



Teaching Conference for
Management Educators

OBTC 2016 at Walsh University
June 8th – 11th, 2016

Submission Template

SUBMISSION GUIDANCE

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**Please include ALL supplementary text at the end of this document* *Only one document
should be submitted**

**Submission Template for the
2016 OBTC Teaching Conference for Management Educators**

1) Title, Abstract & Keywords

In your abstract, please include a brief session description (not to exceed 100 words), and three to four keywords. If your proposal is accepted, this description will be printed in the conference program.

Title	Issue-Based Problem Solving: From Management Consulting to the Management Classroom
Abstract	This session will provide a thorough overview of “Issue-based Problem Solving” (IBPS), an intensive and challenging program for teaching upper-level management classes related to strategic management. Adapted from methods used by top management and strategic consulting firms, IBPS is both a framework and a process that enables students to logically and systematically identify, deconstruct, and propose innovative solutions to complex organizational problems. In this session, we will introduce three component frameworks (SCEQ, Question Trees and Communication Trees) and explore ways they can be used to supplement existing content in strategy, consulting or general management.
Keywords	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Problem solving2. Integrative thinking3. Communication skills4. Problem-based learning (PBL)

2) Format

- ☐ Activity or exercise
- ☐ Roundtable discussion (60 minute only)
- ☒ General discussion session

2a) For activities and exercises only, is yours best suited for

- ☒ A traditional classroom
- ☐ An online class
- ☐ Either

2b) For activities and exercises only, is yours best suited for

- ☐ Undergraduate students
- ☐ Graduate students
- ☒ Either

3) Time Requested:

- ☐ 30 Minutes
- ☐ 60 Minutes (*Roundtables must select 60 minutes*)
- ☒ 90 Minutes

4) Planning Details:

Each room contains a white board with markers, computer (PC) with DVD capability and computer projector. Does your session require any other equipment?

No thank you. A projector hook-up will suffice.

5) Teaching Implications:

What is the contribution of your session to management pedagogy/andragogy? Specifically, please include your learning objectives, and describe what management and/or teaching topics are relevant to your session, and why. Also, include theoretical, disciplinary, or theoretical foundations that will help reviewers understand how your ideas fit within the broader field of management.

Many strategy, consulting, and general management classes emphasize using frameworks to analyze and understand complex situations. Examples in strategic management include Porter's five forces for industry analysis, the CAGE framework for understanding the implications of globalization, and the business model canvas for assessing the potential value of an entrepreneurial idea. These frameworks are valuable, but even advanced students can be forgiven for trying to solve complex problems simply by finding and applying the correct framework.

IBPS, or issue-based problem solving, was created by top management consulting firms to systematically identify, deconstruct, and propose innovative solutions that address the increasingly complex problems faced by their clients. It builds upon ideas such as including the Pyramid Principle (Minto, 2002) and practices at McKinsey Consulting (Raisel, 1999).

We have adapted Issue-Based Problem Solving to an undergraduate strategy curriculum, but the concepts can be taught in a variety of other undergraduate or graduate classes, including consulting and general management. IBPS builds upon the Problem-based Learning (PBL) pedagogical framework, and various approaches to implementing problem solving in the classroom (Bigelow, 2004, Goltz et al, 2008, Sherwood 2004).

Specifically, we teach IBPS as three sequential and interdependent processes:

- 1) The "SCEQ" framework is used to identify a specific and singular core question the leaders of an organization must address,
- 2) "Question trees" then enable students to deconstruct their chosen core question into sub-questions that can be answered with data, and finally
- 3) "Communication trees" help students to structure a compelling recommendation to both receptive and skeptical audiences.

We believe that IBPS can be a valuable supplement to existing strategy, consulting and management curriculum. It is of particular value to advanced students preparing to enter the working world, as we believe it is one approach that can help to improve managerial thinking (Smith, 2005). It provides a means by which they can systematically avoid various "decision traps," including the overconfidence in judgment and "shooting from the hip," (Russo and Schoemaker, 1989). Moreover, anecdotal evidence from students suggests that IBPS enables them to perform well on case interviews and succeed in their first years in the job market.

