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A TIME-EFFICIENT GAME TO ILLUSTRATE CONCEPTS TAUGHT IN MANAGEMENT COURSES AND MANAGEMENT DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

Heinz Weihrich, University of San Francisco

ABSTRACT

The game illustrates concepts taught in management courses as well as in management development programs. The concepts include the effect of group size on effectiveness, intragroup communication, trust/distrust, group cohesiveness, motivation, frustration and withdrawal, competitiveness, leadership/followership, creativity, perception, and others.

INTRODUCTION

In a literature summary of business games, Joseph Wolfe identified 39 games in the various business areas. Games were most widely used in the Business Policy/ General Management area, followed by Economics, Marketing/Retailing, Finance, Management Principles and others. Organizational Behavior games were not shown at all. This may indicate an infrequent use of such games in courses such as Principles of Management and Organizational Behavior. Instructors often hesitate to use games because of their complexity and the work involved in preparing for the exercise.

THE GAME AND ITS IMPORTANCE FOR ABSEL MEMBERS

Over the past twelve years. this game was used to illustrate concepts in the Principles of Management and the Organizational Behavior courses. The concepts usually include: The effect of group size on effectiveness, communication, trust/distrust, group cohesiveness, motivation, frustration and withdrawal, competitiveness, ethical/unethical means to solve the problem, leadership! followership, creativity, perception, and other concepts. In addition, this game has been used in Management Development seminars in different cultural environments including Singapore, Hong Kong, Taipei, Jamaica, Egypt, and Austria. While no conclusions about the cultural differences on he outcome of the game can be reached, a number of interesting observations can be made. Finally, professors doing the exercise among themselves found it very engaging. Thus, the game has been found to be suitable for students, managers, and professors.

The main feature of the game is that it is deceptively simple, and requires little preparation. Yet, the game is rich in illustrating more behavioral concepts than most other games. The task itself is to put together a few pieces to form a prescribed figure. While a few groups have solved the problem in a few minutes, most groups needed about 10 to 15 minutes, and some groups used as much as 50 minutes or never solved the problem at all. The game is important to management professors because it is an effective and time-efficient way to demonstrate managerial concepts. to the

description of the game appears vague in certain aspects (such as what figure is to be assembled), ft is done so purposely in order not to give any advantage to those who may have read this proposal and then participate in the session.

SESSION PRESENTATION

The game will, be presented in a fashion similar to how ft was used in classes and executive programs. The group will be divided into groups of three, six, and nine people. If the total group is large enough three additional groups of the same size will be formed, with one group being allowed to talk during the exercise while the other group may not (note, members may communicate in ways other than talking).

Before receiving the envelope containing the pieces, group members are encouraged to develop the strategy for solving the problem, assign roles, or develop rules by which the group dynamics shall be governed. One person is assigned to each group to observe the members behavior, record them, and report them first to the group and then to the total class. In addition, two "roving observers go from group to group to note differences in behavioral dynamics among them. Observations are reported to the class. Generally, observers are instructed to focus on the group dynamics, leadership, communication, conflicts and their resolutions, and 50 on.

The insights and learning concepts will be discussed by the observers, the participants, and the session leader.

REFERENCE

Wolfe, Joseph, (1985) "The Teaching Effectiveness o! Games in Collegiate Business Course," Simulation and Games, 251-288.