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## Excel Spreadsheet Results File

The standard reporting of LINKS financial, operations, and research results is via a single Word doc results file. An Excel spreadsheet results file supplements the standard Word doc results file.

The Excel supplementary results spreadsheet has been substantially enhanced.


[06 Results](#) \ [Dashboard](#) \ [Decision History](#) \ [Forecasts](#) \ [KPIcharts](#) \

In addition to the financial and operating results worksheet and the decision history worksheet:

- A new "Dashboard" worksheet contains a single-screen top-line summary of your firm's key results for the most-recent LINKS round. When

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## Help Pop-Ups Added to the LINKS Simulation Database

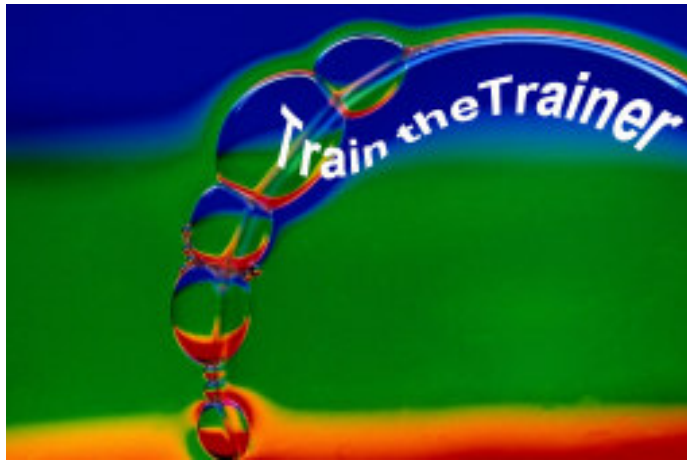
 [Access Help Pop-Up Window](#) 

Help pop-up windows are now accessible on each of the input web-screens in the LINKS Simulation Database.

These help pop-ups will be especially useful for LINKS participants in the early stages of LINKS events. These help pop-ups provide useful top-line advice and tips about an input web-screen.

Pop-ups must be enabled in your web browser to access these help pop-up windows.





# LINKS Train-The-Trainer Seminars

(Summer 2009)

● July 28-30 ● August 18-20

**LINKS Simulations Immersion Experience**

**Five Teleconferences and a Four-Round LINKS Simulation Event**

**R**egistration 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]

# Updated FAQ: “Taxes When a Firm Is Unprofitable”



“When a firm loses money, do taxes still exist?”

If operating income plus non-operating income (interest from marketable securities plus interest paid due to loans plus the sum of all patent royalties paid and received) is negative, the firm is unprofitable.

Such a loss generates “negative” taxes (i.e., a tax credit) which results in a reduction in the size of the final, post-tax net income, since the tax credit effectively subsidizes the operating income loss. In such a situation, taxes will be a positive number, reflecting the tax credit. (Normally, taxes is a negative number representing the taxes paid. But, taxes are only paid if the firm is profitable.)



## Excel Spreadsheet Results File

### Continued from page 1

you access the Excel supplementary results spreadsheet, it opens to the “Dashboard” worksheet. An example of a LINKS Dashboard is accessible via this link:

<http://www.LINKS-simulations.com/GIFS/DashboardExample.jpg>

- A new “Forecasts” worksheet contains two extrapolative|quantitative forecasts of the next round’s sales volume. Be sure to review the details and background assumptions of these forecasts, as reported in this worksheet.

- An enhanced “KPIcharts” worksheet contains charts of each LINKS KPI vs. the

corresponding industry KPI best, industry KPI average, and industry KPI worst for each of the last six LINKS rounds. These KPI charts provide an appealing graphic rendition of the LINKS performance evaluation dimensions displayed in tabular form on the first page of each firm’s Word doc financial and operating reports results file.

The full description of the Excel supplementary results spreadsheet is accessible via this link:

<http://www.LINKS-simulations.com/XLS.pdf>

This link is included on the initial web-screen when students access their firm in the LINKS Simulation Database (“Excel Spreadsheet Briefing Notes”).

## Pros and Cons of Practice Rounds

Some instructors prefer to have practice rounds at the beginning of a LINKS event.

Practice rounds permit students to become familiar with LINKS and the LINKS Simulation Database in a low-risk fashion and their initial decisions (and possible miscues) are not held against them in LINKS performance evaluation.

After the practice-round phase, LINKS is reset back to its original starting position (round #3). Students would then continue on from their original starting position in LINKS in the “official” LINKS event.

