



**IOBTC 2016 at  
University of Winchester  
July 8<sup>th</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup>, 2016**

**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 2016 IOBTC  
International Teaching Conference for Management Educators**

**1) Title of Proposal:**

Elevating the Stakes in Teaching Teamwork: Writing a Book as a Class

**2) Abstract:**

In this session, I describe my experiment with leading a multi-disciplinary honors class that wrote a book about the history of a local trucking firm that had once been the fifth-largest freightline in the country. My students divided into teams and experienced the challenges of coordinating a semester-long creative project that met the standards of a national publisher of local and regional histories. I will discuss the benefits of this project in terms of enabling students to cope with ambiguity, understand the frustrations and triumphs of creative interdependency, and graduate as a published co-author.

**3) Keywords:**

*Teamwork; experiential project-based learning; tolerance for ambiguity*

#### **4) Format**

- Activity or exercise  
 General discussion session

#### **5) Time Requested:**

- 20 Minutes  
 30 Minutes  
 60 Minutes

#### **6) Planning Details:**

*Does your session have any special requirements for space or materials?*

No special space or material requirements – just standard audiovisual equipment (i.e., a projector so that I can show photos from the project).

#### **7) Learning Objectives or Goals for the Session:**

*What are 2-4 specific learning outcomes that participants will get from your session?*

Learning Outcome #1: Participants will understand the logistical requirements and resources needed if they wish to run a similar project in one of their courses.

Learning Outcome #2: Participants will evaluate the pros and cons of this project by weighing the benefits of elevating the stakes (e.g., providing students with a real-world goal, giving them an outlet for their creativity and a chance to be a published author) with the costs (e.g., significant faculty member time, departmental resources, stress that students experience with ambiguity and setbacks).

Learning Outcome #3: Participants will apply the principles from this session during a discussion time in which they will brainstorm ideas for how they might elevate aspirations for their students by raising the stakes in modifying or enhancing exercises and activities they use in their classrooms.

Learning Outcome #4: Participants will explore the key learning points for students that participation in this project illustrated and suggested curricula for reinforcing those learning points.

## 8) Management or Teaching Topics:

*Describe what management and/or teaching topics are relevant to your session, and why. Please include theoretical, disciplinary, or theoretical foundations that will help reviewers understand how your ideas fit within the broader field of management.*

The most central topic relevant to this session is teamwork. Student groups and teams are one of the most common topics of interest (and concern) for management educators. A search of articles in the *Journal of Management Education* over the past three decades yields 886 articles related to facilitating and evaluating student teams and teamwork. Creating team projects that authentically recreate the stakes students will experience in real-world work groups, however, is an ongoing challenge.

The book project described in this session was sufficiently long and engaging to allow us to discuss important theoretical foundations of groups research that are sometimes difficult to illustrate in a classroom setting:

- **Psychological safety** (Edmondson, 1999) – the concept that group members may not feel safe to speak up when they see something that is wrong or needing improvement because they fear repercussions (e.g., being marginalized or snapped at) from other group members. We use Ed Catmull's (co-founder of Pixar Animation) popular press book, *Creativity, Inc.*, to talk about the importance of regular, candid peer-to-peer feedback in collaborative creative projects.
- **Tolerance for ambiguity** – there is particular concern that Millennials (i.e., students who are currently in their late teens to late 20s) were given so much structure as children by overprotective parents that they are unprepared to deal with the ambiguity they will experience in the workplace (Aviles & Eastman, 2012).
- **Coordination** – in my experience, students (like researchers and most of the public, Okhuysen & Bechky, 2009) invariably overestimate how effectively they have communicated and underestimate the coordination requirements of a project. This project also enabled our class to discuss coordination losses to explain how even groups with capable, motivated members may still underperform.

## 9) Session Description and Plan:

*What will you actually do in this session? What activities will you facilitate, how long will they take, and how will participants be involved? 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. Include a timeline for your session.*

I have requested 30 minutes for this session.

I will take the first 15 minutes of the session to describe the book project my class completed in its entirety. My description will include the following:

- **Ideation and Groundwork.** I will describe to participants how I came up with the idea for the book project, the steps I took to sell the project to my dean, to the director of the university's honor program, and to other interested constituencies on campus (e.g., the History department). I will discuss how I found donors to underwrite this activity, how I negotiated a book contract with a national publisher of local and regional history books, and how I secured support from our university's director of special collections at the library and the director of the local history museum, as well as interested citizens who were affiliated with the company that was the subject of the book.
- **Framework for the Class.** I will discuss how I set up the class and recruited students. I will describe the curriculum for the class and how I combined theory (e.g., research findings about teamwork) with practical considerations (i.e., providing enough in-class time for students to do primary research in Special Collections, to interview local community members with ties to the company, to find photos and to write the captions and text of the book).
- **Follow-up.** I will describe the culminating "open house" (i.e., "book signing without the finished books") that our class sponsored for the local community and additional projects (e.g., a collaboration with a marketing class on "Personal Selling" to drive sales of the book) that have spun off of the original idea.

I will reserve the next 15 minutes for a question-and-answer session and a group discussion/brainstorm about how participants can "elevate aspirations" to leverage exercises, activities, or projects they use in their own classes. Depending on the size of the group, we will conduct this portion as a full group or divide into break-out groups that report back to the group as a whole.

## 10) For Activities and Exercises:

*Attach any materials needed to run the activity and debriefing questions. Evidence for effectiveness may also be included.*

N/A

## **11) Implications for Teaching or for Teachers:**

*What is the contribution of your session?*

Participants of this session will:

- Receive the tools, accompanying curricula, and foundational ideas for the logistical, time, and resource requirements of putting together a book-writing project in their own classes.
- Hopefully be inspired to find activities, whether a book project or leveraging something they already use in class, to elevate their aspirations and provide students with even more meaningful learning experiences that transcend the boundaries of the classroom.

## **12) Application to Conference Theme:**

*How does your session fit with the overall IOBTC theme of *Elevating Aspirations*?*

I think the audaciousness of the idea that a class of undergraduate students could write a coffee-table-style book with over 180 historically-referenced photos and captions in just under 12 weeks is an embodiment of the IOBTC theme of *Elevating Aspirations*. I elevated my aspirations for what my students could accomplish and they stepped up to the challenge in ways that surprised, delighted, and (sometimes) frustrated me. I hope that my story will inspire and equip other instructors to consider how they might “up the ante” and elevate the aspirations of students in their own classes.

## **13) Unique Contribution to IOBTC:**

*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 IOBTC conference?*

This project was completed during the Fall semester of 2015, so it is brand-new and my discussion of this project has never been proposed or presented before.

## **14) References and/or Additional Materials:**

- Aviles, M., & Eastman, J. K. (2012). Utilizing technology effectively to improve Millennials' educational performance: An exploratory look at business students' perceptions. *Journal of International Education in Business*, 5, 96-113.
- Edmondson, A. (1999). Psychological safety and learning behavior in work teams. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 44, 350-383.
- Okhuysen, G. A., & Bechky, B. A. (2009). Coordination in organizations: An integrative perspective. *Academy of Management Annals*, 3, 462-502.

Cover of the book written by the class:

