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LINKS Positioning Strategy Simulation Updates

Based on instructor feedback, these updates have been made to the LINKS Positioning Strategy Simulation. some additional product development/design complexity.

Warranty: Warranty has been set to zero for all products (“due to corporate policy”), so that set-top box products will have no warranty. (And, no changes in the initial warranty setting of zero are permitted.) This also means that replacement parts are no longer relevant in the LINKS Positioning Strategy Simulation. This change simplifies the product development/design task a bit by removing one of the product attributes. Instructors may change this technology limit (currently set to zero) during a LINKS event, to add

KPI Charts: The KPI charts have been eliminated from the Word doc financial reports. Students may access these KPI charts in the supplementary Excel results file in the LINKS Simulation Database.



Additional Research Study: Research Study #28 has been added to the LINKS Positioning Strategy Simulation to provide students with another tool to analyze the impacts of marketing program decisions (spending, mix allocation, and positioning).



Coaching, Learning Curves and Evaluation

Discussions with course participants revolve around important strategy issues and that is one of the special things about teaching with LINKS. This can be a lot of fun for both the instructor and the student, certainly more fun than standard case-related discussions. The instructor

wears many hats during a LINKS exercise. Perhaps the most important role is that of coach.



with teams.

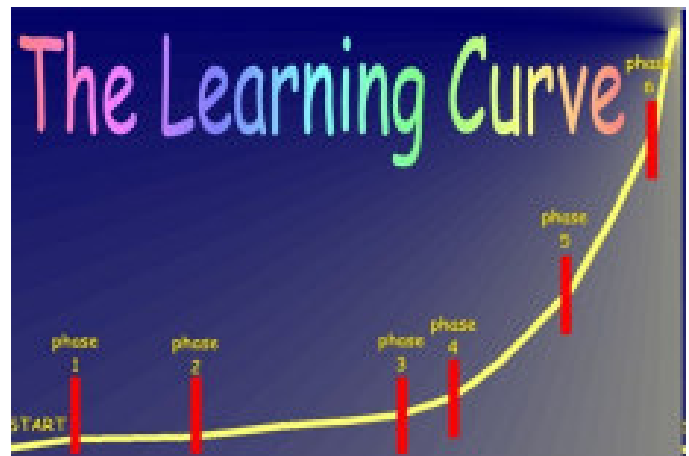
Randy Chapman has a baseball-style hat with the label "LINKS Coach" that he uses during private presidential review meetings

with teams. LINKS participants often come by the course instructor's office a lot (if the instructor is accessible), and much of the interaction is in the style of using the instructor as a sounding board for current thinking about various strategies and tactics. As a coach, the instructor is required to listen, to make helpful comments and suggestions, and to reassure students that their thinking seems sound (or, at least, is not obviously flawed).

Randy takes the stance in LINKS that he is the president of all LINKS firms. His presidential attitude is that the LINKS management teams are fully responsible for all aspects of managing their firms' activities. Adoption of this presidential role facilitates on-going strategy discussions. He typically requires several outside-of-class presidential review meetings during a course, to ensure that students are held accountable for their performance. These formally scheduled meetings can provide students with a regular opportunity to meet with the course instructor to discuss a range of issues. These private presidential review meetings can be scheduled in lieu of regular class

sessions, so that everyone fully understands that they are expected to attend and participate in these meetings. These review meetings are private with only the team members attending, not the rest of the class.

As things evolve in a LINKS exercise, the instructor may deliberately seek out poorly-performing teams. By encouraging such students to attend additional meetings, it is possible to intervene at an early stage before poorly-performing students get too far off track and lose their interest in a LINKS exercise.



There is a steep learning curve with a rich and sophisticated simulation like LINKS. It takes several rounds for participants to become fully familiar with all aspects of LINKS. This is a universal problem associated with complex simulations. Given such a learning curve, it is crucial to include a relatively large number of simulation rounds within a LINKS exercise, so that early learning difficulties may be amortized over a number of simulation rounds. The real payoff from participating in a simulation occurs

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LINKS Train-The-Trainer Seminars

(Summer 2009)

June 23-25 ● July 28-30 ● August 18-20

LINKS Simulations Immersion Experience

Five Teleconferences and a Four-Round LINKS Simulation Event

Registration is available for the next three-day, intensive-mode Train-The-Trainer distance-learning seminars for the LINKS simulations. Randy Chapman, the LINKS author, leads these distance-learning events for academic faculty interested in learning more about teaching with LINKS. This intensive-mode seminar format includes 5-6 hours of work per day during the three days of the distance-learning seminar.

