



**OBTC 2015 at University of La Verne  
June 17<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup>, 2015**

**Submission Template**

**SUBMISSION GUIDANCE**

*\* Remove all identifying properties from this document \**

*\* All files must be saved in PDF format \**

*\*Please include ALL supplementary text at the end of this document\**

*\*Only one document should be submitted\**

**Submission Template for the  
2015 OBTC Teaching Conference for Management Educators**

**1) Title of Proposal:**

**Finding new uses for old exercises: Five squares**

**2) Abstract:**

Many of the “classic” experiential exercises could be used to present a variety of concepts or topics. This session is designed to demonstrate such an exercise and show a range of possible uses. It is our hope to encourage others to revisit activities to see if they can creatively find additional uses for things already use. We will ask session attendees to participate in the Broken Squares exercise (also called Five Squares, Bavelas, 1969). Then we will debrief the exercise in several different ways to highlight approaches to focus the discussion including: communication, planning, leadership, collaboration, and problem solving.

### 3) Keywords:

*Use three or four keywords to describe your session.*

Experiential activities

Five squares

Broken squares

Debrief

### 4) Format

Activity or exercise

Discussion roundtable (60 minute only)

General discussion session

### 5) Time Requested:

30 Minutes

60 Minutes (*Roundtables must select 60 minutes*)

90 Minutes

### 6) Planning Details:

*Does your session have any special requirements for space or materials?*

A room with moveable chairs and a number of tables (round or rectangular) that seat about 5 people.

### 7) Learning Objectives or Goals for the Session:

*What are 2-4 specific learning outcomes that participants will get from your session?*

- 1) To experience several different approaches to debrief an exercise to match specific learning goals
- 2) See an example of a classic exercise
- 3) For participants to reflect on how they can more creatively use experiential activities in their classrooms
- 4) To create an interesting and fun session

## **8) Management or Teaching Topics:**

*Describe what management and/or teaching topics are relevant to your session, and why. Please include theoretical, disciplinary, or theoretical foundations that will help reviewers understand how your ideas fit within the broader field of management.*

Indeed, this is the core of the proposal. That an experiential activity originally used for one topic might easily be adapted for use for other topics.

## **9) Session Description and Plan:**

*What will you actually do in this session? What activities will you facilitate, how long will they take, and how will participants be involved? Reviewers will be evaluating how well the time request matches the activities you'd like to do, and the extent you can reasonably accomplish the session's goals. Reviewers will also be looking for how you are engaging the participants in the session. Include a timeline for your session.*

Participants will be actively engaged in the exercise.

Schedule for the session:

- 1) Introduction (5 minutes)
  - 2) Form teams and distribute puzzle pieces and instructions (5 minutes)
  - 3) Teams of five work on task (10 minutes)
  - 4) Debrief #1 (communication - Joe), Debrief #2(problem solving or something Dale wants to do), Debrief #3 (strategy or something Sue wants to do) (25 minutes)
  - 5) Discussion by participants – how can they use this general idea in their classrooms (15 minutes)
- Total time 60 minutes

## **10) For Activities and Exercises:**

*Attach any materials needed to run the activity and debriefing questions. Evidence for effectiveness may also be included.*

### Finding new uses for old exercises: Five squares

#### Instructions to the Group

In this packet there are five envelopes, each of which contains pieces of paper for forming squares. When the instructor gives the signal to begin, you can open the envelope. The task of your group is to form five squares of equal size. The task will not be completed until each group member has before him/her a square of the same size as that held by others.

#### Limitations on the group:

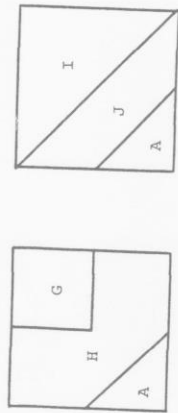
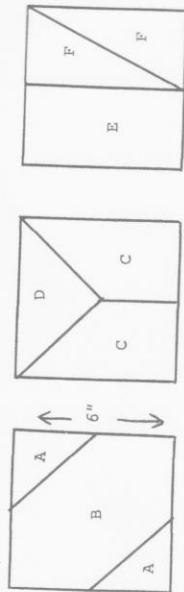
- 1) You may not talk, write or text. Nonverbal communication is permitted.
- 2) No member may ask another member for a piece or in any way signal that another person give him/her a piece
- 3) You may, however, give pieces to other members
- 4) You may not simply put all your pieces into a pile. The pieces must be given (not taken) from one person to another person.
- 5) You may give away pieces, even if you have already formed a square

The group that finishes first will win a prize

#### DIRECTIONS FOR MAKING A SET OF SQUARES

A set consists of five envelopes containing pieces of cardboard which have been cut into different patterns and which, when properly arranged, will form five squares of equal size. One set should be provided for each group of five persons.

To prepare a set, cut out five cardboard squares of equal size, approximately six-by-six inches. Place the squares in a row and mark them as below, penciling the letters *a*, *b*, *c*, etc., lightly, so that they can later be erased.



The lines should be so drawn that, when cut out, all pieces marked *a* will be of exactly the same size, all pieces marked *b* of the same size, etc. By using multiples of three inches, several combinations will be possible that will enable participants to form one or two squares, but only one combination is possible that will form five squares six-by-six inches.

After drawing the lines on the six-by-six inch squares and labeling them with lower case letters, cut each square as marked into smaller pieces to make the parts of the puzzle.

Mark the five envelopes A, B, C, D, and E. Distribute the cardboard pieces in the five envelopes as follows:

Envelope A has pieces	i, h, e
B	a, a, a, c
C	a, j
D	d, f
E	g, b, f, c

Erase the penciled letter from each piece and write, instead, the appropriate envelope letter. This will make it easy to return the pieces to the proper envelope for subsequent use when a group has completed the task.

## **11) Implications for Teaching or for Teachers:**

*What is the contribution of your session?*

We would like to encourage faculty to use experiential activities. One way to do this is to demonstrate how versatile some exercises can be. Hopefully it is also help people understand better how to debrief activities

## **12) Application to Conference theme:**

*How does your session fit with the overall OBTC theme of Learning in Community?*

Not specifically about community, although it is often used to teach cooperation.

## **13) Unique Contribution to OBTC:**

*Have you presented the work in this proposal before? If so, how will it be different? Is this proposal under current review somewhere else? If so, please explain. How will your proposal be different for the OBTC conference?*

Obviously the Five Squares activity has been widely used (in fact it was part of the opening session at an OBTC years ago), but the theme of this proposal is that finding alternative ways to use existing activities is worthwhile by itself. Two of the authors are making a similar proposal to the Eastern Academy of Management Annual Conference using a different activity, but again trying to encourage people to reconsider classic experiential activities. A working assumption in both cases is that for some “relatively newer to the field” faculty, this will be a **new** experiential activity for them.

## **14) References and/or Additional Materials:**

The Broken Squares exercise appeared in Pfeiffer, J.W. and Jones, J.E. *A Handbook of Structured Experiences for Human Relations Training*, University Associates Press, Iowa City, Iowa, Vol. 1, 1969 pp 24-30 with the footnote that it was adapted from Communication Patterns in Task-Oriented Groups by Alex Bavelas.