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## LINKS Train-The-Trainer Seminars January 7-9 and March 10-12, 2009

LINKS Train-The-Trainer Seminars are offered for the enterprise management, marketing, services, and supply chain management LINKS variants.

Current LINKS instructors are invited to pass along this announcement to faculty colleagues and advanced doctoral students who might be interested in learning more about teaching with LINKS.

Experienced LINKS instructors sometimes participate in a LINKS Train-The-Trainer Seminar to refresh their memories of LINKS details just prior

to teaching with LINKS or to explore another LINKS simulation variant for a future teaching activity. Such experienced LINKS instructors may elect just to participate in the TTT's four-round simulation event, ignoring the public teleconferences included in the LINKS TTT program. (PowerPoint decks are e-mailed to all LINKS TTT participants before each teleconference, so such experienced LINKS instructors may freely choose to participate in all, some, or none of the teleconferences as per their availability and interest.)

Details about LINKS Train-The-Trainer Seminars may be accessed via these URLs:

- <http://www.LINKS-simulations.com/TTT/EMttt.pdf> [Enterprise Management]
- <http://www.LINKS-simulations.com/TTT/MSttt.pdf> [Marketing]
- <http://www.LINKS-simulations.com/TTT/SMttt.pdf> [Services Marketing]
- <http://www.LINKS-simulations.com/TTT/SCttt.pdf> [Supply Chain Management]

# 2008 Annual Report

Noteworthy events in the life of LINKS in 2008 included:

- **LINKS Benchmarking Survey:** LINKS instructors with a total of 111 LINKS industries have participated in the LINKS Benchmarking Survey since its November 2006 launch. Through time, these accumulated LINKS benchmarking statistics will be increasingly useful to LINKS instructors as they seek to assess and improve their students' LINKS experiences. And, these benchmarking statistics provide top-line feedback on the performance of LINKS from the students' perspective, to guide the future evolution of LINKS. Accumulated to-date benchmarking statistics are accessible in the Instructor Resources section of the LINKS website.



- **Software Platform R&D:** Software platform R&D investment continued in 2008 to improve operating efficiency, user convenience, user response speed, and long-run ease of maintenance. The LINKS business plan for 2009 continues to focus on usability improvement, user interface refinement efforts, and LINKS content upgrading/refreshment.

- **43% Growth in LINKS in 2008:** Calendar-year 2008 included 43% more LINKS events (industries) in academic degree-granting programs than 2007. This is a wonderful rate of growth as we

move into the sixth year of public marketing of LINKS. In addition to new LINKS instructors joining the LINKS family (often based on recommendations of existing LINKS instructors), many LINKS instructors are using multiple LINKS variants in their undergraduate, MBA, and executive MBA programs.

- **On-Going Outreach Efforts:** To reach out to potential and to current LINKS instructors, we're actively involved in exhibiting at major academic conferences. In 2008, LINKS-simulations.com was an exhibitor at conferences of these associations:

Academy of Marketing Science (AMS), American Marketing Association (AMA), Decision Sciences Institute (DSI), Federation of Business Disciplines, INFORMS, INFORMS Society for Marketing Science, Marketing Educators' Association, Production and

Operations Management Society (POMS), and Society for Marketing Advances (SMA). We'll be continuing these outreach efforts in 2009. If you're attending one of these conferences, we invite you join us at our exhibit for conversation and camaraderie.

Many thanks to all LINKS instructors for their contributions to our 2008 success. Please keep the feedback and the suggestions for improvements coming!

# LINKS-simulations Newsletter: Our New Look

To improve the quality of this newsletter we have added more color, graphics and easier-to-read typefaces. The content will continue to address the issues you have come to know and expect. If you have suggestions, questions or comments, please send them to the editor at [Winkler@LINKS-simulations.com](mailto:Winkler@LINKS-simulations.com).