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]

Did You Know?

Bookmarks in Manuals

All LINKS manuals, including the LINKS Instructor's Manual, have bookmarks throughout their pdf files. In each manual, this initial bookmark page permits convenient instant access to all chapters in a manual with a single mouse click.

What Other Instructors Do

Charge Students Consulting Fees For Consultations

Do you find that your students ask lots of questions that are well discussed in the manual and in the FAQs? Students will regularly ask the instructor questions that are completely covered somewhere in the LINKS website resources.

Here's an interesting approach that Kyle Huggins of Union University has used to manage that instructor-student consultation interaction:

"To make things simple, I have created an easy fee schedule for my consulting services. This fee is only charged outside of two times: (1) class time and (2) normally scheduled office hours. Therefore, any time a student needs my assistance outside of these two normally scheduled times, I will charge a consulting fee of \$100,000 per every 10 minutes," wrote Huggins. (That fee is charged in LINKS bucks, of course, and paid by the student's firm.)

He has several stipulations when students call his cell or visit his office outside of the "No Fee" allotted times:

- The student must ask if I have at least ten minutes to talk about LINKS. If the answer is "not right now" then no fee is charged. If the answer is "sure" then I check my watch and the time begins immediately.
- The student is charged \$100,000 and has ten minutes of my time immediately paid for. There are no refunds for time not used. If the student calls with one question that takes two minutes, then they will still get charged the same amount. It's a flat fee! If the student runs over ten minutes into the eleventh minute, then they will

immediately be charged another \$100,000 for the next ten minutes. Again, its a flat fee schedule!

- Once the student feels comfortable ending the consulting session, they can call the session to an end. Once ended, I will tell the student how many minutes the session took and the consulting fee that will be charged.
- Finally, and most importantly, the only time during our session that I will discuss the length of the session is at the end of the consultation. If the student asks me how much time is left during our session, I will not answer! I ask if the student feels comfortable ending at this point. If not, then we keep going. It's not about the money; it's about their understanding!

He encourages the student to come prepared to eliminate a longer-than-necessary and more expensive consulting session. He encourages his students to "do your work ahead of time, before you come to see me." Huggins feels that this flat fee schedule makes time management much easier. He encourages his students to use the LINKS resources before coming to see him for the answers. He says "USE YOUR MANUAL FIRST!!! Then go to the LINKS website. Then come to me!"

"Devote as many hours as possible to the first few weeks! Dive into the financial statements and begin to understand where all your firm's costs are being accrued from! That is CRITICAL to your future success!"

Thanks Kyle for your input and suggestion.

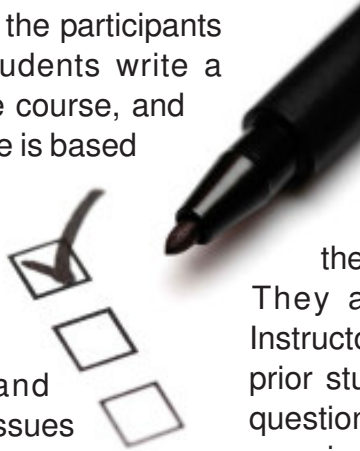


Coaching, Learning Curves and Evaluation

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when participants design and implement programs and then receive market feedback. Feedback is very special and should motivate the participants like no other teaching tool. Students write a strategy review or plan within the course, and a major portion of the course grade is based on performance in LINKS, so the effort requirements align with the formal and explicit reward system.

Performance evaluation and grading are obviously significant issues in academic degree-granting programs. In addition to within-simulation performance



evaluation, “external” evaluation via assignments, reports, presentations, and examinations are all relevant. There are 16 questions in the LINKS Instructor’s Manual designed to be used as a final exam at the end of the LINKS exercise. They are generally complex enough so that they can be used on take-home exams, if desired. All of these questions require thoughtful discussion. They are not just simple recall questions. Instructors may even hand these questions out for prior study and review, and advise students that questions such as these would be fair game for examination purposes.



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.



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.

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), to obtain the relevant access parameters (username and passcode).