

# Developments In Business Simulation & Experiential Exercises, Volume 17, 1990

## SELECTING AND DEVELOPING EXPERIENTIAL EXERCISES USING MOVIES

### A Management Training Perspective

James W. Schreier, Far Cliffs Consulting

#### ABSTRACT

Over the years, business faculty and management train-ers have used movies to teach/demonstrate business principles. Recently, greater use of the movies has appeared in management training programs to teach a wide variety of subjects. These include leadership, career management, and business ethics. This paper examines the available materials and provides guidelines for selection and use. And it describes a step-by-step process for developing exercises using movies. An exercise in business ethics is examined in detail, from selection of a film to development of the companion experiential exercise.

#### BACKGROUND

In the world of business education, business videos are the current rage. Ranging in price from less than \$ 100 to over \$1500, they tout the latest ideas of the best Gelling business authors. And they tell the stories of today's leading organizations. In higher education, the business videos are used-- but their use is often limited by curriculum design, cost, and sometimes equipment. In the business and management training sector, another use of film/video exists. For years, Ken Blanchard, author of *The One Minute Manager* (1986), has said that Gregory Peck is more recognized among managers for his role in "Twelve o'clock High" than he is. This is not surprising because *Twelve o'clock High* presents a thorough, powerfully dramatic case history of situational leadership. Management training programs routinely feature an evening or Sunday night special showing of the film. Other uses of movies, particularly in academic settings, have been discussed elsewhere (Michaelson and Schultheiss, 1988).

In 1986, Blanchard Training and Development produced a video on Leadership and the One Minute Manager. Not only did Ken Blanchard use scenes from *Twelve o'clock High* to demonstrate situational leadership, he takes his viewers "to the movies" to demonstrate the concepts. In scenes from "Young Frankenstein," "Karate Kid," "Nine to Five," "Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid," he teaches the step-by-step process of situational leadership. He illustrates by showing how the characters in the films deal with a variety of different events. In "Karate Kid" he uses a clear parallel to the powerful use of "Twelve O'clock High." He shows that Mr. Miyagi applies situational leadership concepts by the book, in developing Daniel's karate skills.

Blanchard's program does not contain any experiential application of situational leadership concepts to the use of the film. But it would be easy to take that step. The workbook exercises could be adapted to make them a little more experiential in scope. clearly, those who began using *Twelve o'clock High* and Blanchard's broader use of movies deserve credit for sparking the ideas discussed in this paper.

In 1988, Fulmer, Heinselman, and Sashkin released a career management skills inventory and experiential exercise tied to a movie. "Who's in Charge?" the career management skills inventory stands alone. It measures the following ten different areas.

Enjoying what one does.	Striving for the best.
Setting high goals.	Visualizing success.
Committing to risks.	Managing time and resources.
Using relationships.	Balancing work and play.
Positive values.	Looking to the future.

In an interesting step toward experiential learning, they then developed an exercise based on the model and the movie, *Chariots of Fire*. In the Fulmer, Heinselman, and Sashkin exercise, participants rate the two characters emphasis on the ten characteristics. The exercise is similar to the many group consensus exercises involving survival or motivation. Participants compare individual and group responses to an expert viewpoint. Exhibit 1 shows the participant scoring sheet for the *Chariots of Fire* case Study.

#### Exhibit 1

##### Principles of Self-Management

**Step 1:** How would you rank these factors (from 1 = Highest to 10 = for each of the key characters?)

		Harold	Eric
1.	Enjoying What One Does	_____	_____
2.	Striving for the Best	_____	_____
3.	Setting High Goals	_____	_____
4.	Visualizing Success	_____	_____
5.	Committing to Risks	_____	_____
6.	Believing in Oneself	_____	_____
7.	Managing Time/Resources	_____	_____
8.	Using Relationships	_____	_____
9.	Balancing Work and Play	_____	_____
10.	Looking to the Future	_____	_____

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## SELECTION AND ADMINISTRATION

The first part of this paper has discussed the evolution of "managing at the movies" in management training settings. Next I would like to identify the considerations in using a movie tied to an experiential exercise. Then I would like to talk about the development of a movie-based experiential exercise.

