

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

1) Title of Proposal:

Experiential learning: High-impact engagement to create communities of learning

2) Abstract:

Experiential learning is widely considered to be an important component of learning in terms of knowledge transference. Teams are often used as experiential activities that provide the learner with hands-on practice and actively engage in an experience related to their academic program or career aspirations. This session addresses experiential learning activities focusing on the “impact” of the learning through team-based projects that have a consulting focus. These projects allow students to interact with each other to learn the process of collaborative work that teaches them how to be a community as well as learn how to deliver a quality deliverable.

3) Keywords:

Teams, problem-solving, collaboration, and consulting

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:

For this session, a projector, screen, and laptop would be useful for demonstrating the experiential learning process.

7) Learning Objectives or Goals for the Session:

At the end of the session, participants will be able to:

1. Identify opportunities for student projects that address specific workplace issues
2. Describe the process of collaborative work that would guide student teams
3. Demonstrate problem-solving techniques that can be applied in work contexts.
4. Evaluate collaborative learning activities for impact in terms of ability of an organization to immediately implement recommendations

8) Management or Teaching Topics:

Teams have widely used for community learning such that student work together to produce a deliverable but also learn how to work together and leverage the strengths of the individual members. This session will model a process of collaborative learning and focused on defining the organizational problem/issues to engage in the community of learning process. These are composed of “process” and “content” focused strategies. The session will provide participants with a worksheet of how to engage students not only in the process of teamwork but also focused on strategies that provide guidelines to students to engage and produce a high quality deliverable.

Teams are often formed in academic settings with little guidance for how students are to engage in collaborative work. Typically, a team contract is discussed and required but very little focus on the nature of collaboration and treating the team as its own learning community. This activity moves beyond the team contract and is conducted as a class session focused on learning to work together collaboratively and ends with a reflection exercise. The section below is an excerpt of the activity that will be shared with participants in the session with discussion on how we better facilitate collaborative learning.

Process Issues:

1. Define how your team will work in terms of the following:
 - a. Level of task interdependence (e.g., pooled, sequential, or reciprocal)
 - b. Project sharing tools (e.g., email, Google Docs, etc.)
 - c. Software for the project
 - d. Team management tools (e.g., project plan, Gantt chart)
 - e. Communication mechanisms

Content Issues

2. Write a one-sentence problem statement that frames the purpose of your project
3. What is the rationale for your problem statement (e.g., provide evidence to support that it is a problem)?
4. Has the macro-structure of the paper been defined?
5. Are the roles of each member clearly defined AND being practice in this project?
6. Provide a 3 to 5 page Extended Abstract for your project idea to include preliminary research. Students then present their project ideas to the class and engage in a Q&A exchange for project development.

9) Session Description and Plan:

Proposed Format: For best results, this session is scheduled for 60 minutes (although it could be altered to fit a 30-minute session without the brainstorming). There will be 3 sections: 1) Introduction and discussion of collaborative learning, 2) Collaborative learning exercise, and 3) Brainstorming and information exchange.

Part I: Introduction (15 minutes) – The organizer will facilitate introductions and initial discussions of how they engage student learners to work as a community or team.

Part II: Engaging in Collaborative Work (20 minutes) – The organizer will introduce the team learning and engagement activity and demonstrate how it is has been used as well as share student feedback on the process. Participants will receive a handout modeling the activity to generate discussion.

Part III: Brainstorming/Information Exchange (30 minutes) – Session participants will be assigned to do a “pair and share” activity using the team collaboration assignment and provide feedback on how it can altered to fit different learning environments.

10) For Activities and Exercises:

Session participants will be provided materials to utilize the collaborative engagement activity.

11) Implications for Teaching or for Teachers:

After completing this activity in the learning environment, students commented that it should be a required exercise in all classes that use teams and require teamwork. I believe that this exercise can provide educators with a tool that can be used to engage students in teamwork in a way that they control a great deal of the process and Instructor serves a mentor throughout the process.