6) Session Description and Plan:

What will you actually do in this session? If appropriate, please include a timeline estimating the activities will you facilitate: how long will they take, and how will participants be involved? Please remember that 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.

In this interactive session, we will introduce participants to the three components of IBPS by allowing them to practice identifying a broad core question using the SCEQ process, answering that question through the use of Question Trees, and presenting their recommendations using Communication Trees.

Time	Topic
0:00 – 0:15	<i>Introduction to IBPS: From the consulting world to the classroom</i> We begin by providing an overview of the origins of Issue-Based Problem Solving, including a discussion of its value to consulting practices and how faculty adapted it for a required undergraduate strategy class.
0:15 – 0:35	<i>Step 1: SCEQ</i> This important first step requires students to describe the <u>S</u> ituation, <u>C</u> omplications, and <u>E</u> nablees facing a particular organization, before identifying a single broad <u>C</u> ore <u>Q</u> uestion. We describe how to introduce this framework to students using practical examples. In small groups, participants to go through the steps of creating a core question for an organization of their choosing.
0:35 - 0:55	<i>Step 2: Creating and Answering a Question Tree</i> Once students' identify a Core Question, the systematic use of Question Trees (often known as Issue Trees) enable students to break down a broad and difficult question into sub-questions that can ultimately be answered with data. We will describe how Question Trees differ from Logic Trees and provide multiple examples. Participant groups will then create a simple question tree for their core question identified earlier.
0:55 – 1:15	<i>Step 3: Creating a Communication Tree</i> In this final step, students learn how to structure the recommendations resulting from their Question Tree analysis into a compelling argument that can be presented to both receptive and skeptical audiences. Recommendations targeted at likely receptive audiences begin with the proposed solution; those targeted at skeptics rely heavily on the data collected in Step 2. We provide student examples.
1:15 – 1:30	Concluding remarks and open discussion In this final section, we will discuss both the opportunities and potential challenges of implementing IBPS into various management classes.

7) Application to Conference theme:

How does your session fit with the overall OBTC theme of *United in Service*?

Management instructors have several responsibilities related to serving the needs of our students. Perhaps two of the most important are themselves related: preparing our students for the changing world of work, and providing the tools they can use to solve increasingly complex problems. Issue-Based Problem Solving can, if taught properly, help management instructors do both. Specifically, IBPS requires that students “think beyond the textbook” at every stage; students perform each step of IBPS by collecting and organizing their own information. When organized as a group project, IBPS also enables students to learn from each other by combining teamwork and problem solving (Goltz et al., 2008). In the end, many students come to appreciate the fact that often the best solutions to complex problems come not from finding the right answer, but from relying on their own ability to be an independent and critical thinker.

8) 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?

While I have been teaching IBPS for six semesters as part of a required core undergraduate strategy class, I have not yet presented this work before, nor is it under review for a conference or academic submission.

References

- Bigelow, J. D. 2004. Using problem-based learning to develop skills in solving unstructured problems. *Journal of Management Education*, 28(5): 591–609.
- Goltz, S. M., Hietapelto, A. B., Reinsch, R. W., & Tyrell, S. K. 2008. Teaching teamwork and problem solving concurrently. *Journal of Management Education*, 32(5): 541–562.
- Minto, B. 2009. *The pyramid principle: logic in writing and thinking*. Pearson Education.
- Raisel, E. M. 1999. *The McKinsey Way*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Russo, J. E., Schoemaker, P. J., & Russo, E. J. 1989. *Decision traps: Ten barriers to brilliant decision-making and how to overcome them*. Doubleday New York,
- Sherwood, A. L. 2004. Problem-based learning in management education: A framework for designing context. *Journal of Management Education*, 28(5): 536–557.
- Smith, G. F. 2005. Problem-based learning: can it improve managerial thinking? *Journal of Management Education*, 29(2): 357–378.