

## Developments in Business Simulation & Experiential Exercises, Volume 8, 1981

### “INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING: EXPERIENCE IS THE BEST TEACHER”

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It appears that the AACSB accreditation process is seriously moving into the international business domain. We are also seeing an awakening in the political arena. A Republican administration is much more likely to remove some of the export disincentives that have gradually been placed in the way of American Multinational Corporations in their efforts to increase export sales. This interest in international business is a very good sign which seems to indicate an increase is quite likely in our College enrollment in the general area of international business.

The author of this article has been involved with an experiential course offering (A Traveling Seminar) in the area of international marketing and international management for the past six years. The article will highlight some observations about such programs and attempt to pass along a few recommendations for those that might be considering similar course offerings outside the United States.

The basic structure of the seminar is fairly simple. Arrange a program outside the United States, recruit participants, complete the seminar and begin planning for the next program. However, all is not quite as simple as it seems on the surface. The programs that succeed have many hours devoted to detail work and those that fail usually do so because of a lack of appreciation of the true effort level required to make them work. I find that I spend roughly 10 hours per week for an entire year in preparation for each seminar. This does not include the actual time spent outside the United States conducting the seminar. One's colleagues many times feel or at least they give off the vibrations that these trips are one massive 'Boondoggle'. I find this to be one of the most negative factors associated with these international trips and have never fully been able to accept such statements without the hair standing up on the back of my neck. I mention this because you are very likely to encounter such subtle opposition if you ever attempt to arrange such a traveling seminar. Fortunately, the excellent Student responses that these programs have generated far exceeds any such negative reactions.

In the limited space available for this summary I shall attempt to convey a few pointers from my six years of experience with international experiential learning. Start early--working a full year in advance is not unrealistic considering all the details that need to be covered. I am always sure to begin arranging the next years trip several months before I actually leave on this years trip. This way I am able to give my hosts a pretty good time estimate for the next years visit. It is much more effective if I can say something along the lines of this "We really enjoyed visiting your 3ganization this year. Do you feel that we might be able to see you again next year? We have tentatively scheduled your organization for June 10th at 10:00 am. I'll be contacting you in the fall with more details and a follow up letter. Thank you, etc." Many times the executives will put It on their calendars on the spot. Needless to say a commitment at this time is advantageous from the seminars point of view.

I also make an effort to begin recruiting participants as early in the year as possible. This is usually about the second week of the fall term for trips leaving the next summers This gives participants time to plan vacation schedules, make class arrangements for the spring term and set up financial arrangements for the trip. Many students can actually get a part time job during the fall term that will contribute a significant amount of the international seminars total cost. (Which I find to total about \$3000.00 for a full four weeks in Europe, including transatlantic APEX airfare, hotels, all meals, 6 semester hours of tuition, average personal expenses for entertainment during the seminar, all ground travel and all costs of the seminar. This is, of course, a very general average cost figure). It also gives the participants some time to think about the seminar without feeling pressured. I once tried to begin marketing a program at the start of the Spring semester (for a summer program) and only got one student who was interested in participating. I began my marketing program for the next summers trip at the beginning of the fall term and got 20 students from that university to participate. I cannot stress too strongly the need to work on these programs in advance and to begin working as early as possible.