

# **Developments In Business Simulation & Experiential Learning, Volume 24, 1997**

## **INTERNATIONAL EXCHANGE GAME**

Don M. McDonald, Troy State University Montgomery

### **ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this interaction is to help participants gain a better understanding of how exchange benefits all who are involved, but it also creates a good setting to observe emergent leadership and self-organization. Applications include international exchange theory, diversity training, community involvement, networking, team building and leadership. Exchange Cards are distributed to participants, who read, discuss and interact, followed by a debriefing. This is repeated three times in approximately 15 minutes. Just as cooperative effort during exchange maximizes game points for all involved, a global market benefits all more than fractured markets.

### **INTRODUCTION**

This interaction has been utilized in a traditional classroom setting as well as with executive seminars and church groups, with from 10 to 50 participants. It is recommended for use early in a course of study, because it requires no previous knowledge of international exchange theory, leadership, or other participants. It works well as an icebreaker, because it not only encourages interaction, but points are gained by cooperation.

For best results participants should number between 15 and 50. Over 50 becomes awkward for focused debriefs, and a competitive dynamic may develop across groups. Fifty may seem large for debrief, but the interaction during exchange encourages a spirit of interaction.

The facilities must permit participants to move or turn and talk among themselves freely. Theater-type seating may restrict interaction.

The facilitator will furnish enough copies of the exchange cards (See Appendix) for each

participant to have three copies. If participants are not expected to bring their own pens or pencils, these must be furnished, also.

### **Timing and Sequence**

Allow 30 minutes preparation time to become familiar with materials and think through applications for the given participants. Facilitating the session itself is an additional 20 to 30 minutes. Facilitation time can be divided into three parts. Initial presentation to the participants takes 5 minutes. Distribute the exchange cards and allow participants to read and discuss the instructions. Allow no more than 60 seconds for each round of exchange. If fewer than 15 are involved, shorten the time limit to 30 seconds to prevent maximizing exchange possibilities within the first and second round of exchange. Allow 4 minutes for each subsequent debrief, for a total of 15 minutes. Allow 15 minutes for lecture after debriefing.

### **Suggested Format and Monologue**

Present the interaction by saying, "We are about to experience a game designed to help us better understand the principle of international exchange. We will discuss the parallels after the game, but first, enjoy the interaction. You may read the instruction card I am about to pass out and discuss it with others, but you may not begin the exchange until I give the signal." (Distribute only one exchange card per participant. Do not explain any specific applications until after the third interaction. This allows participants to discover as many principles as possible for themselves.)

Signal the exchange. Use a stop watch, and allow participants to see you are using it during the exchange. Allow exactly the specified time for each exchange, so that participants can compare their results across controlled exchanges.

Debriefing after each round may be stimulated by the following questions:

- a) What is the objective-to get the most points you can, or to get more than everybody else around you? Is there a difference? What does it matter? (In the real world of trade, one person can have more than another and still not have enough to survive: one person also can have less than another and yet have more than enough to survive.)
- b) What strategies generated the most points for you? What strategies could generate more points for you?

After the first and second debriefs, distribute fresh exchange cards.

The following are suggested parallels to be drawn from the interaction:

- a) Each time a person signs a card, the card becomes more valuable. The card can be thought of as a product. The process of increasing its value is called value added.
- b) As participants develop means of cooperating with each other, they increase the rate at which value is added to everyone's products. This is a win-win situation, and illustrates synergy--the whole is equal to more than the sum of its parts.
- c) The most points in the game accrue to those who are less concerned about the worth of the card they give away than they are with adding value to the cards as they pass them on to others. You will gain more cooperation from others in increasing your products' value, if they see you are increasing theirs in the process.
- e) Each participant in the game has a different signature. In trade, each trader has some advantage that others do not. Perhaps one has lower labor costs, another has strategic geographical features; while another is more technologically advanced. Even slight differences can be manipulated for advantage to all who are involved in the exchange.
- f) Each round participants were able to increase value of the products by increasing the size and cooperation of the network. Likewise, the ultimate world production will be possible

through one global market, all members of which are cooperating. Some may gain more than others, but all will be better off and differences will be minimized.

### Discussion

Strong points of the activity include the following:

- a) It is low tech, and requires little preparation.
- b) It is generic in nature and can be applied to a variety of contexts that concern mutual benefit from interaction and cooperation.
- c) It can be utilized with a wide range of audience sizes.
- d) It can be facilitated in a wide variety of settings in 20 minutes or less. The author offers the game free, but I would very much like to know personal experiences, adaptations, and applications or others.

### Composition of the Exchange Card

It is suggested that the Appendix content be retyped 6 times to fit in two or three columns on one sheet of paper then cut into separate cards. This not only will facilitate making multiple copies, but also will create a card more easily handled and exchanged among participants.

## APPENDIX

### Exchange Card

#### OBJECT OF THE GAME:

To accumulate as many points as possible in a fixed time limit.

#### SCORING:

1 point for every different person's signature on either side of the card you hold when time is called

#### RULES:

The facilitator will announce the beginning and ending of the playing time.

You may only sign a card which you personally hold and control.