

Developments in Business Simulation and Experiential Learning, Volume 26, 1999
“A NEW MODEL FOR BUSINESS COURSES (GETTING THE STUDENT CONNECTED)”

Carole Lissy – William Rainey Harper College
Mary Lou Lockerby – College of DuPage
Lillian Roy – McHenry County College

Business Simulation General Description:

In this simulation, students participate in an integrated business simulation by enrolling in specific sections of accounting or finance, management, marketing, or human resource classes. These classes model a business organization teaming their personnel to effectively organize, plan, and function as a startup company. Each student participates within the organization based on the course they are taking. Students may register for only one course within this Business Simulation in a specific semester but are welcome to take other courses in the Business Simulation in subsequent semesters.

Enrollment:

Approximately 6 students per course. Students may be enrolled in only one of the simulation sections in a given semester but are invited to register for one of the other Business Simulation courses in a future semester. Dependent on the business concepts used, the courses in the simulation may vary from semester to semester. Typically there are 6 courses that include Marketing, Accounting or Finance, Management, Human Relations, Advertising and other courses dependent on the type of start-up business (i.e. direct marketing, international marketing, multimedia, professional selling, business communications, etc.)

Objectives of the Business Simulation:

- . Developing team building skills
- . Integrating the business curriculum consistent with current business organizations
- . Development of written and verbal skills

- . Application of course materials with a focus on evaluation and selection of strategies consistent with the company
- . Meeting the objectives of the specified courses within the Business Simulation
- . Application based learning

Benefits of the Business Simulation:

Students work as a startup company applying their course material. Each member of the company use their course text, other departments, outside resources, and faculty assistance to fulfill the company and department responsibilities. The simulation assignments will parallel the job functions of the specific departments within the company. For example: The Marketing Department and Direct Marketing Department prepare segments of a Marketing Plan doing market research, product specification and pricing. The Accounting-Finance Department prepare the Financial Prospectus, The Advertising Department prepare the promotion plan and budget for the Business Plan, Management students coordinate, and integrate the responsibilities of the departments by managing their assigned department, The Customer Service Department prepares a customer service plan. The text and other resources identify the issues and the variety of methods which could be used to resolve a task. The team in conjunction with information from other departments within the organization will make decisions most appropriate for the company. Included in the many benefits of taking a course in the simulation environments are the following:

- . Team work - the number one characteristic firms are looking for in today's employment marketplace
- . Decision making - opportunities to

Developments in Business Simulation and Experiential Learning, Volume 26, 1999

evaluate the wide variety of techniques in making an effective, profitable organization and reaching consensus on the technique that will be most applicable to this company

Communication - hands on opportunities to apply written and verbal communication skills in the formulation and presentation of the plans

Interactivity - experience in the development of plans that are company-wide based and integrated with plans of other departments "No department is an island"

Application - using the text material, resources and other departments to prepare a company proposal

No written exams - just quizzes and application based exercises and projects

Assignments:

The Business Simulation departments formulate specific components of a Business Plan for a start-up distributor, service business, restaurant etc. based on the type of business. Each course within the simulation is a designated department within the organization except for Management students who act as the management personnel coordinating the efforts of the individual departments. The individual course content is covered through reading assignments, projects, and business simulation assignments. There are individual and group assignments for each department team. Evaluation on course content is based on quizzes, projects, and team decisions and presentations.

Class Periods:

Lectures in the course are minimal. Instructors are facilitators and resource persons. They answer questions on material and help to clarify any projects the departments and personnel (students) have. All text material and individual assignments are completed prior to class time. Class time is designed to maximize the team

problem solving, discussions, schedule meetings with instructors and or other departments, investigate outside learning resources in the library or the internet, and use the computers for report generation.

The departments, in most cases, are responsible for their department schedule. The class periods begin with a department meeting and manager meetings. The instructors (facilitators) occasionally plan guests to be present at a specific class to share their expertise with the departments, and all departments are notified in advance so that they can plan accordingly. Managers assist departments in areas such as departmental goals and structure. Instructors are always available to discuss assignments, course material etc. and if extended time is needed by a department, meetings are scheduled in advance to insure availability. Routine meetings last no longer than 20 minutes to maximize team discussion, decision, and collaboration time.

Project and Assignment Completion:

There is a syllabus for each class and students are expected to remain current on their course material and honor due dates. Students must submit all projects and quizzes on time. The department teams are responsible for their department schedule under the direction of their manager. The class periods begin with instructor briefings, and then with department and manager meetings.

Conclusion:

As faculty who also teach businesses classes using a more traditional model, we have enjoyed teaching these subjects in this new format. While the time commitment has been great, the rewards are also great. The enthusiasm displayed by our students has been refreshing. We have witnessed first hand how students have applied critical thinking skills for problem solving as well as taking responsibilities for their learning and course outcome. For those of you who decide to give this a try, keep in touch. We would enjoy hearing your experience.