First, and maybe just a bit surprising, the use of film usually is aimed at teaching a specific concept or set of concepts. Even though a movie may be two hours long, it is not really a "business policy" type case study. Twelve O'clock High" teaches a lot about organizations, but it really focuses on situational leadership. 'Karate Kid' teaches little if anything about business, but its an excellent demonstration of situational leadership from beginning to end. "Chariots of Fire" gives an in-depth view of two individuals' motivation and values. It could be used to discuss a variety of motivational models or the specifics of the career management skills used in the related materials. The point is simple, the available movie/exercises emphasize a single, focused subject. Do not look for a good movie that covers that basics of a full semester course in management, marketing, finance, or human resources. In fact, most of the applications discussed here are in the context of 15 -18 hour adult continuing education programs. These programs typically focus on a single topic that might be one day or week in an undergraduate course.

Secondly, using a full-length feature film takes a lot more time than a business, management training video. "Chariots of Fire" runs for over two hours. And it's entertainment -- not education. These points need to be taken into consideration in the planning and delivery of a movie based experiential exercise. Time needs to be allotted for the complete viewing of the film and full use of the experiential exercise. I'm not ignoring the pure teaching value of movie clips. In fact, the Blanchard "Leadership and the One Minute Manager" is an excellent training video. Blanchard is specifically pointing out the teaching points. But in a movie-based exercise, you're asking viewers to capture the teaching points from the broad context of the story. this demands focus and time.

Third, participants need to be given an overview of the learning objectives and their relationship to the film. They need to know what specifically they are watching for. This is particularly important because of the obvious possibility that someone will have already seen the movie. You are now asking them to watch the film for an entirely different reason - to concentrate on the motivation of the characters or their leadership behavior. You do not want them overwhelmed by the overall drama or action. Without the specific instructions, viewers may catch the story and Miss the learning. With the specific instructions, even people who have seen the movie already will continent "I was not watching it from that perspective the first time. For the "Chariots of Fire" exercise, several participants rented the video to rewatch the film in preparation for the case study analysis and discussion.

Finally, the debriefing for both the movie and the experiential exercise is as important, or more important, than for any exercise. The depth of presentation that the movie brings seems to bring a similar depth to the discussion. And the debriefing can be harder to direct because it may wander to other topics raised by the story. But the level and clarity of discussion is excellent using this unique approach.

## DEVELOPING A "MOVIE-BASED" EXERCISE

The current choices for "movie--based exercises are limited. In published versions, there are leadership and career management. So somebody intrigued by the idea might want to develop their own movie based experiential exercise. There are 1000's of movies available, many opportunities for developing an interesting exercise. The next section of this paper examines both the process and content of such an exercise.

Participant reactions to both the "Leadership and the One Minute Manager" video and the "Chariots of Fire" case study impressed me. So I decided to develop a movie based experiential exercise. The course was a two day, continuing education, workshop oti Ethics and the Manager." Obviously the first step of the process is identifying the specific learning objectives of the program. In this class, the Ken Blanchard/Norman Vincent Peale book, The Power of ethical Management (1988), was the course text. It presents a basic ethical model: is it legal? Is it balanced (fair to all parties)? and how would I feel about my actions if they were in the news? The next Bet of learning objectives dealt with the role of the manager. This class was for practicing managers. One objective was to examine the role of the leader in the process of day-to-day ethical management decision-making. I decided to examine this process by using the Kouzes/Posner model from The Leadership Challenge (1987). This model talks about ten basic actions for leaders and leadership from the eyes of the follower. This approach seemed a good opportunity to examine ethical behavior in organizations.

While learning objectives are being considered, you must consider a design for the experiential exercise. This also happens as you select a film. For the experiential exercise, it may be helpful to think about a standard exercise style, or process issues, to facilitate the design. For example, the content is ethics and leadership. But the process can be a focus on individual or group decision-making, values clarification, or communication. The issue to be faced here relates to the content versus process issues addressed in part by Schreier [1979]. He stated that exercises teaching process or organizational behavior concepts can be content as well as process relevant. A powerful, potentially generic, model for an experiential exercise is the group ranking, consensus type, experience. It forces participants to make choices about some issue, whatever that may be, communicate with others to discuss and defend their decisions, and, as a group, come to some agreement. The exercise can be used easily to direct a group toward a step where they propose solutions to a problem or recommendations/guidelines for a general area of concern. Having decided on the concepts that I wanted to present, and the group decision-making process that seemed to fit, the search for a film began in earnest.

