

Experiential Learning Enters the Eighties, Volume 7,m 1980

THE ALL STAR WORLD SERIES TEAM EXERCISE:
AN EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING EXERCISE DEALING
WITH VARIOUS ORGANIZATIONAL BEHAVIOR ISSUES

George T. Solomon, Georgetown University
and George Washington University

ABSTRACT

The "All Star World Series Team Exercise" is designed to allow those participating an opportunity to deal with a number of organizational problems within an imposed time constraint. The exercise requires a total community to plan, organize, coordinate and develop an organizational entity capable of collecting the necessary information and determining the "All Star World Series Team" for a particular decade. As such, groups participating find themselves dealing with such issues as delegation, authority, responsibility and interpersonal communications. The ultimate goal of this exercise is to simulate the reality of organizational life with all its pressures and dilemmas.

"I see
I forget

I hear
I remember

I do
I understand

Confucius

INTRODUCTION

Many teachers and practitioners of behavioral science not only support but attempt to practice the thrust of Confucius' saying. The development and refinement of experiential exercises has allowed the behavioral science to bridge the gap from the theoretical tenets to the development and practice of individuals' espoused theories of action. Many theorists, especially Argyris and Schoen, have dealt with the usefulness and relevancy of experiential exercises.

Many exercises have been developed along the lines of dealing with a specific organizational issue: interpersonal communications, trust and many others. Few exercises have attempted to deal with many issues centered around organizational effectiveness. The purpose of this exercise: "The All Star World Series Team" is to afford participants an opportunity to interact with a large group, usually the community attending the training or class. Also, this exercise serves as the vehicle for bringing together many of the separate issues discussed during an introductory organizational behavior course or training activity.

"THE ALL STAR WORLD SERIES EXERCISE"

This exercise contains two sets of information: one for the participants and the other for the trainers-instructors. The participants handout describing the exercise, the goals of the exercise, time limit, group size and physical setting, is included in this abstract.

The trainers-instructors handout describing the materials needed, the placement of the data, the implementation of the exercise and the discussion of the exercise after completion will be included later in this paper.

Goals of the Exercise

The activity you are about to begin is designed to highlight some of the important issues surrounding effective human behavior in organizations. During the course of the exercise you will need to deal with the following dilemmas:

1. Flow to develop efficient organizational structures to accomplish the various tasks before you.
2. How to deal with varying leadership styles and their effectiveness in group performance.
3. How did the decision-making process occur in your groups?
4. Did each group and the community in whole use the strengths of each member?

Group Size

For this exercise, you will remain in your groups but will need to coordinate with almost every other group present. This exercise requires the entire community to participate and interact totally. In order to proceed with this exercise, this handout will establish the criteria for presenting your community answer as well as the parameters of the exercise.

Nature of the Problem

The problem itself is not very difficult. I merely want you to obtain the All Star World Series Team for any decade. (Instructor-trainer selects the particular decade depending on available information.) This information is readily available in a number of published reports as well as being known intuitively by any amateur sports buff.

For the purpose of this exercise, the following data will be used to evaluate the performance of each player (with the exception of pitchers)

1. The individual's batting average during the World Series in question. (For players who happened to appear in more than one World Series, select their best series. You can view each Series as being discrete from all others.)
2. The individual's fielding percentage during the World Series in question. Once again, his performance in a particular Series should be considered discrete. The fielding percentage evaluates the defensive capabilities of each individual. Normally, when looking at a box score, which contains the relevant material for this exercise, it appears under the heading "fielding average."

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3. Pitchers should be evaluated on the basis of their Won-Loss record during the World Series in question as well as on their Earned Run Average. These are the only two factors to be considered with respect to pitchers.

Within the next few minutes, each group will receive a piece of Confidential Data from me. This data serves two purposes. First, it gives each team a basis of beginning the exercise. Second, it gives the location of the second piece of data. Each envelope contains, in riddle form, the location of the next piece of data and a piece of the box score from a particular World Series Game. Therefore, each envelope contains two pieces of data. One, the clue about where the next piece of data will be found and two, a piece of the box score for a particular World Series Game played during a specific decade.

Parameters of the Exercise

In order to make this exercise meaningful as a learning experience, certain parameters need to be followed. These parameters are:

1. The physical boundaries of the exercise. This exercise will take place within the area immediately surrounding the campus of the university or training site. No area within these bounds is off-limits. Be on your toes clues can be placed anywhere, and on anybody!
2. Time duration of the exercise. The exercise will commence immediately and run for 3½ hours. At that time, the community must turn their answer in for "The All Star World Series Teams" for both leagues.
3. The authorized information sources. The only source of information that is readily available for this exercise will be found in your envelopes. You may decide to forego this endeavor of collecting clues and merely guess. I don't recommend the latter. You may even call friends, resident sport experts and the like, but this may waste time and cost money.
4. The computation of the individual player's weighted performance average. Players will be selected to the All Star team based on their Weighted Performance Average, except pitchers. (This average is computed by taking an individual's batting average times a particular percentage and adding his fielding average times a particular percentage; (i.e., George Solomon's batting average .349 (x) .8 plus fielding average 1,000 (x) .2 = Weighted Performance Average of .279 = .2000 = .479.) The figure .479 thus becomes the weighted average for George Solomon.

