products, the importance of the marketing variables (e.g., price, TV ads) for determining the sales level of each of the companies, and the costs of operating in the industry (e.g., the cost of TV advertising, raw materials, etc.). *Threshold Solo Competitor* can generate hundreds of different competitive environments.

Threshold Solo Competitor offers users many advantages. The play-alone participant can run the simulation not tied to anyone else's schedule. If participants perform poorly against the computer competitors, they can stop playing the current setup and start a new competition quickly and easily. It provides a challenging environment to practice and to learn management skills.

INSTRUCTOR FEATURES

Threshold Solo Competitor has an administrator program that allows an instructor to control some of the features of the participant's program. These include determining (1) the economic environment (industry demand, costs, and weightings of performance variables) participants will face, (2) if and when students will confront any managerial dilemmas (behaviorally-oriented decisions), and (3) whether the restart option for participants is disabled.

Disabling the restart option lets instructors use *Threshold Solo Competitor* as an assessment instrument to examine students individually, without team effects, on their knowledge of the simulation and their ability to manage their company in its competitive environment. By presetting the industry demand, costs, and weightings of performance variables, the instructor can have all students face the same economic environment. With the restart option disabled, the students have only one pass through the sequence of quarters to successfully manage their company. The instructor can use the ratings on the performance factors to evaluate the student's

performance. This exam can be conducted either with all of the students sequestered in a computer lab or as a take-home exam.

The *Threshold Solo Competitor* administrator program is also able to read the data file on a student's *Threshold Solo Competitor* disk. This allows the instructor to printout or view administrator reports that show the performance of all 16 companies operating in an industry. These administrator reports include Marketing reports (e.g., pricing, advertising, and unit sales), break-even analyses, operations reports (e.g., Mfg. COGS assessments), financial reports (e.g., common-size income statements). The *Threshold Solo Competitor* administrator reports are identical to those generated by its sister product, *Threshold Competitor*.

Threshold Solo Competitor is unique in its ability to offer an instructor the use of managerial and ethical dilemmas. While each team faces the same behaviorally-oriented, the response to the dilemma decision made by a company can vary among companies - even if they choose the same course of action in their attempt to manage the problem.

With the flexibility provided by the administrator program, an instructor can use *Threshold Solo Competitor* for an introductory trial and practice before beginning the use of *Threshold Competitor*, for exams after completing the use of *Threshold Competitor*, or as a stand-alone pedagogical tool. *Threshold Solo Competitor*'s stand-alone features make it especially suited for large lecture classes by lessening the administrative burden on the instructor, while still providing students the opportunity for hands-on application of concepts and topics discussed in the classroom. The administrator's manual describes, in detail, how to make use of each of these features of *Threshold Solo Competitor*.

AVAILABILITY

Threshold Solo Competitor will be published by Prentice Hall. Expected release date is early 1998. If you are interested in receiving this product, please contact one of us. Our e-mail addresses are:

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