**Search and you shall find! Celebrating MOBTS’s 50th anniversary with a scavenger hunt (and discussing how such experiential activities can be integrated into business-related courses)**

**Abstract**

In this session, we discuss how scavenger hunts may be used in management-related courses and programs to help students learn about a wide array of topics. To illustrate their use for management educators, we designed a scavenger hunt in honor of the 50th anniversary of MOBTS. Join us to embark on an exciting team-based activity in which teams will travel around the campus to find items related to the Society, its two journals, and the conference location. As a tie-in with MOBTS’s 50th anniversary: your team’s goal is to collect 50 points in 50 minutes!

*Keywords*: Scavenger hunt; experiential learning; icebreakers.

**Session format**: Experiential activity.

**Classroom style**: The activity is designed for an in-person class but could be adapted virtually.

**Course level**: The activity is appropriate for both undergraduate and graduate levels.

**Time requested**: 75 minutes.

**Resources requested**: Main room for opening and plenary, no additional tech resources needed.

**Unique contribution**: This paper has neither been submitted nor presented elsewhere.

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**Introduction, Theoretical Foundations, and Teaching Implications**

Educators who use experiential learning (e.g., Kolb, 2015) endeavor to provide their students with meaningful experiences through which they have the opportunity to develop key competencies and apply course concepts to concrete situations. While these experiences can take numerous forms (e.g., Wright et al., 2022), in this submission, we focus on scavenger hunts, defined by Merriam-Webster (n.d.) as “game[s] in which players try to acquire without buying specified items within a time limit.”

Used in academic settings, scavenger hunts are engaging activities that can be adapted to a broad array of programs, courses, and content. They are also adaptable to multiple course formats, as they can be run in both face-to-face and virtual meetings. Notably, the literature suggests that they can be used to teach a number of business-related topics, including – but not limited to – organizational culture (Barclay & York, 1996), team effectiveness (Manning & Schmidt, 1995), communication practices in the organizations (Tipton & Kurpitz, 2017), and marketing (Schaller, 2020), as well as to help students develop their academic literacy by having them find and synthesize information from academic articles (Wyland et al., 2021).

Scavenger hunts can be used in other academic contexts as well. For example, one of the authors (along with a colleague) recently used a scavenger hunt as part of a “welcome session” for new students enrolled in a specialization of the Master of Science program at their university. Over the course of one hour, students took group pictures or selfies at various locations around the campus, took pictures with a couple of members of the administration and registrar team, and looked up random (i.e., not school-related) and informative (university-related) facts. As such, the activity both encouraged team building and provided participants with useful knowledge about the program and the institution.

Given their versatility, scavenger hunts can therefore be integrated into a number of courses and contexts. To illustrate their use for management educators, we designed a scavenger hunt in honor of the 50th anniversary of MOBTS. In addition to shining a spotlight on the Society, we use this opportunity to provide an innovative and experiential introduction MOBTS’s two journals (the Journal of Management Education and Management Teaching Review), as well as celebrate the conference location.

**Learning Objectives**

Used in the classroom, the learning objectives and materials for a scavenger hunt will undoubtedly be tailored to course content. As such, in the overview presented below, we focus our objectives and the description of the exercise on the proposed session for the MOBTS conference. We then use the debrief to expand the discussion to how such activities may be used more broadly, prompting participants to reflect on how they may incorporate scavenger hunts and similar exercises in their in-person and virtual courses.

Through their participation in the exercise, attendees will….

1. *Discover* information about the Management & Organizational Behavior Teaching Society,
2. *Discover*, *compare*, and *contrast* the two journals published by the Society – namely, the Journal of Management Education (JME) and Management Teaching Review (MTR), and
3. *Reflect* on how they may *adapt* the exercise (i.e., scavenger hunts or similar experiential activities and games) for their in-person and virtual courses.

**Exercise Overview**

**Preparation and Materials**

To run a scavenger hunt, instructors must prepare:

1. A *list of items* that participants will need to locate during the activity. This will likely require some advance preparation in order to a) identify items that are relevant to the program and/or course, as well as b) set-up items, as needed, in specific locations.
2. The *instructions for the activity*: specify the start and end time, meeting place, and any other rules. Share information related to how points are calculated: Are all items worth the same number of points? Do points differ based on the difficulty and/or importance of an item on the list?, etc.
3. A *prize* for all participants or the winning team (optional).

**The Search Begins! Steps and Instructions to Run the Exercise**

**Step 1: Greet participants and form teams** (5 minutes). We will begin by welcoming participants, forming teams of 4-5 members, and introducing the activity.

