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## LINKS Global SCM Competition

**L**INKS-simulations.com is pleased to announce an exciting new initiative...the LINKS Global SCM Competition. The initial competition is scheduled for October-November 2010. The LINKS Supply Chain Management Simulation will be used in the LINKS Global SCM Competition.

Highlights of the LINKS Global SCM Competition:

- ◆ Cross-Institution 6- and 8-Round Supply Chain Management Simulation Competitions
- ◆ Your Student Teams Compete Against Student Teams From Other Institutions
- ◆ Challenges Students in an Intense Team-Based Cross-Institution Competition
- ◆ For Students in Academic Degree-Granting Programs Worldwide
- ◆ Undergraduates Compete Against Undergraduates; MBAs Compete Against MBAs
- ◆ Targeted at Upper-Level Undergraduates and Advanced (2<sup>nd</sup>-Year) MBAs



Separate LINKS Global SCM Competitions are offered in 6-round and 8-round formats to accommodate wide-ranging institutional class schedules, varying instructor timing preferences, and instructor preferences for the intensity of a within-course team-based supply chain management simulation experience.

Further details about the October-November 2010 LINKS Global SCM Competition (scheduling, student eligibility, costs, and registration procedure) are accessible via the LINKS Global Competition link on the LINKS website.

Participating in the LINKS Global SCM Competition is an alternative instructional/learning opportunity to the traditional usage of LINKS within a single instructor's course (i.e., an event with students from a single course conducted according to the course instructor's preferred scheduling).



## LINKS Payments Processing

**A**fter students pay for LINKS participation via “Pay For LINKS” on the LINKS website, there’s a lot of back-office work involved in processing payments. This is all highly-automated within our LINKS software system, so processing only involves a few minutes of actual human operator-interaction for each batch of payments.

When LINKS payments accrue, we begin LINKS payments processing by requesting a new payments report from PayPal. When we receive e-mail notification of this report from PayPal, we download the new payments spreadsheet. Our software sorts the payments in this spreadsheet by professor and then uploads the updated payment files to the LINKS web-server. These updated payment files are referenced when students or instructors check payments on their respective web pages in the LINKS Simulations Database.

Students who have paid for LINKS using an e-mail address other their official LINKS e-mail address (as provided to us by the LINKS instructor) must go to the LINKS website and click on “Payment Questions?” to update their payment information so that we can correctly correlate a LINKS payment with the correct e-mail address. When a student does this, an e-mail notification is sent to us. These updates are then processed after new PayPal payments have been processed.

LINKS instructors can access the payments spreadsheet for a LINKS industry in their “firm-0” webpage by clicking on “Display Student Payments To-Date”. This Excel spreadsheet will show every paid student. Students who opt to pay via the PayPal echeck process will not have their payment appear right away as it takes several days for this type of payment to clear. Instructors may notice that a student payment has two e-mail addresses listed--meaning that the student did not pay using their official LINKS e-mail address and updated their payment information via the “Payment Questions?” on the LINKS website.

We’ve always used PayPal as our payment processor because PayPal uses the latest anti-fraud technology, allows us to accept a variety of payment types (credit cards and echeck) and allows us to send bulk invoices to customers, allows customers to pay us without sharing their financial information with us, enables global ecommerce, and is a trusted name world-wide. PayPal has proven to be a reliable partner in our LINKS billing process. This smooth billing process has allowed our customers to spend minimal time paying for LINKS, and more time on the fun stuff...playing LINKS!



## LINKS in Africa



*Ike Ehie (Kansas State University) recently returned from a sabbatical in Nigeria where he used LINKS for a supply chain management course.*

First of all, I wanted to extend my appreciation to Dr. Randy Chapman for allowing me to use the LINK SCM simulation at the American University of Nigeria in Yola, at Adamawa State, Nigeria at no cost to the students. That was really a big help in incorporating the LINKS simulation in the first-ever supply chain management course taught at the university.

