Why do I teach using a service simulation? My primary reason is that teaching with a simulation is fun – both for students and the instructor. Marketing thought leaders currently stress that firms and customers co-create value. We might say the same about business schools and students; students must actively participate in the learning experience to derive value from the courses we teach. In my experience, nothing matches a simulation for keeping students engaged in actively applying course concepts. A simulation is also a natural fit with how students live their lives. Due to their ready adoption of all things electronic, students are very comfortable operating in the dynamic environment of a simulation – and they enjoy working in teams and competing against their peers.

I organize my course around a simple and powerful principle: “All organizations should strive for effective service so that relationships are created and strengthened, leading to the creation of value for customers and shareholders.” However, it is a principle that can be difficult to understand...
and apply in practice. For example, students tend to start out believing that “more service quality is always better.” Through the simulation, students learn that service quality means different things to different customers – and market segments will differ in their willingness to pay for service.

The competitive nature of a simulation also drives home the challenges of managing demand and supply. We teach students that services are produced and consumed simultaneously and that they are perishable. However, the implications become evident to students in the simulation when demand fluctuates over time — and they face challenges in meeting demand and maintaining service quality. They come to realize that both supply and demand for a service depend upon how their firm designs and delivers its service – that is, the technology, operations and human resource decisions that their team has made. At the end of the course, students often say that they have never worked harder – or had more fun!

I can hear you asking: “Is it really fun for the instructor?” My answer is “yes” because students learn when they confront business challenges in the simulation environment – especially when they face the consequences of their decisions, as well as competition from their peers. This feature allows the instructor to take on a new role: coach. Instead of lectures and videos, the instructor can meet with teams in small groups and facilitate the learning process – responding and shaping the conversation about how to apply course concepts.

My last reason why a service simulation is so effective – and fun – is that it reflects the modern business landscape. Service has emerged as a key driver of competitive advantage for companies in all industry sectors and across the globe. Superior service quality provides a competitive advantage for leading companies in traditional services businesses, such as Charles Schwab (financial services), Marriott Hotels (hospitality services), Starbucks (quick service restaurant), and FedEx (logistics services). However, it is equally important in industries such as computing (Oracle), telecommunications and information services (Verizon), repair and maintenance services for engineering, medical and/or other equipment (GE), and services that support financial, health or energy management systems. For this reason, it is easy for students to see the relevance of the principles they are learning – and relate them to their own experiences as a consumer of service and a future manager.
The LINKS Service Quality Management Simulation was a core part of a 3-day, 24-hour Services Marketing seminar for executive MBAs at Euromed Management, a business school in Marseille, France. With eight hours of class per day over three consecutive days, we organized the LINKS decision runs to take place on the first day at 6 p.m., the second and third decisions on the second day at 1 p.m. and 6 p.m., and the last decision on the third day at 1 p.m. Students ended with team presentations describing their strategy, what worked and what didn’t, and best and worst management decisions.

This particular simulation was a great fit for the course intensity and length since it requires decision-making and analysis of the interrelationships between multiple factors that affect performance, and it incorporates the external complexity of changing market demand and competitor actions. The students were completely engrossed in the simulation from the start. The contiguous nature of the course over three days kept the students undistracted and mentally engaged in the game. At the end, all of the students longed for another round so they could continue to see how their strategy would play out.

Zannie Voss (Chair and Professor of Arts Administration in the Meadows School of the Arts and the Cox School of Business, Southern Methodist University) is a new LINKS Simulations user.
LINKS Train-The-Trainer Seminar
May 29-31, 2012
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 seminar for the LINKS simulations. Randy Chapman, the LINKS author, leads this distance-learning event 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:

# Follow The Roadmap:
## A Guide for Prospective New LINKS Instructors

| Familiarization | “How do I learn about the LINKS Simulations in a few minutes?” | Access the LINKS website [http://www.LINKS_simulations.com](http://www.LINKS_simulations.com) and look around.  
• Click on things that look interesting.  
• View the student and instructor introductory videos. |
|-----------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
A LINKS Briefing is a convenient way to have a personally guided tour of the LINKS website and its resources to support instructors and their students. |
| Exploration     | “So, why should I use LINKS?” | Rich Content  
Customizable  
High-Touch Instructor Support  
We Manage LINKS For You  
Web-Based:  
• Convenient 24x7 Access  
• No Software To Download/Install  
• Extensive Web Support Resources (IM, PPTs, Syllabi, FAQs, Tutorials, Multiple-Choice Test Questions) |
| Trial           | “How can I try out a LINKS simulation?” | Access the LINKS demo for your preferred LINKS simulation variant and explore.  
- - - and/or - - -  
Offered multiple times yearly, LINKS distance-learning TTT seminars include five one-hour teleconferences and a four-round simulation event. |
| Usage           | “What support do you provide for a new user?” | On-going telephone and e-mail support to new LINKS instructors is provided by Randy Chapman, the LINKS author, Chapman@LINKS-simulations.com.  
Extensive instructor support resources are available via the Instructor Resources link on the LINKS website. Sample course syllabi, PPTs, and instructor FAQs provide comprehensive self-service support.  
Extensive customization options exist to support LINKS simulations applications in introductory and advanced/elective courses. For example:  
• Initial deactivations of some decisions to ease students into the simulation.  
• Mid-event enrichments (e.g., more brands and regions).  
• Course-specific customization (e.g., immediate-access research studies, recycling/recovery decisions, and product technology extensions). |
Where In The World Is LINKS Simulations?

LINKS Simulations exhibits at 10-12 conferences annually to reach out to prospective LINKS instructors and to interact with existing LINKS users.

We’ll be exhibiting at these conferences in the near future:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Conference</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>May 17-19</td>
<td>Academy of Marketing Science @ New Orleans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 7-9</td>
<td>INFORMS Marketing Science @ Boston</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 14-16</td>
<td>Frontiers of Service @ University of Maryland</td>
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If you’re attending any of these conferences, please do stop by our exhibit to chat.

LINKS Stats: Size of LINKS Industries

LINKS industries consist of two to eight competing firms. Larger class sizes are conveniently accommodated with multiple (independent) industries. But, what’s the “right” size (number of firms) of a LINKS industry? There’s no simple answer … but five to seven firms are typical, accounting for about 64% of all LINKS industries in the Spring 2012 LINKS season.
**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 (LINKS@LINKS-simulations.com), the LINKS author, to obtain the username and passcode.