The search for an appropriate film can be very difficult. Or it might be drawn from a list of candidates that an instructor has considered for possible use. Or it might be a stroke of luck that a film stands out as a possibility for an exercise. It may even be there are several films that fit a particular teaching objective. Such seems to be the case with leadership. The list of appropriate films for demonstrating situational leadership may result in a leadership film festival. On other subjects, like business ethics, it may not be quite as simple. Or it may just be a film you watched recently on cable. This was the case with business ethics. The idea for a film-based exercise prompted the thought of "Tin Men, a business comedy starring Richard Dreyfuss and Danny DeVito. The Story concerns aluminum siding salesmen in the sixties. It follows their personal and professional exploits as the industry begins to face regulation from consumer/community boards.

With learning objectives and a possible film, the final decision about the type of experiential exercise can be made. At this point I was working with two possibilities, a group decision-making exercise using the principles of leadership or a values clarification exercise similar to "The Girl and the Sailor" (1989). In this exercise, shown in Exhibit 2, a story is told about five people. The values clarification is a simple question: which of these people do you like least? The same process could be used for the key characters in a film. I finally decided to develop both exercises and use them as a multi-part experiential exercise. The materials are shown in exhibits 3-5.

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## Exhibit 2

### THE GIRL AND THE SAILOR

A ship sank in a storm. Five survivors scrambled aboard two lifeboats: a sailor, a girl, and an old man in one boat; the girl's fiancée and his best friend in the second.

During the storm, the two boats separated. The first boat washed ashore on an island and was wrecked. The girl searched all day in vain for the other boat or any sign of her fiancée.

The next day, the weather cleared, and still she could not locate her fiancée. In the distance she saw another island, hoping to find her fiancée, she begged the sailor to repair the boat and row her to the other island. The sailor agreed, on the condition that she sleep with him that night.

Distraught, she went to the old man for advice, 'I cannot tell you what is right or wrong for you,' he said. 'Look into your heart and follow it.' Confused but desperate, she agreed to the sailor's condition.

The next morning the sailor fixed the boat and rowed her to the other island. Jumping out of the boat, she ran up the beach into the arms of her fiancée. Then she decided to tell him about the previous night. In a rage, he pushed her away and said, 'Get away from me! I don't want to see you again!' Weeping, she started to walk slowly down the beach.

Seeing her, the best friend went to her, put his arm around her, and said, 'I can tell that you two have had a fight. I'll try to patch it up, but, in the meantime, I'll take care of you.'

## Exhibit 4

### Why Are All These Things Happening to Me?

## Exhibit 3

### Leadership Practices and Ethics

From the viewpoint of **LEADERSHIP ACTIONS**, rank order the following characteristics (1 = most important - 5 = least important). Consider these practices from two perspectives of leadership: the formal leadership (supervisors/managers/owners) and the informal leadership (more experienced co-workers/peers/industry "stars").

	FORMAL	INFORMAL
Challenging the Process	—	—
Shared Vision	—	—
Enabling Others	—	—
Modeling the Way	—	—
Encouraging the Heart	—	—

Leadership is not just about leaders; it is also about followers. Successful leadership depends not just on activities of the leaders. It depends on the perceptions of the leader by the followers. Here are some factors concerning perceptions followers have of leaders. Again, rank them (1 = most important - 5 = least important) from both the viewpoint of formal and informal leaders.

	FORMAL	INFORMAL
Honesty	—	—
Competence	—	—
Being Forward-Looking	—	—
Inspiration	—	—

### Leadership Practices and Ethics

From the viewpoint of **LEADERSHIP ACTIONS**, rate the following characters (1 = good example - 5 = poor example). Consider these practices from two perspectives of leadership: the formal leadership (supervisors/managers/owners) and the informal leadership (more experienced co-workers/peers/industry stars").

B.B. Tilley Wayne Stanley

Challenging the Process

Shared Vision

Enabling Others

Modeling the Way

Encouraging the Heart

From an informal standpoint, what about B.B. and Tilley's co-workers, Sam, Mo., etc.?

Leadership is not just about leaders; it is also about followers. Successful leadership depends not just on activities of the leaders. It depends on the perceptions of the leader by the followers. Here are some factors concerning perceptions followers have of leaders. Again, rate the characters (1 = good example. 5 poor example) from both the viewpoint of and informal leaders.