## Volume Discounts in the LINKS Supply Chain Management Simulations

Volume discounts now exist for all raw materials and sub-assembly components for regular procurements, excluding emergency procurements, in the LINKS Supply Chain Management Simulations:

- **Raw Materials:** If your firm's purchase order size for Alpha or Beta exceeds 250,000 kilograms in a month, your firm receives a 7.6% discount on the current raw material price for all procurement order volume in excess of 250,000 kilograms. An

additional 6.2% discount (a total discount of 13.8%) accrues for a raw material purchase order in excess of 500,000 units. A further 5.4% discount (a total discount of 19.2%) is realized for a raw material purchase order in excess of 1,000,000 units in any month.

- **Sub-Assembly Components:** If your firm's purchase order size for any sub-assembly component from any sub-assembly component supplier (i.e., the sum of surface and air purchases from a supplier) in a region exceeds 50,000 units in a month, your firm receives a 10.4% discount on the current sub-assembly component price for all order volume in excess of 50,000 units. An additional 7.1% discount (a total discount of 17.5%) is realized for a sub-assembly component procurement order in excess of 100,000 units from any supplier in a region.



# New Instructor FAQ: “Grades Reporting To Students”

***“Is it possible to report the LINKS grades to the students, as part of their page one financial/operating report? This would be the full performance evaluation report, as is available in the latter pages of the Instructor’s Game Administrator Report.”***

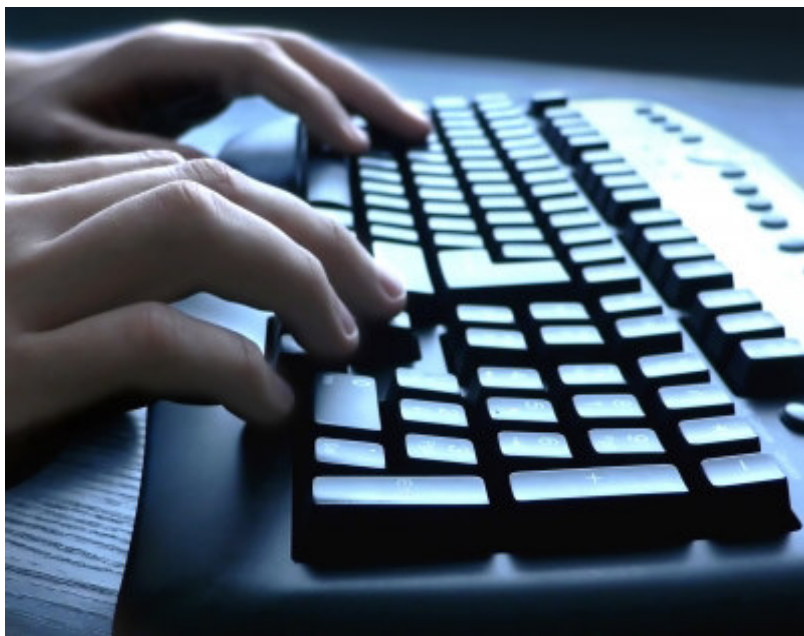
Yes, by setting switch\_grades=Y, LINKS grades are reported as part of the first page of the financial/operating reports. Like all LINKS switches, the LINKS Administrator sets this switch based on instruction/direction from the LINKS instructor.

The default switch\_grades=N means that grades are only reported to instructors as part of the Game Administrator Report. Grades reporting to students can lead to over-attention to grades rather than running their LINKS business, which is the reason why the default setting is switch\_grades=N. However, sometimes, activating grades reporting is the only way to catch the attention of students as to their relative within-industry standing, particularly for younger students (i.e., undergraduates). And, sometimes students will be quite demanding about wanting to know their current and on-going within-LINKS grade

standing, thus leading the LINKS instructor to activating full grades reporting to students.

Grades reporting should not be activated until at least several rounds have passed after initialization and advancement to round #3, to reduce initial information overload as students assume managerial control of their LINKS firms and also to ensure that there are meaningful differences in performance. Activating grades reporting as part of the round #6 game run is the earliest recommended activation timing.