### *What is your experience in teaching and your continued link to Nigeria?*

I am from Nigeria and came to the United States more than 30 years ago as a student. I am concurrently the principal investigator of a USAID grant that was awarded to Kansas State University to assist the University of Lagos in Nigeria to strengthen their business curriculum both at the undergraduate and MBA programs. As a result of this grant, I make frequent visits to Nigeria. This has given me the opportunity to understand the educational system in Nigeria, especially with the tertiary institutions. I was invited by the dean of the school of business and entrepreneurship at the American University of Nigeria in Yola to come and teach courses in project management and supply chain management and I honoured his invitation. With my interest in supply chain management and my desire to teach such a course in a Nigerian university, I decided to do my sabbatical at the American University of Nigeria in Yola which occurred in spring of 2010.

### *What course were you teaching?*

I taught two courses, one in project management and the other in the supply chain course management to mostly management students who were in their final year at the university. These students had the requisite academic background for the course since they have all taken both the introductory operations management course and the decision analysis course.

### *What made you decide to use LINKS as part of this course?*

For the three or four years that I taught the supply chain management course at Kansas State University, I used the LINKS Supply Chain Management Simulation and it worked very well. I



American University of  
Nigeria Arts Building

was quite impressed with the product. With LINKS you can look at various performance metrics—financial, operational and customer-oriented metrics. Besides understanding the intricacies of supply chain management, the effect of various SCM decisions on the numerous performance matrices was a big factor in choosing the LINKS Supply Chain Management Simulation. With LINKS, you have a whole list of metrics that you can use to evaluate the impact of your decisions. It gives you a good picture of supply chain with an understanding of how to manage a supply chain

from the raw material, to manufacturing, to distribution, and to retailing. It provides students with good metrics to evaluate the performance of the supply chain—looking at financial, operational, and customer perspectives.

### ***How did LINKS fit into the course?***

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The students ran the simulation for nine consecutive weeks (months of operations). The simulation accounted for one-third of the final grade and was integrated in the course from beginning to the end. Students were able to learn the various decisions in affecting a company's supply chain and immediately apply the decisions in the simulation.

### ***Did the students enjoy LINKS?***

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The students really appreciated the opportunity to use the LINKS simulation in the course. This was probably the only simulation they were exposed to. The fact that they could link their decisions with their performance in the simulation raised their understanding and confidence in the supply chain topic. These were graduating students that were getting ready to get into the real world, and some of the issues that we were discussing were things that they knew they would be getting into when they got into the business world.

One of the students in the class was going to study in Sweden for his master's program in telecommunication, but after he went through the course, he has now changed his mind to study supply chain management and had applied for admission in Kansas State University for the spring 2010 semester.

### ***Were there any technology problems you had with the students in this program?***

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I knew that LINKS was a web-based simulation, and the university has a reliable internet connectivity. It was been reported that the university is the most-wired campus in all of Africa. The university provides every incoming freshman with a laptop computer. The university has 24/7 wireless



access to the internet for the laptops and in the labs, so it was easy for me to use LINKS and internet access was no problem whatsoever.

The students actually outperformed the company that they competed against which Randy created. At the beginning, the students did not perform very well, but as they learned the material and were able to make better decisions, they actually outperformed their competitor, which was very good. They improved on their forecasting and applied different methodologies looking at the short-term as well as the long-term results. Based on the material covered in class, they were able to apply the knowledge gained to improve their performance.

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***Did you have a CEO and did the students work themselves into a structure in their team?***

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Yes, the student I mentioned that has applied to come to Kansas State University in spring of 2010 emerged as the leader (CEO) of the group. The student was able to organize the group and led discussions about the decisions being made and held the group together. In the final presentations for which the dean was present, we were all very impressed with the performance of the students.



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***Was there much involvement with the rest of the faculty?***

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There were no other faculty members involved in the course. The university lost their key factor member in the area and they in the process of recruiting a replacement.

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***Do you have any advice for anyone who is teaching in a remote location?***

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First of all, they have to have a reliable internet access. This is key. The other advice I would give is to teach this to either graduating seniors or MBA students who have some business courses in operations management and decision analysis.

The dean mentioned that this is the first supply chain course that he is aware of being taught anywhere in Nigeria. It was nice to have the experience to teach this course in Nigeria and I would like to see more coverage of supply chain management in the business curriculum in other Nigerian universities.



