

Developments in Business Simulation & Experiential Exercises, Volume 9, 1982

THE FALRIS ORGANIZATIONAL SCAVENGER HUNT

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ABSTRACT

The FALRIS Organizational Scavenger Hunt is an exercise designed to provide students with an experience in organizing resources in order to accomplish a task; in this case the procurement of various goods and pieces of information as part of a well-known "fun format", the scavenger hunt. Each item and/or group of items has been selected in order to demonstrate various dimensions of organizational behavior; e.g., systems concepts, cooperative vs. competitive behavior, individual vs. group effort and so on. The exercise serves as a vehicle for (1) examining these various organizational issues and (2) promoting group cohesion. The design of the "hunt" and advice on conducting and processing the exercise are offered.

INTRODUCTION

The concept of a group scavenger hunt, at first blush, might seem to be a fun experience devoid of any real learning opportunities. However, properly designed and executed the exercise becomes a vehicle for providing students with an overview of organizational functioning. Conducted early in the semester, it builds group cohesion quickly and provides students with a common experience which can later be referred to in order to reinforce various aspects of behavior in small group settings.

The actual activities of the exercise focus on the acquisition of goods and knowledge through the medium of a scavenger hunt. A copy of a typical FALRIS Scavenger Hunt appears in the appendix. The goal of the exercise, however, is to force students to experience and hopefully reflect on group relationships and effective ways to use groups to accomplish tasks. To this end, each activity or set of activities is designed to provide an example of effective group task functioning and/or group social dynamics.

The course structure itself is based on the work of Cohen, Fink, Gadon and Willits (1980). Students are organized into on-going work groups and learn about organizational behavior through the process of being participants/observers. The FALRIS Organizational Scavenger Hunt is typically used as an initial group task. Immediately upon being formed into groups, instruction booklets (see appendix) are distributed to the groups. Since only one copy is given to each group the first organizational issue they confront is one of information dissemination. During processing of the exercise it is often noted that the holder of the directions usually emerges as the task leader; students learn quickly that information is a source of power. The groups have the remainder of this class period and the whole of the following class period to work on the task.

On the second class day after the task is assigned, the groups must submit their items. Once the items have been inspected and recorded an in-class competition is held. Activities such as trivia contests increase group cohesion and provide a fun

ending to the exercise. The following class is spent processing the exercise; class members describe how they went about organizing their groups and procuring items. The professor offers insight into alternative strategies and helps students to recognize why what happened happened.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITIES AND TIPS FOR PROCESSING

Described below are some of the activities in the exercise, the various strategies for handling them and tips for processing. (Item numbers correspond to those in the appendix.)

Item #23 (Football predictions) This item is aimed toward getting students to understand the concept of "activity traps." They often substitute activities for objectives, in this case, they make picking winners their objective when it should be scoring points. If they recognize that scoring points is their objective they are more likely to analyze the reward system and see that if they predict a one-point spread for each of the games the minimum points they will receive for this item is 57.5 out of a possible 60, regardless of the outcome of the football games. Groups invariably assign this task to an athlete or someone who knows a bookie. Those who select large point spreads usually cannot adequately describe the reward system for this item during debriefing.

The dimension of cooperation vs. competition is brought out in several of the items. Item #10 (Group Photo) forces groups to cooperate in order to produce the photo. Item #20 (Scarce Book) forces them to compete. A rare book is selected, making sure that the professor has a copy. The idea here is that students should use the professor as a resource. Other items are neutral in terms of demands for cooperative or competitive behavior thus allowing the groups to make their own assumptions. A good example is Item #5 (List of Uses for a Brick). The optimum strategy is for all the groups to cooperate. Six groups could produce 120 different uses, divide them up and every group would receive the maximum 100 points for the item. Insight, however, is not enough. If anyone sees this as the optimum strategy he/she must influence the groups to collaborate. This is consistent with the course's main objective-building interpersonal skill. The next best strategy is to form alliances with as many groups as are willing to participate. The least effective is group brain-storming--since there are no "checks" on whether the same use would be produced by others. Better to have each group member generate an independent list, then compare uses and eliminate duplications. System concepts can be introduced here in terms of the individual, his/her group, groups in a course section and so on.