At



# New FAQ: “Retail- and Direct-Channel Prices”

[LINKS products simulations with multiple channels]

*“What relationships should exist between retail-channel prices and direct-channel prices? For example, should direct-channel prices always be less than retail-channel prices?”*

Manufacturers’ prices to channel #1 are the retailers’ costs. Retailers markup manufacturer prices (i.e., the retailers’ cost) to their customers, the final end-user set-top box customers. Manufacturers’ prices to direct channels (channels other than channel #1) are to final end-user set-top box customers. So, manufacturers’ prices will generally be higher in direct channels than in channel #1 to allow for the retailers’ markups in channel #1, assuming that a manufacturer’s target final end-user prices are meant to be similar in all channels.

It’s difficult know whether the comparable final end-user prices for set-top box products in channel #1 and in direct channels are predictable as to

which would be relatively higher or lower. It seems reasonable to expect that retailers would observe brand-comparable prices in competitive direct channels in their region and would not feel positively inclined toward manufacturers who undercut retailers’ prices in a direct channel.

But, the larger issue may be channel-set segments. Some customers only purchase set-top boxes through a specific channel. Other customers consider all brand options in all channel options when making purchases. So, if the channel-specific segments are large compared to the joint-channel segment, then there wouldn’t be much cross-channel competition.

## Did You Know?

There are at least 49 different course syllabi samples for your review, including six on Marketing Management, 14 on Marketing Strategy and 18 on Supply Chain Management. The resources on the website are there to make the instructor’s job easier.

Check them out at the **Instructor Resources** link and click on Course Syllabi.



# Game Run Schedules With Embargos

In processing LINKS game runs, our normal administrative protocol is that the results are “publicized” immediately after the game run is executed. “Publicized” includes uploading the new results to the LINKS web-server and sending e-mail to everyone in a LINKS industry (students and

input submission deadline) and the LINKS results are uploaded to the web server so that the LINKS instructor has immediate access to the results. However, embargoed results are not available to students until the instructor-specified embargo time.

Embargoing is useful for instructors who wish to release results only after a class has concluded (for example, to retain students’ undivided attention throughout the class) or for instructors wishing to have early access to the results, before their students can access the results.

To embargo results, encode your embargo schedule within the game run schedule that you submit before your LINKS event begins. Here’s an example entry on a game run schedule for an embargoed game run:

*November 7 @ 200pm: Round #7; results embargoed until 900pm that evening.*

Everyone in a LINKS industry always receives an e-mail announcement of the availability of new results immediately after a game run has been executed, regardless of whether embargoed results exist. And, embargoed results are “immediately” uploaded to the LINKS Simulation Database after a game run. However, students can’t access embargoed results until the specified embargo time limit has passed because the results’ links are inactive until that time.

the instructor) to announce the availability of the new game run results. For most LINKS instructors, immediate game run processing and turnaround after the input submission deadline is desirable.

It is possible to “embargo” the availability of LINKS results until an instructor-specified time after the input submission deadline and subsequent game run. With an embargo, LINKS is run in the normal fashion (normally within two hours of the



# LINKS Spotlight

## Good Advice for LINKS Students: “Don’t wait until the last minute.”

It is always a good idea for each team to input their decisions into the LINKS Simulation Database well before every deadline. We have heard the following reasons for not getting their results in on time: 1) the internet was down; 2) my car broke down; 3) my computer fried. So far, no one has used “the dog chewed up our team’s reports.” On our end, although our web server host has an excellent record, there is a less-than 1% chance the server could be out of commission doing scheduled maintenance at the exact deadline time, and the team would miss the run.

Past experience shows that when a team waits until the last minute they invariably leave out some essential things, such as ordering research reports, or remembering to turn on a new product or budget for a new channel or region. And while only one person can input at any time, those inputs should be checked or reviewed by other members of the team matching those decisions that the group as a whole has agreed upon. Hence, it is important to have time to make that vital last check in each round.



