**Abstract**

Providing experiential learning activities that also engage core cognitive learning theories are paramount to classroom teaching. Teaching conferences and journals inspire instructors to continue to create and develop new ways to ignite classroom learning. The following impactful activity is used at the beginning of the class to prepare the mind for learning the importance of goals and strategies and shows how even a game of chance can be improved with focus.

Keywords: experiential, bell work, goals, strategy

**Introduction**

In an effort to make experiential learning the “norm” in management education, several journals and conferences have been created for the sharing of ideas that would increase the tools available for professors to use in the classroom. Conferences, such as the Management and Organizational Behavior Teaching Conference, inspire professors to continue experimenting with new ideas in order to provide an always improving classroom experience, and provide a ticket to MOBTS’ Summer Conference.

Being extremely passionate about goal setting and strategy, I felt a little frustrated with the indifference many undergraduate students demonstrated about a topic that is perhaps one of the most critical topics in management. The following activity is the result of experimentation with several activities in order to “drive home” the importance of goal setting and strategy. This activity not only demonstrated the importance of goal setting, but it also created a memorable and impactful moment that students and professionals remembered for years later.

**Literature Review**

There are two main learning theories that most learning activities are based on, experiential (Kolb, Boyatzis, & Mainemelis, 2001) and cognitive (Renner, Stafford, Lawson, McKinnon, Friot, & Kellogg, 1976). Experiential learning theory (ELT) focuses on the activity that inspires the learning to occur such as through a concrete experience like shooting a basketball or through abstract conceptualization of reading about how to shoot a basketball and envisioning what it would be like to shoot a basketball. Essentially ELT is learning that uses an activity to create a need for more information or inspires curiosity on a subject and, therefore, increases a desire to learn. At this point, the educator has “readied” the learner for further knowledge which, when obtained, is readily received and retained longer than “forced” learning (Beebe, Mottet & Roach, 2013).

Cognitive learning theories tend to focus on the mental process of learning. It starts with a stimulus. Once a stimulus is received the learner then pays contemplates the meaning of what is occurring based on past experiences and current contexts. Then, based upon the cognitive process, a person acts upon the stimulus. The more educators can provide interesting stimuli to learners and provide time for pondering and reflection upon what they’ve learned, then learning will occur. (Renner, et al. 1976).

In order for these two theories to work best, a spark needs to be created in the mind of the learner. World renowned teaching consultant and author Harry Wong refers to this as Bell Work (Wong, Wong, Jondahl & Ferguson, 2014). A small activity originally intended to provide structure to a classroom, Bell Work has since been further defined as the spark to igniting the conversation for the day, preparing the soil for a seed to be planted. The activity presented in this session is intended to utilize both experiential and cognitive learning theories as Bell Work, a quick 15-20 minute impactful activity at the beginning of class to get the mind prepped for understanding the importance of setting goals and strategies.

**References**

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**Learning Objectives:**

LO1 – Understand the importance of “proper” goal setting

LO2 – Understand the importance of setting a strategy to accomplish goals

**Exercise Overview:**

**Materials Needed:** one six-sided die per person

**Class size:** 15 or more. I’ve never conducted it with a group smaller than 15.

**Timing:** I use it as Bell Work, but it’s strong enough to stand on its own. 5-10 minutes for the activity, 10ish minutes for a discussion, but with an active class the discussion could go as long as the professor allows it. I once taught pretty much the entire chapter just by using this activity without even bringing up PowerPoint while still covering everything I needed to cover.

**Activity Overview:**

Participants will take part in an activity and discussion with rolling six-sided dice. In the classroom, students will enter and choose their seats. Announcements are discussed, then, almost as if it’s a side thought the teacher announces that today the class is going to try something out. Just for fun, they’re going to see how many sixes the class can roll in a minute. The tone is important here. If students know it’s a competition, then they’ll approach it as such. It is important that the first roll is just a simple “Let’s see what happens” type roll and not a hype-them-up-to-roll-100-sixes-roll.

The timer is set. The teacher says go. Students start rolling as many sixes in one minute as they can. At the end of the minute I ask students to call out their score one by one so everyone can hear. I write the numbers on the board or on an Excel spreadsheet that is projected on the screen. The class average is provided. I’ve conducted this activity many times and in every single occurrence the class average is around 6.2 sixes in one minute.

Next, I assure the students they can do better and I tell them I want them to try to get 20 sixes in one minute. Of course, they scoff, as they should, because they’re not even close. I’m asking them to triple their production, but I tell them I really want them to achieve 20 sixes. They begin to roll again. They call out their answers again. This time the average is almost always around 6.7.

At this point I ask what happened. They say many things, but almost always someone says “This is just a game of chance. There’s nothing we can do.” At this point I ask what goal they would set for themselves then. It’s almost always around 8 or 9. I tell them I want them to get 12, to double output. They scoff at this as well. Then I point out that there are people in the class that have successfully produced more than 10 sixes each of the two times. Time is then allotted for those “successful” rollers to say what their tips are for success. Armed with their new tricks, they roll again. This time the class average is around 11.7.

Discussion follows about what happened, how people were feeling and what changed between time one and time two, time two and time three. We talk about the importance of setting goals and then developing strategy on how to reach those goals. Then, throughout the lesson, I refer back to the dice activity to help illustrate the emotions and power of setting “proper” goals and strategies for success.

**30 Minute Session Plan:**

As stated in the overview, this activity has never been conducted with fewer than 15. Any less and it could skew the mean. Therefore, if there are at least 15, then the exercise will be introduced and demonstrated using the professors as students. If the numbers are far fewer than 15, we will talk through the exercise together and a small demonstration will be provided with the understanding that the average will most likely be different than what is experienced in the classroom.

Note: This class activity normally takes 15-20 minutes as listed in the overview above. More time is allotted in each section than normal in the timing listed below in order to provide ample time to answer any questions or give additional insight into what would happen at each stage of the activity.

**Welcome/Introductions**: 5 minutes

**Hand out dice/initial instructions**: 5 minutes

**Role first round + scores**: 3 minutes

**Roll second round + scores**: 3 minutes

**Roll third round + scores**: 3 minutes

**Debrief and wrap up**: 10 minutes