LINKS students are normally advised of practice-round scheduling in the course syllabus or LINKS - event schedule, so there are no “surprises” in the conduct of LINKS and so that it’s clear which rounds count for grading purposes and rounds are purely for practice. There doesn’t seem to be any obvious case that favors “surprising” students with a LINKS-event reset after several initial (practice) rounds. So, a practice-round schedule is normally publicized to students before LINKS begins.

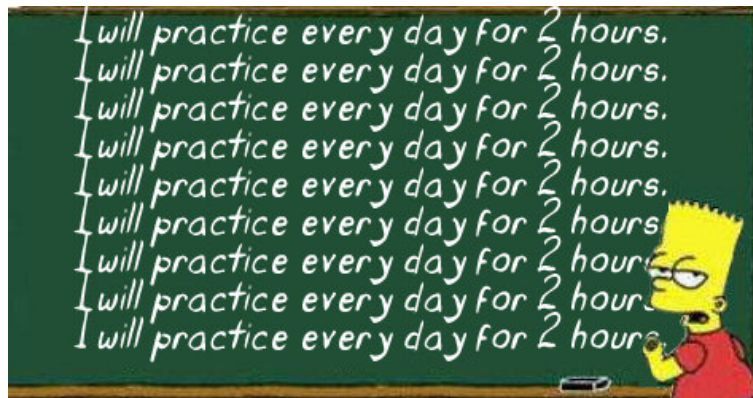
To schedule practice rounds, include them in your LINKS schedule submitted before the beginning of your LINKS event. Also include the specific date/time when LINKS is to be reset back to round #3, for subsequent use by LINKS

participants in the actual/official event. Once the simulation is reset back to round #3, previous practice-round results will not be available.

In resetting LINKS back to round #3 after the conclusion of the practice rounds, everything reverts back to where it was after round #3. This is not a reinitialization of LINKS, with new randomness introduced into the round #2 and round #3 results. The same underlying scenario file is still in effect.

It is just a reversion back in time to where things were at the end of round #3. After such a reversion, all decision inputs and financial results will be as they were when students first assumed managerial control of their LINKS firms after round #3.

There are some disadvantages and associated issues with practice rounds in LINKS events.



·First, practice rounds encourage students to think of LINKS as a game rather than treating it as a real management challenge. In my experience, it’s always wise to encourage students to treat LINKS as a real business at all times.

·Second, the presence of practice rounds may encourage some students to ask for “do-overs” if something unfortunate/bad/unexpected happens in a LINKS event. This is decidedly not real life, since real life doesn’t permit “do-overs.”

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# Did You Know?



There is a link on the Home Page of the LINKS Website for the **World Clock and Times**. If you have ever needed to know what time it was in a distant place (or even a close one) you can find it on this link. Search either by continent, or the standard list (which may take some time to load because of its size). If you need to plan a meeting between people on different continents or just to make a call far away, there is a link named Meeting Planner which may be helpful. Select the cities you are interested in, and the day you want to hold the meeting to have the planner display corresponding times for all those cities for that day. Millions have used the World Clock which will be 14 years old in November. However measuring time, in hours, months and years has been around for many thousands of years

**Explore the LINKS website  
and remember...  
*Without time,  
everything would happen at once.***

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## Pros and Cons of Practice Rounds

Continued from page 4

Third, instructor-optional switches may be used to “ease” students into LINKS. For example, product development (service design in the LINKS services variants) may be disabled for a round or two at the beginning of a LINKS event. This encourages students to gather some relevant customer preference research before engaging in costly and disruptive product/service reconfigurations.

Randy Chapman never uses practice rounds when he teaches the course for the reasons cited above. He does routinely use instructor-optional switches to limit the LINKS decision space initially and then add deactivated decision areas over the first few rounds in a LINKS event.

Each practice round counts toward the total number of rounds in a LINKS event. For example, standard LINKS pricing includes nine rounds for the LINKS Marketing Strategy Simulation and for the LINKS Supply Chain Management Simulation. An event with two practice rounds leaves seven additional rounds in the actual event for the standard LINKS price. Of course, additional rounds in a LINKS event may be included in the original LINKS purchase price that LINKS students pay for LINKS participation. But, this has to be planned ahead so that the correct price is paid by LINKS students.



## 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 Randy Chapman ([Chapman@LINKS-simulations.com](mailto:Chapman@LINKS-simulations.com)), the LINKS author, to obtain the relevant access parameters (username and passcode).



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

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