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INTERCOLLEGIATE CASE ANALYSIS COMPETITION AS AN EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING EXPERIENCE

S. Kyle Reed, The University of Tennessee-Knoxville

ABSTRACT

The study of management by the case method is so universal today that it has encouraged regional intercollegiate competition among some of the more prestigious business schools with MBA programs. A team from The University of Tennessee-Knoxville in 1978 won the Southeastern competition for the second year in a row. This paper will elaborate on the selection and coaching of the team in preparation for the competition, the format of the competition, selection of the case, assignment of the case to competing teams, and the atmosphere within which the teams prepare the case for presentation. Selection of judges and criteria for judging will also be included.

INTRODUCTION

Competitions in the Northeast at Dartmouth and in the Southeast at the University of Georgia have been going on for two years now, and the enthusiasm generated indicates that such competitions will become an annual affair.

The Southeastern competition consists of two parts--a case analysis and playing of a management simulation, but this paper is concerned only with the case analysis portion of the competition.

CASE TO BE USED

I have chosen the 1977 competition as an example, since I want to use the case assigned during that competition. Independent Publishing Company (Intercollegiate Clearing House Case 4-377-062) was used that year, believe it or not, in both the Northeastern and the Southeastern competitions. (Twenty copies of this case are made available for distribution at the ABSEL Conference.)

SELECTION OF THE TEAM

Instructions from the University of Georgia suggested the selection of a five-member team made up of full-time students in the MBA program at the competing schools. We chose six students, one of whom became the alternate as chosen by members of the team.

Every effort is made to have each chosen student represent a different area of concentration in the MBA program. I work very closely with the various departments seeking their assistance in obtaining the top student(s) in each area.

The chosen team members are enrolled in a special section of the Graduate Business Policy course, and essentially the same procedure is followed in teaching this section as is used in any other section of the course, except for the fact that much more attention is given to the importance of oral presentations.

COACHING THE TEAM

The class meets one day per week for about three hours, and after spending about the first three meetings covering the basic aspects of corporate strategy (using Business Policy by Christensen, Andrews and Bower, Richard D. Irwin, Homewood, Illinois, 1978), most of the emphasis is placed on oral presentations, following instructions from the University of Georgia coordinator.

Competition takes place during the Spring quarter. The following instructions were received early in the quarter from Dr. William F. Glueck, coordinator of the case portion of the competition:

You will receive the case material when you arrive. We have arranged for the library to be available Friday night should you desire to use it. This approach puts each team under the same constraints. Of course, University of Georgia students have no knowledge of the case to be used or its industry.

The presentation will follow this approach:

1. The team will present its analysis and recommendations for twenty minutes. They can hand out any exhibits, etc., they choose which makes their presentation more effective.
2. The judges will question the team on the presentations and its implications for ten minutes (changed to twenty minutes during the 1978 competition).

The panel of judges will include:

- a consultant who specializes in strategic management policy.
- a top executive who makes strategic decisions.
- a professor who teaches policy and who is not affiliated with any of the competing schools.

None of the judges has any ties to the host school.

3. The competing teams will question the team similarly for ten minutes (eliminated from the 1978 competition).
4. The suggested outline of the presentation is:
 - a. The Corporate Objectives
 - b. Analyses of Current Status of the Corporation
 - (1) Environmental Opportunities and Threats
 - (2) Internal Strategic Advantages and Weaknesses

Insights into Experiential Pedagogy, Volume 6, 1979

- c. Alternative Strategies for Improvement of Corporate Performance
- d. Major Implementation Policies
 - (1) Organizational and Personnel Changes
 - (2) Functional Policies Necessary to Make the Strategy Work (for example - financial, operational, marketing policies).
- e. How the Strategy Chosen Will Better Ready Corporate objectives

The team members were assigned a number of cases to be presented following this procedure, using any combination of the team members in the various presentations. However, each member had ample opportunity to become involved.

Since the time constraints in the instructions were so critical, great emphasis was put on the use of effective visual aids which could made a strong point in a minimum amount of time.

