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Editorial: Introduction to Special Issue on modern day experiential exercises

Steven Meisel

Dilip Mirchandani
Rowan University

Editorial: Introduction to Special Issue on modern day experiential exercises

This special issue is an initiative of the Eastern Academy of Management and the Southwest Academy of Management. It is made possible through a generous grant from the Fellows of the EAM.

Our goal is to put a spotlight on the creativity and current scholarship of teaching and learning. Specifically, experiential exercises that are easily accessible and applicable to most courses in the management curricula.

We were delighted and a little overwhelmed with over 80 submissions. Because of publisher page limits, we are only able to offer six articles but that represents a highly selective acceptance rate of 7.5%.

The articles you will read in this issue focus on varied topics in sustainability, leadership, disability, and assertiveness. Most require just one or two classes, but we also offer an engaging and challenging article on a semester-length game design project. Some exercises are specific to one topic, but others can be adapted to several topics in management, organizational behavior and human resources.

Here are brief introductions to what you will be reading [. . .]:

- "An Introduction to Climate Change in Management Education: An Individual-Level Approach." Climate change is a unifying issue for research and practice across disciplines. An understanding of climate change and how to address it is vital in our teaching. This experiential exercise introduces management students to climate change by giving them an opportunity to address it in their own lives. This approach engages students and helps create understanding on the individual, organizational and global levels. This exercise can easily be adapted to different courses, time lengths and learning formats (e.g. on-ground, virtual and asynchronous online). We are excited by the potential to create lifelong learning in this area and transfer of knowledge from the classroom to personal practices.

- "Hidden Challenges: An Invisible Disabilities Learning Activity." An estimated 20%–25% of individuals have disabilities, many of which are hidden from peers and colleagues. The growing field of equity, diversity and inclusion calls for expanding and deepening knowledge about issues that have received little attention. However, management textbooks rarely mention invisible disabilities. This enlightening hands-on experiential exercise challenges our perceptions and deepens students' learning and experience with this important topic.

- "How Grumpy Cat Helps Students Learn Management Concepts." This activity is based on a well-known meme. That is, an image juxtaposed with short text that

elicits emotional responses from its readers and is now a staple in social media. Examples include Grumpy Cat, Success Kid and Distracted Boyfriend. This article demonstrates how memes can be used to introduce theories and concepts in ways that engage our students and connect with the course material. The exercise can be used for a variety of topics and in online and in-person teaching. Grumpy Cat is innovative, fun and immediately familiar to students. What could be better?

- "Building Assertiveness and Listening Skills Using Dysfunctional Peer Project Scenarios." Students (and faculty members) often avoid handling problems caused by peers in team projects. In response to this common problem, this activity is designed to plan and enact assertive communication. Students develop scripts to deal with four common team problems. Learners then analyze the problems, impact on the team, the blame they assign in the situation (to call attention to any bias) and develop speaking and listening approaches to achieve their preferred outcomes. This innovative and important exercise enhances learning through reflection with variations for additional practice and debriefing. The exercise is immediately useful with situations relevant to students' daily lives and core skills that are transferable to the workplace.

- "Origami Organizations!" This exercise is hands-on, engaging and fun for students and their instructors. The activity is designed to teach undergraduate and graduate students about different organizational structures. Student teams construct origami animals using both mechanistic and organic structures to create a zoo based on instructions and boundary conditions. Working through different levels of origami difficulty students internalize the challenges and strengths of organizations with contrasting structures. The debrief allows students to draw their own conclusions about organizational structure and to discuss what day-to-day work looks like at different types of organizations. This is an outstanding example of an experiential exercise creating "sticky" learning.

- "Developing Cooperative Strategy Board Games to Train High-Performing Teams." The exercises shared in this Special Issue are mostly timed for one or two classes and designed to enhance a specific topic. This article is different as it presents a semester-long experiential learning experience that takes place in three phases. In Phase 1, students learn about how companies use gamification in training high-performing teams. In Phase 2, students play a cooperative strategy game with their student teams. In Phase 3, students design (and play) their own unique cooperative strategy game. What makes this particularly interesting is that students learn about gamification and the dynamics of high-performance teams by creating their own readiness to learn. The article has an excellent debrief and the activity can be used in a variety of courses. Although the focus is on leadership it creates learning in many other topics and presents a truly innovative design.

The common thread is that all the exercises are student-centered and offer clear information for preparation, presentation and developing a thought-provoking debrief.

To help understand our article selection process, we want to share some ideas that guided our thinking. Boyer (1990) offered a typology of four types of scholarship including that of teaching and learning. Since then, there has been an increasing recognition of the vital role that the SoTL plays in educators being actively engaged in ongoing thoughtful examination of pedagogy, communication and learning outcomes. SoTL makes students the central stakeholders in the educational process. New approaches and pedagogical devices

are particularly essential in the context of contemporary grand challenges – economic, environmental and social. With respect to pragmatic guidance for SoTL, Felten (2013) identified five principles of good practice – inquiry focused on student learning, grounded in context, methodologically sound, conducted in partnership with students and appropriately public – the open access to *OMJ* content is particularly useful in this regard. Furthermore, Kayes *et al.* (2005) highlighted six aspects of team experiential learning – learning about purpose, membership, roles and role leadership, context, process and action. We believe that the experiential exercises selected for this special issue are consistent with these aspects of good practice. We hope you agree.

We also recognize the creative brilliance of these authors in design and user experience. And as feedback and reflection are critical aspects of experiential learning, we acknowledge the extraordinary diligence of our group of dedicated reviewers.

Finally, we thank Vance Lewis and Robert Yawson, the senior editors of *OMJ*, for their wisdom and support.

As a final organizing thought, we believe in the value of experiential learning. It aligns theory with practice, fosters skill development and prepares students to be effective, adaptable and thoughtful managers in their dynamic and ever-changing business environment.

We hope you agree and will enjoy putting these exercises to work in your own classes. Please share your thoughts with Dilip (mirchandani@rowen.edu) and Steve (meisel@lasalle.edu) and [. . .] welcome to this Special Issue of *OMJ*.

Steven Meisel
Department of Management and Leadership, La Salle University,
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA, and
Dilip Mirchandani
Department of Management, Rowan University, Glassboro, New Jersey, USA

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