Another systems principle, that of interrelationships between items is built into the exercise as well. The answers to items #17 and #21 can be found in item #14 (Book of Lists). Likewise, items #4 and #12 are linked based on proximity. The local Gino's and the bookstore are across the street from each other. Does a group send out 2 people to get these items or one to

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get both (resource allocation).

Groups must learn to depend on organizations outside their own: item #13 (Postcard) makes them dependent on the postal system (environmental uncertainty). In addition, the postcard could be linked to item #8 (Empire State Building) thus reducing time spent but increasing risk should the card not arrive in time. Trade-offs such as these need to be examined. Priorities also need to be set by the group: Item #6 (Sales Slip) requires the group to act quickly given the date on the slip is required to be the same as the day the exercise is handed out.

The topic of motivation can be raised in relation to Item #24 (Cake). The range of effort in the cakes produced is usually quite wide: everything from simple snacking cakes to elaborate castles complete with moats. Those not expending much effort are no doubt focusing in on the small external reward offered (10 pts. with a 1 in 6 chance at that). Why would people go to the effort of making a time-consuming cake given small external rewards? Issues such as task challenge, achievement, and chance for recognition from peers can be examined.

Since the students are required to keep track of the time spent on the exercise (see Time Sheet in Appendix), data can be generated and used in debriefing concerning effective time utilization. Efficiency scores can be generated by dividing total task points into total time spent. Feeding this information back to students helps them to see that although a certain amount of time must be put into a task, once that threshold has been reached, how effectively the time is used is what becomes important.

One word of caution in processing this exercise; the professor needs to take care in presenting the aims of each item. There is a tendency to come across as "Aha Gotcha!" Obviously students learn from falling prey to the numerous traps built into this activity, however, it is important to provide feedback in such a way as to protect students from embarrassment. One technique which mitigates this possibility is to share the failures experienced by the professors in conducting previous rounds of the exercise. (This should also serve as a warning to hunt designers.) For example, one semester students were required to bring their items to class in a carrier with four wheels. Upwards of two-thirds of the groups fulfilled this requirement by ripping off shopping carts from a local supermarket. Worse yet, after the class they left the carts in classrooms, hallways and outside the building. The manager of the store called the Dean of the College who, in turn, contacted the Chairperson who, predictably in turn, contacted the professors responsible for the course. This showed the professors that their definition of system size was woefully inadequate and became a valuable teaching point concerning ethics, system theory and of course reinforced the axiom that "_____ rolls downhill." In keeping with this idea, prior coordination with potentially effected parties (e.g. library, local business, etc.) is a must in order to maintain support for the exercise.

APPENDIX

FALRIS GROUP SCAVENGER HUNT¹

General Instructions

This is an exercise in organizing group resources to attain goals (in this case course points). It will require that you organize yourselves in a variety of ways to optimally utilize your resources. In most cases it will be to your advantage to think before acting. Try to be efficient: it is a time-consuming task even when well organized.

The goal of the exercise is to gain as many total task points as possible. These total task points will then be converted into course points according to the conversion table. Note that the group with the largest number of total task points in your section will receive an additional five course points to be added to the course points as determined from the table below. Your group must assume all responsibility for the actions it takes to acquire the items. (i.e., don't break laws.)

Scoring System for Group Scavenger Hunt

<u>Task Point Total</u>	<u>Course Points*</u> (for each group member)
850-1000	+50
700- 849	+40
550- 699	+30
400- 549	+20
250- 399	+10
0- 249	0

*Group with the highest task point total in your section will automatically get an additional 5 course points per member.