If a player appears in more than one World Series, each appearance should be evaluated separately from previous appearances. Do not average scores for players appearing in more than one series.

Also, remember that you are attempting to select the best player, based on the Weighted Performance Average, for each particular position in baseball. The correct percentage to multiply both the batting and fielding average is located in an envelope which can be located after Number 3 is completed.

5. The use of the computer terminals. In order to facilitate your computations there is a special program available in the mini-computer library. The necessary password and other data must be first obtained in a clue envelope before entry into the system is permitted. The computer room will be made

available half-way through the exercise. (The use of the computer room is optional for this exercise. The handout for the instructor-trainer goes into greater detail on this matter.)

6. The method of presentation of the results. Your final tabulation will be handwritten. The entire community will turn in one written answer for the players in the American League and another for the players in the National League. These sheets will have the following format.

Player's Name (i.e.) George Solomon	Position C	W P Average .999	Year 1965	Team L.A. Dodgers
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The position order for this presentation is:

1. First Base (1)
2. Second Base (2)
3. Third Base (3)
4. Shortstop (SS)
5. Catcher
6. Outfield
7. "
8. "
9. Pitcher (P)

NOTE: The presentation for the pitcher is different from the other players, as you will include his Won-Loss record and his E.R.A. instead of the Weighted Performance Average.

Additional Notes

It will soon become obvious to each participant that a knowledge of baseball is not necessary for success in the exercise. In fact, it would be very helpful to each team if they had at least one person on the team who knows nothing about this sport.

Every team has the right to expel any group member from the team if the member does not contribute to the team's overall effectiveness. This "right" may be involved with my consent at any time. NOW LET'S PLAY BALL

Desired Outcomes and Benefits of this Exercise

This exercise is designed to offer participants an opportunity to deal with the following organizational issues:

1. Organizational Design
2. Contingency Leadership
3. Delegation
4. Authority and Responsibility
5. Interpersonal Communications
6. Interpersonal Relations
7. Group Dynamics
8. Group Norms and Values
9. Meeting Organizational Objectives and Goals
10. Organizational Climate

Individuals who participate in this exercise will better understand the effect of the internal and external environment has on the completion of organizational objectives. It will allow them to put into "practice" the "theory" which is espoused during the course or training session. The primary purpose of this exercise and its benefit to the participant is the creation of an organizational microcosm which allows them an opportunity to deal with and analyze their actions.

Trainers-Instructors Handout

1. The physical boundaries of the exercise. Determine prior to the exercise a reasonable geographic area

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in which the various clues will be placed. Vastness of space is not important as much as diversity of locations (i.e., buildings, offices, restaurants)

2. Time duration of the exercise. Use the time length specified in the participant's handout 3½ hours.
3. The authorized information sources.
 - a. Xerox two copies of the final composite box scores of the World Series played during a particular decade (i.e., 1950 1959).
 - b. Determine how many clue envelopes you will place within the physical boundaries of the exercise. It is best to develop a series of clues for each sub-group in the total community. Keep in mind, that you initially indicate that there are two sub-communities - The National and American Leagues. And that within each League there are X teams (small groups) working on completing the assignment.
 - c. Once you determine the number of clues or clue envelopes, six to eight is the best number, cut up the composite box scores into small pieces. Part of the participants responsibility is to reconstruct the box scores in total so that they can read off the individual's batting and fielding average. (Provide groups with tape to aid in their reconstruction.)
 - d. Once you have cut up the box scores, mix them up and distribute them somewhat equally among the clue envelopes. You may find it useful to label the envelopes.
 - e. You need to develop a series of written clues which you put into each envelope. The purpose is to move the participants from point to point within the physical boundaries of the exercise.
 - f. The exercise is initiated when you hand each group their initial clue envelope.
 - g. Make the clues imaginative and in riddle form. Any reference to the topics discussed during the training session or class only enforces the expoused theories presented.
4. Computation of the individual players weighted performance average.
 - a. As stated in the participants handout, they must first obtain the fielding and batting average of each player who appeared in the World Series for that decade and multiply it by two weights (e.e., .40 and .60).

The instructor or trainer randomly selects the two weights to be assigned to the batting and fielding average. The two weights can be hidden in an additional clue envelope or written on the back of the Xeroxed box scores prior to cutting them up for the clue envelopes.
3. The use of the computer terminals (optional)
 - a. A program has been designed in conjunction with this exercise which allows the participants the ability to tabulate the weighted average quickly. However, as in keeping with the spirit of the exercise, various stumbling blocks are built into the program to cause the participants a degree of anxiety.

CONCLUSION

Experiential learning is designed to bring reality into the world of theoretical ideas and tenets. This exercise is designed to incorporate many theoretical principles into one total experience. Participants hopefully will experience the total range of emotion and organizational issues within the framework of this exercise. As a result of this experience, participants will more clearly understand and perceive the factors which contribute to a competent organization in which trust, cooperation and mutual goal setting is possible.