The LINKS-Simulations Newsletter is a monthly newsletter for current and prospective LINKS instructors and for LINKS friends. Please e-mail questions, comments, suggestions, and other contributions (e.g., LINKS teaching tips) to [Winkler@LINKS-simulations.com](mailto:Winkler@LINKS-simulations.com).



Editor: Cyndy Winkler

**Access this edition: <http://www.LINKS-simulations.com/newsletter.pdf>**

**Access previous edition: <http://www.LINKS-simulations.com/newsletter-previous.pdf>**



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## Reminders

### LINKS Passcode Retrieval:

Convenient LINKS passcode retrieval for a LINKS participant (student or instructor) is possible via the “Retrieve LINKS Passcode” link on the main LINKS webpage (<http://www.LINKS-simulations.com>). Executing the “Retrieve LINKS Passcode” operation e-mails the firm’s passcode to the participant’s official e-mail address as currently recorded in the LINKS Simulation Database.

### E-Mail Address Management:

LINKS instructors submit their students’ e-mail addresses (grouped into teams) as part of the information-set provided to initialize a LINKS industry. Often, these are institutional rather than personal e-mail addresses. Since some participants prefer to use a personal e-mail address rather than an institutional e-mail address for LINKS, it’s possible for participants to update their official e-mail address as recorded in the LINKS Simulation Database.

Participant updates of official e-mail addresses as recorded in the LINKS Simulation Database are possible only after initialization and publication (via e-mail to all team members) of each LINKS firm’s passcode. Using their LINKS firm’s passcode, LINKS participants may change their official LINKS e-mail address after LINKS initialization via the “E-Mail Address Management” button in the LINKS Simulation Database. Confirmations of e-mail address changes are e-mailed to the old and new e-mail addresses.

### Student Payment Timing:

The published LINKS price (the discounted price) is in effect until the first round of LINKS is complete. Then, the price is increased 25%. This means that we can initialize your LINKS simulation event (and advance LINKS through to its normal starting point) and students can continue to pay at the discounted price until the first scheduled round is run. Before initialization can occur, we do need to receive your game-run schedule and the students’ e-mail addresses (grouped into teams).

It is not necessary for your students to pay before LINKS begins to have access to the discounted LINKS price. Students must only pay before the first official game run on your game-run schedule to receive the discounted price. Thus, student payments can occur simultaneously with the beginning of your LINKS simulation event.

Student payment with a personal credit card is via the “Pay For LINKS” link on the LINKS webpage.

As a practical matter, a final warning/reminder will be e-mailed to those students who haven’t paid by the first game run, before implementing the non-discounted price.

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## LINKS Website Resources:

LINKS website (<http://www.LINKS-simulations.com>) links provide convenient access to all LINKS simulation variants, to the LINKS Simulation Database, to passcode-protected instructor resources, and to user interaction contact points such as “Pay For LINKS”, “Payment Questions?”, and “Retrieve LINKS Passcode”.

## Some LINKS Resources:

- **Printed Manuals:** All LINKS manuals are freely available for download via the LINKS website. However, some LINKS instructors prefer to have publication-quality printed manuals provided for all of their students, rather than relying on their students to individually download/print the participant’s manual from the LINKS website. We’re happy to provide this service for LINKS instructors. The all-inclusive additional cost for participant manuals varies from \$18/student to \$28/student depending on the LINKS simulations variant. We normally need three weeks advance notice to arrange for production and shipping (to the instructor) from our on-demand printer.

- **What’s New Document:** Please access the following document at the case-sensitive URL <http://www.LINKS-simulations.com/WhatsNew.pdf> to obtain a detailed listing of new updates/enhancements to LINKS. Experienced LINKS instructors should access this document several months before their next usage occasion, to review the updates/enhancements to LINKS since their last usage occasion.

- **LINKS Instructor Resources Access:** You may access the evolving LINKS Instructor Resources via the LINKS webpage. Contact the LINKS author, Randy Chapman ([Chapman@LINKS-simulations.com](mailto:Chapman@LINKS-simulations.com)), to obtain the relevant access parameters (username and passcode).

