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LONG LIVE YOUR BUSINESS GAME

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One year ago I had the pleasure of contributing an article to Simulation/Gaming/News indicating that infant mortality of business games has been excessively high. In the year since that pronouncement at least 70 to 80 new games have come into being and a similar number have expired. In the seventeen years since the inception of management decision simulation, at least a thousand games have been conceived, gestated, and after a brief period of love and fond expectation, most of these new-born games were simply added to the infant- game mortality statistics.

In my article I stated that “to reach a ripe old age Bulgarians swear by yogurt, and Armenians, by grape leaves,” but what should you do, eat or think about, so that your own game or the one you like, will get a reprieve from the bibliophiles mortuary.

In the fifty-plus papers and panels you will be privileged to hear and participate in during this first “National Conference on Business Gaming and Experiential Learning,” I am sure you will learn much about what goes into business game longevity. As the proud progenitor of a fifteen-year old offspring, Management Decision Simulation, let me have the liberty to give some life-extending advice.

1. Keep your game understandable and simple in structure. The fancier and particularly the mathematically exotic games tend to be one-shot ventures.

2. Make it realistic. The game should be a learning experience. Since life and reality are synonymous, the closer you get to reality the longer life expectancy you give your game.

3. Give it flexibility. Adapt or perish is just as pertinent to decision simulation as it is to the preservation of living species.

4. Be sure it is purposeful. While class-room stimulation and having fun can and should be integral to game-playing, it must have pedagogical and hopefully, research value.

5. Live your game. Even a near dead game will be resuscitated by academic mouth-t-mouth first aid. Many an excellent game has been prematurely consigned to the mortuary because of lackadaisical instructors.

As you go about today’s and tomorrow’s conferencing in business gaming and experiential learning, see if you can spot strengths and weaknesses relative to these five suggestions in the games you see and will hear about. Let’s put an end to the Blue-Baby Syndrome and give our games a better chance to outdo Methuselah.