The oral presentations were video-taped, with faculty members and an executive-in-residence acting as judges. Critiquing of the tapes was one of the most beneficial aids used in the coaching, because the effectiveness of the presentation is just as important as the facts given in the analysis.

ON TO THE COMPETITION

Competition on the campus at the University of Georgia at Athens took place on May 13 and 14, 1977. Teams from Vanderbilt University, The University of Alabama, The University of Florida, Florida State University, The University of Georgia, and The University of

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

Saturday, May 14, 1977

Donuts & Coffee:	Graduate School Lounge	7:00 - 7:55
Selection:	Order of Presentations	7:45
Assemble:	Law School Auditorium	7:55
Presentation of Cases:	Team *	8:00 - 8:40
	Team _____	8:40 - 9:20
	Team _____	9:20 - 10:00
	Break	10:00 - 10:20
	Team _____	10:20 - 11:00
	Team _____	11:00 - 11:40
	Team _____	11:40 - 12:20
Lunch		
Assemble	-----	1:55
Presentation of Game:	. . .	2:00 - 5:00
Social Hour	-----	6:30 - 7:30
Dinner	-----	7:30
Awards	-----	9:00
Party at Oglethorpe House	-----	10:00

*Order of presentation determined by drawing

Tennessee arrived at 3 p.m. on Friday, May 13, and after orientation and room assignments were given copies of the case to be analyzed. They were told that presentations would start at 8 a.m. the next morning.

At orientation teams were given the following schedule:

Needless to say, the teams worked all night long in analyzing the case and getting ready for the big presentation. In the short period of time, it was amazing to see the beautiful jobs done by the students.

THE CASE

The Independent Publishing Company case involves John Ginn since his takeover as President and Publisher of IPC, a part of the Harte-Hanks Newspaper chain. He had been quite successful until the fall of the first year when the economy in the distribution area of his newspapers in the Anderson, South Carolina, region plummeted in 1975.

Harte-Hanks had agreed on goals for Ginn, and had established a bonus system based on whether he reached the goals --\$6,800 if he reached the "good" level of managerial margin, and \$12,000 if he reached the "outstanding" level. Naturally, John was shooting for the big pot.

In spite of his successes, by early December Ginn could see the loss of all bonus because of the rapid deterioration in the economy. What should he do?

(At this point in the presentation there will be a brief analysis of the case. I plan to follow the actual presentation made by the team from The University of Tennessee--using their visual aids, etc.)

THE JUDGING

The judges did a superb job of questioning the team members of various aspects of the presentation. Criteria shown in Figure 1 were used for judging.

THE WINNER

At the Awards Banquet the judges were overwhelming in their praise for the outstanding jobs done by each of the teams. Competition was very stiff, and the winner --The University of Tennessee.

EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

Students who participated in the competition say that they would not take anything for the experience. They feel that it was as near to the real world as it possibly could have been. Here they were analyzing problems of an actual organization in the vicinity of the competition and giving their recommendations the same as they would to the management of their own company-- or as a group of consultants giving their recommendations to a client.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that ABSEL encourage this type of competition in other geographical areas of the United States and perhaps make the competition such that regions could compete and a grand winner announced.

Insights into Experiential Pedagogy, Volume 6, 1979

FIGURE I
INTERCOLLEGIATE CASE COMPETITION JUDGES' EVALUATION SHEETS

TEAM # () EVALUATION:

MAJOR CATEGORIES	RATING										
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
I. They have identified the Problem(s). (Poorly)	_	_	_	_	_	_	_	_	_	_	(Very Well)
II. They have proposed viable (realistic) alternatives. (Poorly)	_	_	_	_	_	_	_	_	_	_	(Very Well)
III. They have proposed and supported realistic recommendation(s). (Poorly)	_	_	_	_	_	_	_	_	_	_	(Very Well)
IV. They have shown conciseness and articulated in their presentation. (Poorly)	_	_	_	_	_	_	_	_	_	_	(Very Well)
V. They have responded to Judges' questioning. (Poorly)	_	_	_	_	_	_	_	_	_	_	(Very Well)
<u>TOTAL SCORE:</u>											