



**OBTC 2017 at Providence College
June 14th – 17th, 2017**

Submission Template

SUBMISSION GUIDANCE

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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.

Teaching Structure with La Cosa Nostra

Using the case of La Cosa Nostra, we aim at developing a more integrated understanding of how organizational structure and design concepts influence the functioning and performance of organizations. Specifically, we present theoretical grounding in the basics of organizational structure as well as information on La Cosa Nostra's business. We then invite students work in teams to present a proposal to restructure La Cosa Nostra. Feedback and assessment scores from students suggest that the activity is both engaging and effective in conveying the concepts associated with organizational structure.

Key words: Organizational structure, matrix structure, La Cosa Nostra, organizational chart

2) 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.

Based on our teaching experience, students seem to have difficulty understanding, relating to, and even getting excited about the construct of organizational structure. They also seem to lack the ability to critically assess the firm structure-strategy relationship. Yet, the reality of the global and local economies calls for students to develop a deeper understanding of the structure construct. Even more, many organizations are now adopting complex designs, such as matrix structures, to accomplish work tasks. Indeed, a recent report in McKinsey Quarterly by Bazigos and Harter (2016) states that eighty-four percent of the US employees Gallup surveyed were matrixed to some extent. Given these statistics, we could safely assume that a lot of our graduates will be employed in some form of a matrix organization.

As such, we designed our activity with four learning objectives in mind. Specifically,

Objective 1: Develop students' ability to identify structural elements.

Objective 2: Develop students' understanding of the relationship between structure and strategy.

Objective 3: Develop students' understanding of the matrix structure.

Objective 4: Develop students' understanding of the impact of structural alterations.

To accomplish our objectives, we present the business model of La Cosa Nostra and ask students to assess and re-design the mafia's structure into a matrix.

We also had three Goals in mind for this session:

Goal 1: to provide participants with an effective activity to use in the classroom for developing students' understanding of structure,

Goal 2: to allow participants, who would use the activity, to actually experience what students in the classroom might, such as the challenges, the revelations, and the learning moments, and

Goal 3: to receive feedback as to how our presentation could be improved along with addressing questions that participants might have in relation to the presentation format.

We believe our activity could successfully be used in classes such as Organizational Behavior, Organizational Theory, Strategy, and Organization Development.

3) 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.

After a brief introduction, the bulk of this session will involve participants engaging with artifacts of mafia culture. In some cases participants will work individually—and in other cases participants will work in small groups—to make linkages between an elements of organizational culture framework, the artifact, and the implications of the artifact for the mafia's survival. Some of these artifacts come from FBI and formal investigations, others are reenactments from famous movies.

The session will close with a dialogue regarding participants' thoughts, reactions, and questions. This dialogue is important for many reasons, including participants having the opportunity to leaf through the resources they can use in the classroom and digest the benefits and challenges of using the exercise in their own classroom.

More specifically, our presentation will be in the following format:

Introduction (purpose of session and set up)

5 minutes

Case Presentation	
Presentation of theory on key structure elements	10 minutes
Brief overview on La Cosa Nostra and its business	30 minutes
Group Activity:	
Students are asked to identify the structure elements of La Cosa Nostra's design (Objective 1)	10 minutes
Students are asked to identify the two strategic objectives of La Cosa Nostra and make an assessment whether their structure supports these strategic objectives (Objective 2)	5 minutes
Theory on matrix	10 minutes
Group Activity	
Students are asked to re-design La Cosa Nostra's current structure into a matrix organization, while discussing matrix features (Objective 3)	10 minutes
Students are asked to critically examine how the proposed alterations in La Cosa Nostra's structure can influence organizational performance and individuals' work experiences (Objective 4)	10 minutes

4) Application to Conference theme:

How does your session fit with the overall OBTC theme of *Navigating the Changing Currents*?

The mafia's organizational culture has enabled the U.S. mafia to navigate and survive in an ever-changing context. Participants will view cultural artifacts, such as videos of rituals and lists of mafia terminology, and identify how the artifacts helped the mafia survive (by navigate changing social, political, and economic landscapes to evade authorities). Participants will make linkages regarding both individual artifacts and the resulting web of culture contribute to the mafia's survival.

5) 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?

Similar content regarding the mafia and organizational structure was presented at the IABE conference in Las Vegas, 2017. Given the format and expectations of that conference, the presentation was a lecture, without videos or interactive exercises. A manuscript detailing the activity is currently under review in Journal of Management Education. However, holding a demonstration session in OBTC conference will allow us to actually demonstrate the intricacies of the activity to an audience that could hopefully use it in their classroom. We also want to engage the educators and allow them to experience firsthand what students in the classroom might experience.

References

Bazigos, M. & Harter, J. (January, 2016) Revising the matrix organization. *McKinsey Quarterly*. Retrieved from <http://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/organization/our-insights/revisiting-the-matrix-organization>.