



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

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 2017 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.

Making Your Case for OB and Competitive Advantage

Most students—and perhaps some of our faculty colleagues—fail to appreciate the fact that organizational behavior courses are dedicated to one of the few potential sources of sustained competitive advantage. *This session begins with a quick recap of resource-based theory. Next, participants engage in an exercise they can use to show why and how organizational behavior resources can indeed be sources of sustained competitive advantage. Then, participants use Alka-Seltzer and water to compare how socially-complex (and other) resources operate in markets. Some graduating students recall this exercise as particularly memorable and useful.*

*Competitive advantage Organization performance Organizational resources
Resource-based view*

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.

This half-hour session contributes to management pedagogy by providing a mechanism to bolster student motivation to learn organizational behavior. This exercise is based in resource-based theory (Barney, 1991).

This exercise corrects and remediates a misunderstanding about organizational behavior courses. At least anecdotally, some students see OB and soft skills as less crucial than courses such as finance and marketing. In short, some students can see OB as a “nice to have” course rather than a course regarding a crucial source of competitive advantage.

Learning objectives. Participants can:

1. Define what social complexity is

2. Explain the substantial implications of social complex resources for competitive advantage, according to resource-based theory
3. Compare the social complexity of content discussed in organizational behavior courses relative to other courses commonly required for business degrees.
4. Confidently facilitate the exercise in their own classes.

3) Session Description and Plan:

This thirty-minute session has three parts, which are outlined in the following table. The outline is quite detailed given that use of Alka-Seltzer in the classroom is not necessarily intuitive.

Part 1: Welcome and Motivating the Exercise	5 minutes
Welcome and participants shout-out what they sometimes hear people say that trivializes OB courses	
Participants review handout showing resource-based theory's criteria for a resource to be considered a source of sustained competitive advantage; <i>emphasis placed on social complexity making organizational resources inimitable.</i>	
Participants brainstorm with neighbors resources that are socially complex. A few participants share their examples with the group.	
Part 2: The Exercise	15 minutes
Participants open Alka-Seltzer and take on an acting role: Participants act as students and identify potential sources of competitive advantage that students would mention (common responses: patents, new technology, a CEO...).	
The facilitator works with two participants, who share their source of competitive advantage, declare their innovation to be the Alka Seltzer, and drop the tablet into the water. Facilitator observes that the water is eating away at the innovation/tablet. This dissolving mirrors what happens in markets: as soon as an organization introduces an innovation, the market (the water) will eat away at the innovation. Strategists call this competing away: In marketplaces (water), competitors "compete away" potential advantages. An organization may achieve a brief first-mover advantage, but not a meaningful competitive advantage.	
Facilitator explains that these innovations/tablets are competed away because the resources are not that costly to imitate or substitute. Participants share examples of innovations that have been "competed away" in markets. (Likely examples: phones, tablets)	
Facilitator makes connection that the socially-complex resources are not rapidly competed away because they are costly to imitate.	
Participants recall and share examples of socially-complex resources they identified earlier. Facilitator drops her tablet into water (package not opened). The wrapping protects the resource from dissolving/being competed away. This is what happens with socially-complex resources—they cannot be rapidly imitated or substituted. Surely, if left a few days the package and table will erode. However, the socially-complex resources are more durable than other resources. While this discussion takes place, facilitator invites participants to imagine their Alka-Seltzer is a resource (socially complex and wrapped or not socially complex and unwrapped) and drop their resources into their water.	
Participants work with neighbors to evaluate a list of courses common to business curriculum and identify if the courses involve socially-complex resources. A couple groups share their observations with the class. Facilitator confirms why the resources discussed in other classes are not socially complex.	
Facilitator shares how exercise concluded in class.	
Part 3: Debrief and Wrap-up	5 minutes
Participants discuss their thoughts, reactions, and questions with neighbors. A few subgroups share thoughts, reactions, and questions, which are discussed	

4) Application to Conference theme:

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

Given shifts in the higher-education landscape, faculty are increasingly pressured to justify the value their courses add to students' education. This exercise gives participants a way to demonstrate the value and importance of organizational behavior courses and socially-complex resources.

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?

This exercise and content have never been presented.