Next, we will distribute the list of items for the scavenger hunt, which can be grouped into four categories (please see Table 1 for sample items). Drawing on our learning objectives, the first two include itemsrelated to MOBTS (such as meeting one or more Fellows, meeting an executive of the Society), and elements pertaining to the journals (such as identifying sections common to both JME and MTR). To celebrate the conference location, the third category includes things that highlight characteristics of, and iconic locations in, the state of Florida. The final category will include other team-building elements that support cohesion and collegiality – both hallmarks of the MOBTS conference. To reinforce the link between the activity and this important anniversary for the Society, participants are tasked with **collecting** **50 points in 50 minutes**.

Table 1

*Sample Items for the MOBTS Conference Scavenger Hunt*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Item** | **Category** |
| 1. Go to Currents (the café) in the Davis College of Business building to meet a MOBTS Fellow[[1]](#footnote-1). Take a group selfie together! (*2 points*) | Highlight MOBTS |
| 1. Go outside the main entrance to the Davis College of Business building to meet with the MOBTS President. Take a group selfie with him! (*3 points*) | Highlight MOBTS |
| 1. Go to [location to be determined]. In the room, you will find a number of index cards – each corresponds to the name of a section published in either JME or MTR. Take an index card that corresponds to a section that is common to both journals. (*2 points*) | Learn about the journals (JME and MTR) |
| 1. Go to the Oak Hall dorms (where attendees stay when on site). Search through the building to find 3 posters of well-known Disney movies that have been hung on walls. Hint: each poster is in a different location… Take a group selfie in front of each. (*2 points per poster*). Write the name of an actor or actress who played one of the main roles in the film in the space below to earn a bonus point. (*Max* *1 bonus point per poster*) | Celebrating the conference’s location |
| 1. Travel to the basketball courts to find an inflatable alligator. Write the alligator’s name (hint: look for the name tag) in the space below. (*2 points*) | Celebrating the conference’s location |
| 1. Stop by the Intramural softball field to find one of the presenters from today’s session. As a group, sing at least 30 seconds of your favorite 80s song to earn *2 points*. Plus: *2 bonus points* will be awarded should the group add any choreography to their performance! | Other team-building activities |

**Step 2: Teams disperse** (50 minutes). Teams set out for the scavenger hunt. Before they leave, we will remind them that the debrief will be begin in 50 minutes in the same room. If one member per team is comfortable sharing their cell number with the organizers, we will send a reminder when only 10 minutes remain for the activity.

At least one presenter will remain in the meeting room in case questions arise, while others will walk around the campus to interact with teams as they embark on their adventure. Should any participants arrive late, the presenter in the room will be able to form additional teams and share the instructions, so the new teams can join the activity in progress.

Importantly, we will ensure to also have an alternate version of the scavenger hunt list that we can give to any team(s) whose members do not feel comfortable walking across the campus for the activity. This ensures that all attendees will be able to participate.

**Step 3: Distribution of prizes** (5 minutes). Participants will be happy to learn that their efforts were not in vain! Every participant will receive a small prize at the end of the activity.

**Step 4: Debrief** (15 minutes). We will open the plenary with general questions designed to encourage participants to reflect on how a scavenger hunt, or a similar activity, could be used in their courses: “*How might a similar activity be integrated into one of your courses?”* and *“What topics would you center the exercise on?”*.

Collectively, the group can then discuss potential ideas, obstacles, and suggestions for mitigating any challenges: *“What would be key factors to consider in the planning?”*, *“What pitfalls do you anticipate?”*, and “*How can we mitigate them?”*. At this point, the presenters can share their experiences with similar activities, overviewing how they designed them and typical student reactions.

Finally, to close the session, we will return to our central theme – the 50th anniversary of MOBTS – to inquire: “*What item was your favorite on our list?”* and *“What do you take away from the session?”*.

**Session Overview**

As the steps are detailed above, we focus our overview on the logistics and materials required to successfully run the exercise at the conference.

1. Organization: Aside from a meeting room that can hold 30-50 people, no additional materials (technology, etc.) are required from the conference.
2. Timing: Given that we aim to tie the exercise to the 50th anniversary of MOTS (i.e., 50 points in 50 minutes), we are requesting a 75-minute timeslot. However, we can adapt the activity to a shorter timeframe if needed.
3. Materials: To finalize the scavenger hunt list, we will contact members of the conference organizing committee who are familiar with the Jacksonville campus, to request additional advice on locations for items.

**References**

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1. Should the session be accepted, we will contact Fellows to see if they will be attending and available to participate in the activity. The point values of items will also be adjusted based on our final list, to ensure that the goal of 50 points is attainable within the time limit. Sample locations are proposed but may be adjusted. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)