

The Integration of Attendance at Outside Professional Organizations into the Management Classroom

As part of an Introductory Management class, students are required to attend a professional meeting(s) off campus. Although challenging, most students have considered this exercise extremely beneficial. The student identifies, researches, contacts, and then attends a professional organization meeting relevant to their desired profession. As a result, students have developed networking skills; acquired contacts; received scholarships; served as liaisons between professional chapters; engaged in “pro bono” work, and most importantly, led to the development of greater self-efficacy as it relates to their professional development. Student illustrations, reflective papers, comments, feedback and suggestions for faculty will be presented.

Key Words: Student Exercise, Networking, Professional Organization, Professional Association

Introduction, Objectives and Rationale of the Exercise, and Teaching Implications

Professional organizations and associations are extremely critical to success in many careers and professions. Professional organizations provide opportunities: for developing and maintaining professional relationships (networking); for continued professional development and education through seminars, lectures, publications, and conferences that they offer; for gaining experience in other areas of your profession through pro bono activities; to develop leadership skills through being an officer of the organization; acquiring certifications; to stay abreast of current issues through their trade publications; they also serve as support as you tackle professional issues that are common to others in your field. These are just a few of the many things that professional organizations and associations offer a developing professional such as our students. Unfortunately, many students do not see the value of their membership in such professional organizations until they have graduate and have been in their field for several years, or not at all. The following exercise helps our students explore the many things that these organizations can offer them now and in the future.

For the past ten years, as part of an Introductory Management class, I have required my students to attend a professional meeting(s) off campus. Although challenging at times, almost all of my students have considered this exercise to be extremely beneficial to them professionally. The exercise involves them identifying, researching, contacting, and then attending a professional organization or association meeting relevant to their desired profession. Students present each part of this assignment as part of a reflective paper. Since this management course is required of all students in the School of Business, these students come from all majors and the professional organizations that they have chosen to attend are usually linked to their major and chosen profession. As a result of their attendance at these meetings, students have developed greater networking skills; acquired important professional contacts; received scholarships, both nationally and internationally; served as liaisons with other professional chapters; served as student

member on the professional association board of directors, participated with professionals in “pro bono” work, but most importantly developed greater self-efficacy as it relates to their professional development. Students have attended a wide variety of professional organizations across all areas of business including e.g. Society for Human Resource Management, Financial Service Professionals, American Institute of Certified Public Accountants, PICPA, APICS, National Association of Black Accountants, Women Accountants, Black MBAs, Financial Executive Institute, Financial Service Professionals, American Marketing Association, Sales and Marketing Executives.

Presentation Format

I have used this exercise in a classroom setting, but I believe that it could be modified to be used online. I have used this exercise with both graduate and undergraduate

I believe that this exercise can be successfully discussed within 60 minutes. The materials and equipment provided at the OBTC conference will be sufficient for this presentation. Nothing else is required. Handouts and other supplemental material will be provided by the author.

Overview of the Presentation

The basic exercise will be described and its underlying rationale will be explained. Individual participants will be given an opportunity to discuss this exercise and assignment. This presentation would also include a discussion of how participants can redesign or modify the exercise for their particular circumstances. I will also present my experience with this exercise; student illustrations, comments and feedback; as well as suggestions for faculty and other interested parties in using this exercise. An illustration of how this exercise was completed by.

Application and Contribution to the Conference Theme

A professional organization or association is a community that creates a climate where individuals unite around common profession and a series of professional goals. With this exercise, students are exposed to their desired profession in a way much more expansive than what is typically associated with a textbook or class. Professional organizations are designed to benefit their profession, their community (through pro bono activities) and to be mutually beneficial their members. For these reasons, I believe that this presentation serves the conference theme. I have provided illustrations of some of the materials that I have used in this exercise in the appendix.

Although I have used this exercise for at least 10 years, I have not presented this proposal at this OBTC National Conference or any other conference in the past and it is not presently under review for any other venue.

Supplemental Material

Steps of the Exercise

Step 1: What is your major? What is the professional area that you are interested in?

For instance you might choose marketing, finance, personal finance, sports management, accounting, human resources, sports management etc. or some specific area of interest – as auditing, sports marketing, facilities management, etc.

Step 2: Identify a professional organization or association in your field of interest. You could do this by talking with someone who works in this area as to which organization(s) that they belong to and/ or that they would recommend to you. You could also Google “professional organization or association” with your area of interest such as: “marketing”, “finance”, “sports management” or “accounting”, etc. For instance, you would Google “professional organization or association and auditing.”

Step 3: Then go that organization’s website and cut and paste the following material in the worksheet below. After you attend a meeting, please answer the questions at the end of the worksheet in the form of a reflective paper as discussed in class.

Step 4: Attend a meeting. Describe the meeting and relate it to some of the things that we have discussed in this class, other classes, and your future career plans.

Step 5: Briefly summarize what you have learned from this exercise.

Step 6: Intended Actions - Has this experience and your familiarity with this professional organization spurred you to action?

What do you plan to do within the next week?

What do you plan to do within the next month?

What do you plan to do within the next three months?

What do you plan to do within the next year?

Step 7: Answer the following questions:

What was positive about this exercise?

What was negative about this exercise?

What difficulties did you experience and how did you resolve them?

What suggestions would you have for enhancing this exercise for future students?

Professional Association/ Organization Exercise Worksheet

1. Profession Chosen
2. Professional Association/ Organization Chosen and Reason Why.
3. Who are their members? What industries or organizations do they represent?
4. Do they have a code of ethics? And if they do, what is it?
5. Benefits of Membership – Which benefits are of interest to you and why?
6. Do they have a student membership? What are its costs?
7. Upcoming Meetings – Locations, Dates and Times – Are there discounts for students?
8. Trade Publications, Journals, Magazines, Online Publications, Links, Blogs, etc.
9. Trends, Issues and Concerns
10. Organizational Awards and Criteria
11. Individual Awards and Criteria
12. Recognized Initiatives
13. Members Identified and Their Contact Information
14. Individuals you know that are Members.
15. What “pro bona” activities does the organization engage in? How might you get involved with these efforts?