



**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:**

Activating anchors: Using popular culture to further integrate liberal arts and management education

**2) Abstract:**

*Please include a brief session description (not to exceed 100 words). If your proposal is accepted, this description will be printed in the conference program.*

Work in educational psychology has long recognized the importance of existing knowledge for the process of meaningful learning. Moreover, many in both the academic and popular press have noted the benefits of embedding the humanities and traditional liberal arts in management education. However, students may struggle to connect concepts from these areas with their prior knowledge base. In this session, we present and discuss an example “game” that connects the *The Art of War* and management concepts to contemporary hip-hop music. This approach heeds the call to further integrate the traditional liberal arts with management education in an engaging and entertaining manner that promises to increase learning.

**3) Keywords:**

*Use three or four keywords to describe your session.*

Popular culture, liberal arts, *The Art of War*

**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?*

This session requires only a projector and working computer.

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

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

At the conclusion of this session, participants should be able to:

1. Connect management or broader business concepts with the liberal arts and popular culture;
2. Exploit less obviously relevant areas of students' prior knowledge to increase learning; and,
3. Adapt the presented "game" to fit a variety of management courses.

## **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.*

*"If I had to reduce all of educational psychology to just one principle, I would say this: the most important single factor influencing learning is what the learner already knows. Ascertain this and teach him accordingly" (Ausubel, 1968: 18).*

Work in educational psychology has long recognized the importance of existing knowledge for the process of meaningful learning (Ausubel, 1968). While Ausubel's assimilation theory has fallen in popularity, the concept of advance organizers or other schemas by which individuals connect what is being taught with pre-existing knowledge has stood the test of time (Ausubel, 1978, 2000). This concept highlights the need to understand students' prior knowledge and begin the learning process there. That is, to facilitate learning, we must meet the students where they are, and then find ways to connect the concepts we teach with what students know.

Recently, many in both the academic and the popular press have noted the benefits of blending the traditional liberal arts and management education (Gandel, 2015; McNuit, 2014; Nesturuk, 2015). These examples follow a 2011 Carnegie Foundation study that noted the distinct strengths of liberal arts and management education, and the need for students to gain skills from both (Colby, Ehrlich, Sullivan, & Dolle). Students are prepared to be productive, empathetic, and critical global citizens when they have an integrated, interdisciplinary education found commonly in management education that

is integrated with the liberal arts. However, students may struggle to connect concepts from the humanities and traditional liberal arts curricula without a prior knowledge base.

In this session, we present and discuss an example “game” that connects the *The Art of War* and management concepts to contemporary hip-hop music. This approach heeds the call to integrate liberal and management education in an engaging and entertaining manner that promises to increase learning. This particular variant of the game was used in a strategic management course. Many have noted the benefits and applications of using Sun Tzu’s *The Art of War* in business courses and especially in management strategy thinking (Chen, 1994; Chu & Tse, 1992; Weick, 2003). This use of the classic military strategy text offers precisely the benefits promised by integrating liberal arts and management education. However, such an approach, in and of itself, may be missing a crucial link that prevents meaningful learning. That is, supplementing one lofty lesson with another may not reach students who lack the prior knowledge to make such lessons meaningful.

A potential remedy to the disconnect between what both management and liberal arts instructors teach and what students are able to connect to could be the use of popular culture, and in particular popular music. For decades, management instructors have reported the use of music in the classroom for various reasons (Powell & Veiga, 1986; Rettig, 1979; Zimmerman, 1986). Rettig (1979) mentioned the enjoyment that students had on “music day,” where they had to illustrate course concepts with popular songs of their choice, while Zimmerman (1986) used country music to expose students to blue collar life, with less success. The “game” presented in this session follows Rettig’s approach, but in a more guided fashion. The result is an engaging and entertaining session in which students learn both strategic management concepts and gain appreciation for the timeless, applicable wisdom of an ancient military strategy text.

## **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.*

1. **Introduction** (5 minutes): We will begin with presenter and participant introductions and a brief overview of the theoretical grounding described above.
2. **“Who Said It?” Game** (5 minutes): We will take the role of game show hosts as the participants play a game attributing selected quotes to Sun Tzu, the famous ancient Chinese military strategist, or Tupac Shakur, the late 20<sup>th</sup> century hip-hop artist.

3. **Game Debrief** (7 minutes): We will discuss with participants the ways in which each quote from the game can be used to illustrate management or broader management and business concepts.

4. **Discussion** (10 minutes): We will facilitate a discussion of how a similar game or other tools can be used to connect course concepts with both the liberal arts and popular culture.

5. **Conclusion** (3 minutes): We will wrap-up the broader discussion by teasing out a few key takeaways.

## **10) For Activities and Exercises:**

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

No additional materials are needed.

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

*What is the contribution of your session?*

This session provides teachers with an engaging example exercise and a broader discussion of connecting popular culture, the liberal arts, and management concepts in a way that capitalizes on students' prior knowledge. This approach anchors liberal arts and management concepts to students' popular culture knowledge, which could increase learning. Moreover, this session will be light-hearted and at least somewhat entertaining, which should encourage participant sharing of other ideas for using this approach.

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

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

This session is conducive to elevating aspirations both in the classroom and for global citizenship. As noted in the Call for Papers, elevating aspirations in the classroom includes valuing "your own, and your students, lived experiences." This session provides participants with an example and discussion of ways to meet the students where they are by connecting management and broader management and business concepts with their prior – and seemingly irrelevant – bodies of knowledge, thus capitalizing on their lived experiences in less-than-expected, but engaging, ways.

Moreover, this session provides participants with an example exercise that connects an ancient Chinese military strategist, a 20<sup>th</sup> century hip hop artist, and concepts frequently covered in management courses. These connections challenge students to recognize the value of not only western-oriented management thinking, but also the ideas found in relevant disciplines that may be foreign to some students thus “broaden[ing] understanding of global citizenship.”

### **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 work has neither been published nor presented anywhere else or at any other time.

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

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- Rettig, J. L. (1979). Teaching OB with words and music. *Journal of Management Education, 4*(2), 41-42.
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