B.B. Tilley Wayne Stanley

Honesty

Competence

Being Forward-Looking

Inspiration

Again, from an informal standpoint, what about B.B. and Tilley's coworkers, Sam, Mo., etc.?

## Exhibit 5

### Why Are All These Things Happening to Me?

### Leadership Practices and Ethics

Considering the behavior of B.B., Tilley, Wayne, Stanley, and B.B.'s wife, rank order these characters based on "Who Do You Like Least?" Rank the person you like least #1 and the person you like the best #5.

	Ranking
B.B.	_____
B.B.'s Wife	_____
Tilley	_____
Stanley	_____
Wayne	_____

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## Administration

The exercise is administered by first having participant complete and briefly discuss the leadership characteristics, shown in Exhibit 3. Then the film is introduced with comments about evaluating the characters' behavior from an ethical and leadership stand- point. A brief overview of the film is provided to give participants an idea of who and what to watch. During the early moments of the film, key characters are pointed out.

After the film, each exercise is introduced briefing. The leadership actions exercise, exhibit 4, is conducted first. Participants could have spent over an hour discussing these factors. The 'Who Do You Like Least exercise was conducted in a brief format to close out discussion of the film. Either of these exercises could be given between a half-hour to an hour for discussion.

## Debriefing

The exercise is debriefed by having each group of participants, from the previous exercises, develop a list of specific guidelines for ethical business conduct with comments about how it relate to their Specific jobs. Here the difference between an undergraduate student setting and an adult continuing education or MBA student is apparent. These exercises were designed specifically to apply ethical management principles to their jobs and organizations. The discussion focuses in these areas and often prompts a variety of very specific questions based on the participants' experiences.

## Evaluation

Evaluation of this movie/experiential exercise comes from the debriefing. Are participants able to identify some key concepts of ethical management? Are they able to make application of these principals to their own On-the-job situation? And evaluation comes in the form of end-of-program evaluation forms? The question of real evaluation of learning comes back on the job and is extremely difficult to measure. The managers should go back to their jobs more knowledgeable and aware of the ethical impact of their decisions and behavior.

## OTHER POSSIBILITIES

If you start thinking about the concepts taught in different courses and movies that demonstrate them, you can quickly develop some interesting possibilities. The movie "Chorus Line" is an excellent vehicle for discussing job hunting skills, recruitment, and selection strategies. From the individual viewpoint, the film includes a portrayal of the job hunter's concern, highlighted in the early Moments with a song "My Resume." From the organizational Standpoint, there are points about both recruitment and selection. An experiential exercise evaluating the selection of the dancers in the movie against a recommended set of hiring principles would provide a good vehicle for evaluating hiring standards. Exhibit 6 is a summary of Kurt Einstein's (1986) principles for selection and is an excellent format for an exercise.

## SOME SPECULATION

In developing the ethics exercise based on "Tin Men, r examined a variety of movies and considered exercises on a variety of management subjects. The speculation might be interesting for someone wanting to develop a movie-based experiential exercise.

Subject	Possible Films
Change	Fiddler on the Roof
Power/Social Responsibility	The Moneychangers
Motivation/Values	Secret of My Success
Power	The Magnificent Seven

## Exhibit 6

How to Pick the Best  
Personnel Selection and the Future of Your Company Personnel  
decisions fail because managers fail to:

Develop job specifications.

Gather enough information to make a correct selection.

You must know what you need, what is acceptable, and what is unacceptable in a candidate.

The dynamics of selection are:

Past related information.

Future related information.

Performance standards.

There are two evaluation criteria:

Capability and Personality

**The "boss-subordinate" relationship is the most  
dynamic in any working situation.**

A candidate should never be interviewed under stress.

References should be taken with a great deal of reservation, and are generally unreliable.

**The essence of the interview it to determine if the  
candidates can do what they say they can do.**

## CONCLUSION

Movies provide an interesting opportunity for some creative experiential exercises. The guidelines identified here, although similar to guidelines for good experiential exercises of any type, are important. Using films requires some special set-up and instructions to the audience. It requires specifically focused exercises that focus on the learning objectives, which may be quite different from the plot of the film. The results are interesting. Participant reports high levels of involvement with the learning. The discussions during the exercises seem to produce a very deep level of analyze and understanding. Measuring the learning might be an important step in making this a proven format for experiential learning.

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