

## COMBINING IN-BASKET AND SURVIVAL GAME EXERCISES INTO AN ACTIVE LEARNING EXERCISE

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### ABSTRACT

This exercise borrows from the in-basket pedagogy by creating a list of activities faced by a manager coming back from vacation (the in-basket), and requires the student to rank-order these activities as to the order in which they should be undertaken and how each of these activities should be handled. The exercise borrows from the survival game pedagogy by bringing in an expert ranking to compare and discuss against student individual and group rankings. Student assessment of this exercise shows this to be an enjoyable and positive learning experience. The researchers have assessed this as both a non computer based and a computer based exercise. Under these conditions the instructors have compared the effectiveness of these exercises in (1) achieving its stated objectives, (2) determining the source of learning (student, expert or instructor), (3) helping students determine their business career orientation and (4) prioritizing tasks.

### THE EXERCISE

The following nine situations were included on the handout for Introduction to Business students.

1. Sara is chronically late for work. She is a good employee, but her lateness has gotten out of control. Her supervisor is at the end of his rope. He wants you to meet with Sara and handle this.
2. A longtime customer wants to come in and talk with you about the deteriorating quality of your products.
3. One of your best employees wants to see you about a job offer at a higher salary he has received from a competitor. He wants you to match this offer.
4. Your banker wants to see you about some irregularities in the accounts receivables he has as collateral for one of his loans.
5. Your ad agency wants to meet with you about a customer research project it has just completed. They say they have detected a problem that requires immediate attention.

6. One of your the investors major investors of your company wants to see you today
7. You have some excess cash in certificates of deposit at the Bank of Louisiana that have to be rolled over today. The banker wants to meet with you as to other investment opportunities.
8. A reporter from a local newspaper wants to talk to you today about a story she is writing about a health problem that involves one of your products.
9. Your secretary is in charge of the company picnic this weekend, and needs you to make some decisions on the program, food and timetable. Orders have to be placed today.

### NON-COMPUTER VERSUS COMPUTER ADMINISTRATION OF THE EXERCISE

The exercise was administered to 76 Introduction to Business students with the students hand-calculating the exercise. The exercise was also administered to a different group of 60 Introduction to Business students with the computer calculating the exercise. A quantitative assessment was made of the exercise with a post exercise questionnaire based upon the objectives of the exercise. Overall, the students showed the highest assessment rating for the exercise as a "positive and enjoyable learning exercise." We also broke out the hand calculated and computerized applications to see the effect the computer had upon the exercise. The different applications showed two significant differences at the 0.05 level. The computerized application was significantly higher in attributing learning from the exercise to the experts. This is very interesting in relationship to the survival game pedagogy. The computer seemed to put a more authoritative (or more "expert") emphasis on the input of the practitioners. It seemed to put the instructor back to the intended role of moderator. The second significant difference was shown in "This exercise gave me experience in decision making." Again, this seems to indicate that the computer is a help in running this as an active learning exercise. It again might be that the credibility of the expert ranking is increased when entered into the computer. This

might be reinforced by the positive (but significant only at the 0.09 level) change with computerization on the students' assessment of "This exercise helped me gain experience in better prioritizing activities." Again, the computer might strengthen the active learning value of this exercise by strengthening the students' perception of the experts' ranking. Several assessment scores decreased with computerization, but none of these changes were at a 0.05 significance level.

#### **References Available on Request**