**Going back to the flaming dumpster: Revisiting experiential exercises gone awry.**

MOBTS has a rich history of sharing positive experiences with experiential learning exercises, and since 2017 when we first had a *Garbage Fire* session, there has been a growing history of learning from each other when our efforts, while possibly innovative, didn’t succeed. In 2017, we had an interesting discussion at Providence College with approximately 8 attendees. Though there wasn’t an overflowing audience, all present agreed it was interesting and we ought to try it again the following year. 2018 saw a standing room only crowd at Coastal Carolina University, and last year at Ramapo College saw another room filled with participants; clearly attendees had an appetite not only for schadenfreude, but for innovation and collaboration around learning from failure.

As MOBTS attendees, the very nature of the conference often revolves around *innovation and collaboration*; as we approach MOBTS 2020, we pay tribute to the classic *Gather ‘round the experiential fire* (Andre, et al., 2010) sessions that have been an anxiously awaited session since before many of us (the facilitators of this session) attended our first OBTC/MOBTS conference. These sessions are heartily attended, have near-legendary status and have spawned related sessions (e.g., Quijada, Baldwin, & Marx, 2018).

Management educators who attend MOBTS, inspired by other educators and practitioners are generally open to new experiences, and learning from others’ great ideas. The very nature of “innovation and collaboration” flows through the conference itself. As we’ve noted in years past, sometimes the experiential fire which we try to harness burns us instead. Well-intentioned new ideas fail. Oft-practiced activities drawn from our society’s own journals aren’t executed in our own classrooms as well as they were drawn up on the pages of those journals. Even exercises from the revered *Gather ‘round the experiential fire* sometimes don’t go as planned. Each of us (session facilitators) have failed (often repeatedly) in bringing what we hoped would be an innovative activity to our classroom. Most attendees can likely reflect on their own classroom situations gone awry; which may be why we have seen many attendees at our sessions – misery loves company? Or, perhaps moreso, a greater desire to learn from our collective failures and move forward with new efforts.

The pop-culture management maxim to “fail fast and fail forward” (e.g., Maxwell, 1982) is meant to encourage creative solutions to problems. As educators, we often encourage our students to take risks in the safety of our classrooms. Some of us also follow our own advice and take those same risks by inventing new exercises, or trying established exercises in new contexts. As *Garbage Fire* presenters, we know that we have (and will continue to) make mistakes, but we are committed to persevering. Conversely, we have (and hope to continue to) have successful classroom experiences, but recognize that these successes are not permanent either. We must continue to evolve as educators, and learning from failure is not only meme- and inspirational quote-worthy, but rather also an integral part of our own professional development.

In this session, we invite attendees to reflect on experiential activities that had unintended outcomes and we frame our experiences in Kolb’s (e.g., Kolb & Kolb, 2005) experiential model of experiencing, reflecting, thinking and acting. That is to say, for each activity we: encourage session attendees to present experiences that led them to integrate the particular activity in class; jointly reflect upon what went wrong; express our collective thinking on what remedies are appropriate; and suggest actions that we recommend for one another as we think of using these activities. In doing so, we hope the collective knowledge of management educators increases, leading their initial experiences to be more positive so that their own recursive cycle of experiential learning begins with greater success.

Based off our past experiences, we plan to offer a brief introduction to the format of the session, and each of the facilitators. We will then break into smaller discussion groups led by each of the facilitators, following the experiential learning model presented above. We plan to break back out to a full room discussion in the final half hour of the session, allowing each of the smaller groups to present examples of how their small-group session helped with their professional growth and learning.

Of note, and building off previous sessions and the experiences we’ve both presented and learned from, we plan on exploring with attendees how instructor humility (e.g., Edelson, Lo, Nelson, Stark, Stratton, van Esch, 2019) can serve as a path from the garbage fire to safe, burn-free existence. Educators, as leaders, should exemplify emotional management through their ability to 1) admit mistakes and limitations, 2) spotlight others’ contributions and strengths, and 3) model teachability (i.e. being open to feedback, new information/ideas, and listening). (Owens & Heckman, 2012). We plan on focusing on this element of humble leadership from an instructor’s perspective.

Additionally, this year, we plan to explore our own and our attendees’ experiences that resulted in a classroom failure, but that we (and they) have revised and tried again. It is this resilience, whether from attending our sessions, or one’s own persistence (stubbornness?), that we are hoping to encourage in the *Garbage Fire* sessions.

The exercises we present in this session and will solicit from attendees will differ from traditional experiential exercises that might be gathering ‘round another fire, not in their solid grounding in experiential pedagogy and andragogy, but in the errors of execution or location or other types of mistakes that led to their lack of success, and what was done to address these mistakes and try again.

Our exercises share the foundations of the successful exercises one often finds at MOBTS, and we include our own failed experiences with exercises that others have implemented successfully. It is, however, our very lack of success that creates value; the resilience and persistence of management educators who are willing to take chances and fail (sometimes spectacularly) – but ultimately learn – has led to successes as well.

We understand that research and practice are intertwined, and our session is a clear homage to one of the most popular sessions at the MOBTS conference each year. Using our failure to create successful future iterations is at the heart of experiential learning (e.g. Kolb 2014; Kolb & Kolb, 2005). Just as we teach our students the cycle of experiential learning and how past experience informs future actions, we encourage management educators to collectively learn from each others’ failures to inform future successful classroom initiatives.

This session includes all types of exercises, online and in-class, individual and group-oriented at both undergraduate and MBA levels, across the spectrum of management topics. Effectively, we hope that this paper will be used as an analogical fire safety tool as we rescue our exercises from the flames and help others not to be burned – or at least know how to heal those wounds.

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