Instructions for completing Time Chart

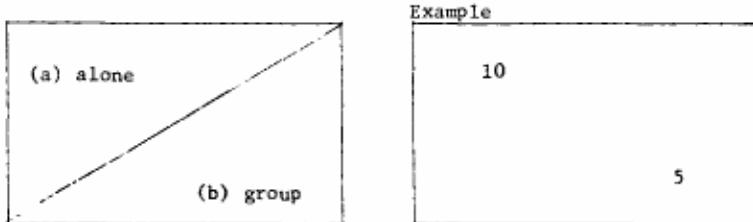
While the primary reward system for the exercise is the points, we would also like to get an idea of the time involved in completing tasks. Consequently, each group member is to keep track of how much time he/she spends on each item. For each item the group member is to record how much time he/she spent (a) working alone or with someone outside his/her group and (b) working with one or more members from his/her group. The attached time chart is to be completed by each group and must be submitted before any items can be submitted for point evaluation,

Time is to be calculated in five-minute intervals e.g., 1 hour would be 12 units, 1 hour 8 minutes would be 14 units; 2 hours would be 24 units, etc. The items called miscellaneous on the time chart should include time spent in planning and coordinating overall activities not associated with any particular item. Time associated with a specific item should be listed next to that item.

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The division of time spent into components (a) and (b), as outlined above, should be entered into the time chart as follows:



TASK ITEMS

Item

1. A matchbook from a Philadelphia restaurant (Must show a Philadelphia address)
2. A copy of a newspaper headline announcing that the Brooklyn Dodgers had won the World Series.
3. Eight (8) pawns from eight (8) different chess sets (It must be obvious to me that they are from different sets.)
4. Salt package from Gino's.
5. A list of 20 different uses for a brick. (Submit a typed list.)

6. Sales slip from an Acme supermarket dated 9/16/81.
7. A copy of the best selling novel of 1966.
8. A picture of the Empire State Building.
9. In class on Monday (9/21/81), groups will participate in a college bowl "trivia contest." We will play six or seven rounds: each round will consist of a toss-up question followed by bonus questions. A different group member will represent each group for the toss-up part of the round, i.e., each group member will represent his/her group at least once. The team which wins the toss-up will then, as a team, have an opportunity to answer the bonus questions. Each group must bring a working flashlight to class to use in this contest. Failure to do so will mean disqualification from the contest.

Six or seven topic areas will be drawn from the following list:

The Wild West	Names of ships	Geography
U.S. Presidents	Quotations	Television
Fictional Women	Outerspace	Awards
Famous Pairs	Invention & Discovery	

The professor will impose final decision for any disputes which arise.

10. A photograph of a group of people numbering more than 10 but less than 15 which must include at least two members from your group and at least 1 member from each of two other groups in your section. 60
11. A copy of E. A. Trabant's signature. (not an original) 20
12. A business card from David's Bookshelf. 10
13. A postcard postmarked September 16th or 17th, 1981 from the State of New York. 30
14. A copy of The Book of Lists. 10
15. An empty bottle of San Miguel Beer. 15
16. One "Community Chest" card and one "Chance" card from a Monopoly game. 20
17. Type (on a 3" x 5" card) the most common last name in the U.S.S.R. 25
18. A copy of the Revolver album by guess who. 20
19. Attached crossword puzzle completed by your group 250 if completely correct (otherwise, 1 1/2 Pt. for each correct word entered in puzzle.)

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|--|--|
| 20. A copy of <u>The Symbolic and the Real</u> . | 50 |
| 21. What did the following men have in common (besides the fact that they were
un and are all dead)? (Type answer on 3" x 5" card) | 40 |
| Aristotle
St. Thomas Aquinas
Sir Francis Drake
Patrick Henry
Ulysses S. Grant | |
| 22. A metal object made prior to 1800 (must be able to verify product date). | 25 |
| 23. For five NFL games on Sunday 9/20/81 pick the winner and give the expected
score for each team in the game. A typed card with the five games and
predicted outcomes is to be placed In my mailbox in Room 306 no later than
noon Friday (9/18/81). You must have your course section and group number
on the card.
EPS = Expected Winner Score - Expected Loser Score | 60 If all five winners are
correctly identified <u>or</u> if the
exact scores for both teams in
one game are correctly predicted
(otherwise total the expected
point spread (EPS) for all five
games and subtract half of this
total from 60 to determine the
task points received.) |
| 24. On Monday (9/21/81) each group <u>must</u> bring in a home-made cake with the
group number on it. Failure to do so will mean forfeiture of all points. | 10 pts. for most creatively
decorated cake in section. |

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GROUP # _____

SECTION # _____

TIME CHART