# New @ LINKS

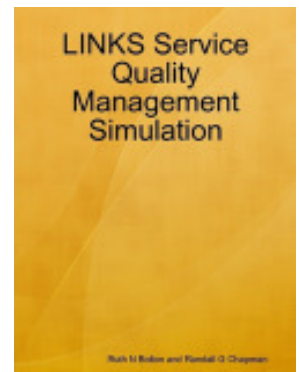


## LINKS Service Quality Management Simulation

**W**hen you don't have time in your services, operations management, and marketing courses for a "larger" simulation but you'd still like to include a "smaller" team-based, competitive simulation experience in your undergraduate, MBA, and EMBA courses, we invite your consideration of our new LINKS Service Quality Management Simulation.

About the LINKS Service Quality Management Simulation:

- ◆ Challenges students to effectively integrate business processes to profitably manage service quality
- ◆ LINKS firms manage service operations (human resource management and service capacity management) and marketing interrelationships
- ◆ Traditional financial statements and operating reports provide an information-rich environment for analysis and decision making
- ◆ Performance assessment is via a balanced-scorecard of financial and operating metrics, with performance judged relative to within-industry competitors
- ◆ Four 1.5-hour rounds, equivalent to several "Harvard"-style cases in outside-of-class student preparation time
- ◆ Value-priced @ \$20/student



Like all LINKS simulations, the LINKS Service Quality Management Simulation is:

- ◆ Competitively dynamic (LINKS supports industries with between 2 and 8 firms; simultaneous, parallel LINKS industries accommodate larger class sizes)
- ◆ Web-based (no software to download/install)
- ◆ Fully-administered by LINKS-simulations.com (instructors teach; we run LINKS for you according to your schedule).

A 20-minute telephone briefing with Randy Chapman, the LINKS author, is a convenient way to learn more about the LINKS Service Quality Management Simulation. If you have an active internet connection, we can provide a guided tour of the LINKS website and the resources available to support students and instructors throughout LINKS events.

Details about the LINKS Service Quality Management Simulation are accessible on the LINKS website: <http://www.LINKS-simulations.com> The 56-page participant's manual can be accessed via the LINKS website.



# LINKS Train-The-Trainer Seminar

August 17-19, 2010

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 seminar 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]



## New LINKS White Paper

A new LINKS white paper has joined the evolving “White Papers” collection on the LINKS website and the “LINKS Papers” collection in the Instructor Resources section of the LINKS website: “Planning and Executing Effective Presidential Review Meetings”

The full set of LINKS white papers includes:

1. “Best-Practice Teaching With Business Simulations”
2. “Extreme Customization With LINKS Simulations”
3. “Practice Rounds in LINKS Events”
4. “Adding Ethical Dilemmas To LINKS Events”
5. “Individual Performance Assessment in Business Simulations”
6. “Designing Effective LINKS-Based Courses: Required, Recommended, and Optional Elements
7. “Advice To My LINKS Successor”
8. “Coaching Throughout the Business Simulation Lifecycle”
9. “Planning and Executing Effective Presidential Review Meetings”

The “LINKS Papers” collection includes articles, presentations, and white papers about the LINKS simulations.

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## LINKS Instructor’s Manual -- Chapter 4: Course Flow

There are five absolute minimum essentials for teaching with LINKS:

1. LINKS students must pre-read the LINKS participant’s manual before LINKS begins.
2. The LINKS instructor forms LINKS teams.
3. An in-class introduction of LINKS led by the LINKS instructor should take 30-45 minutes of classroom time.
4. The LINKS instructor creates and publishes a LINKS game run schedule which is followed throughout the LINKS event.
5. A final in-class debriefing concludes a LINKS event. Typically in one of two forms:
  - An instructor-led debriefing (30-45 minutes of classroom time).
  - Final formal team-based presentations (75-90 minutes of classroom time).LINKS instructors might follow-up such presentations with concluding remarks.

Chapter 4 outlines a variety of “recommended” and “optional” LINKS-related activities, exercises, and student reports that might be included with a complete LINKS exercise. While no single course will ever use all of these, the full inventory of possibilities is documented in the LINKS Instructor’s Manual to provide LINKS instructors with a convenient, single-source menu table from which to choose, organized in time-sequence format. It’s good for you to know!

# Reminders

**LINKS Passcode Retrieval:** 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 recorded in the LINKS Simulation Database.

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

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 a LINKS 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.

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

**E-Mail Address Management:** Using their LINKS firm’s passcode, LINKS students may change their official LINKS e-mail address 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.

**LINKS Instructor Resources:** Instructors access 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 username and passcode.



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



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