12) Application to Conference theme:

This exercise/discussion is designed to model how we can create communities of learning but using teams in a different way by engaging students in both process

and content issues. The class sessions becomes more focused on exchange of ideas that enhance learning and creates a sense of community.

13) Unique Contribution to OBTC:

I created this assignment in the Fall 2014 term, so it has not been used or presented at any other conference. I think the unique contribution is that it moves teams past just having a team contract and actually generate a community-based atmosphere where students learn in teams but also learn from other teams in the class.

14) References and/or Additional Materials:

See attached exercise for the session.

Revision to OBTC Submission

The proposed exercise for this session occurs after the Team Contract has been drafted and agreed upon by all members. As part of the preparation for the Team Contract, team members have completed the following: (1) assessment of team member competencies, (2) assignment of team member roles, and (3) established team norms, which includes rewards and disciplinary actions.

This exercise is not specifically drawn from theory but rather emerged as a post-hoc observation (similar to LMX theory of leadership) and an attempt to assist teams with the challenges associated with engaging in collaborative work. Traditionally, team theories focus on the decision-making process and generally follows the rational model of decision-making such as the PADIL method (Baldwin, Bommer, and Rubin, 2013). The PADIL method walks through the student through the process of (1) Define the Problem, (2) Explore Alternative solutions, (3) Decide on a course of action, (4) Implement the solution, and (5) Learn/evaluate for effectiveness. This model is similar to other models of decision-making but what it fails to do is guide the student in creating and engaging in collaborative that is required of teams to produce a course deliverable. Thus, while the Team Contract (Charter) and the decision-making frameworks are useful for forming teams and identifying an assignment, these strategies do not address the challenges associated with individuals learning to work as a collaborative.

The exercise below has been designed for use in any course utilizing teams that helps students distinguish between “process” vs. “content” decisions that need to be made within the team structure. This exercise was initially developed from an Organizational Behavior course and now used in a Leading High Performance Teams course. As an Instructor, I have observed that one of the major challenges is defining a problem and teaching to individuals to work as collective. I begin by making the distinction between *process* (how we work) and *content* (nature of the work produced) to help the team get started and stay focused on both of these issues that must be managed.

The exercise provided below is best used for projects where the team has to examine/survey the internal or external environment and identify issues that need to be addressed or opportunities that can benefit the organization. This exercise is also useful for case analyses, particularly the content issues that engage the student to move beyond a recitation of the known information but really explore the underlying issues.

The student feedback on this exercise has been very positive in that it engages the student team to begin the work and avoid procrastination. This process occurs usually 2 weeks after the Team Contract has been formed and serves as a quality check on the team’s progress in successfully meeting the deadline and producing a quality deliverable.

References:

Baldwin, T.T., Bommer, W. H., & Rubin, R. S. (2013). Managing Organizational Behavior: What Great Managers Know & Do (2nd. Ed). McGraw-Hill.

Experiential Exercise – Beginning Collaborative Work for High Performance Teams

I. Process Issues

Define how your team will work in terms of the following:

- A. Level of interdependence in producing the final product
 - a. Pooled
 - b. Reciprocal
 - c. Sequential
- B. What project sharing tool has the group agreed to use? Is everyone successfully using this tool?
- C. What software did the team agree to use for the project (e.g., Word)
- D. What team management tools is the team using, if any? (e.g., project plan, Gantt chart, etc.)
- E. What communication mechanisms (e.g., email, text, GroupMe, or something else) have been established by the team? Is everyone successfully using the mechanism?

II. Content Issues

- A. Write your *one-sentence problem (or opportunity) statement* that frames the purpose of *your* project.
- B. What is the *rationale* for the problem/opportunity you have identified? Specifically address how you can support that it is a problem or opportunity.
- C. Has the *macro-structure* of the paper been defined?
- D. Are the *roles* clearly defined and being practiced in this project (e.g., which member is responsible for producing the work for the project).
- E. As a team, how would you define the overall quality of contributions to this team project thus far? Be specific to address what is working well and what needs to be clarified or adjusted.

