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LINKS Global Services Competition Results 2013

14 teams with a total of 51 participants competed in the March-April 2013 LINKS Global Services Competition with the LINKS Services Marketing Simulation. The 14 teams were grouped into two LINKS competition industries.

Co-winners ('Gold Medalists') of this LINKS Global Services Competition were:

- Industry **SE1**: firms **1** and **5** (from the *University of Puerto Rico - Rio Piedras* and *Concordia College*)
- Industry **SE2**: firms **4** and **6** (from *Concordia College* and the *University of Tulsa*)



These firms are listed in numerical firm-number order, not ranking order, so these firms should be viewed as equal and unranked 'co-winners' in their respective LINKS Global Services Competition industries.

Performance evaluation was based on the multi-factor balanced scorecard performance evaluation system described in the LINKS participant's manual.

Congratulations to all!





Which Day and What Time?

LINKS Simulations staff routinely execute instructors' scheduled game runs at 900am, 100pm, 500pm, and 900pm U.S. Eastern Time every day of the week. How do LINKS instructors select game run days and times for their LINKS events?

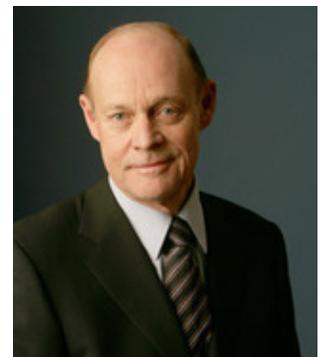
In this Professor's Column, experienced LINKS instructors comment on their game run day and time selection rationale/considerations.

Thursdays @ 900am U.S. Eastern Time

Marketing Management 4020 is case oriented and designed to hone students' critical thinking skills. This undergraduate required class is scheduled from 1225pm-145pm on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Forty to fifty students enroll each semester and are divided into two LINKS industries. The ideal management team size for each firm is five students, but teams of three and four have been effective. Written case analyses, discussions, focused lectures, readings, and the LINKS Marketing Principles Simulation are the primary educational tools.

Students write a two page case analysis, excluding exhibits, as a "ticket" to participate in the Tuesday case discussions. Text chapters, as well as articles, are the basis for discussion on Thursdays. For example, if the focus of the Tuesday case is pricing, the Thursday readings would provide students with the opportunity to explore pricing in-depth. Following the discussion, a Ph.D. student reviews the results of the most recent LINKS run with the class and identifies firms that may need special coaching. The last 30-40 minutes of the Thursday class are used by LINKS teams to begin the analysis of the most recent results and to ask questions. Having a Ph.D. student involved with both analysis and coaching provides a quality educational experience for the students because two people have more time to interact with each of the teams.

Since the written analyses are due on Tuesdays, the students have voted to have the simulation inputs due at 1059pm. on Wednesdays. LINKS is run at 900am U.S. Eastern Time on Thursdays. Because the David Eccles School of Business is located in Salt Lake City and is on U.S. Mountain Time, LINKS results are generally available at 700am on Thursday morning, which provides 2-3 hours to analyze the LINKS results before the class meets.



Gary Grikscheit
University of Utah



Jessica Rixom
University of Utah

In conclusion, written case analyses are due at the beginning of class on Tuesday, LINKS inputs are due Wednesday evenings at 1059pm., LINKS results are analyzed before class on Thursdays, and graded papers are returned at the end of class on Thursday.

Wednesdays @ 100pm U.S. Eastern Time

My part-time MBA class of 38 meets on Tuesday nights. We use the LINKS Marketing Principles Simulation as a key component of this marketing management core course. Due to the large class size, I have two industries comprised mostly of teams of three.

On “decision nights,” I give students about an hour of class time to finalize their decisions for the quarter. (Of course, they have spent a great deal more time working on their analyses before class). In addition to inputting decisions on the LINKS website, each team must turn in hard copies of their decisions to me before they leave for the evening.

Since the class meets on Tuesday evening, I have the LINKS runs scheduled for Wednesday at 100pm. I have found this timing works best for these reasons:

1. I can scan the decisions on Tuesday night and Wednesday morning to make sure there are no glaring input errors. When I find something that looks like a typo or too outside the range of normal inputs, I contact someone on the team on Wednesday morning to give them a chance to correct the error.
2. Since the decision was just revisited and discussed in class on Tuesday evening, it should be fresh in everyone’s minds. When team members receive the output on Wednesday afternoon, they can more easily link results with decisions, a key factor in learning how to make better decisions.
3. Having the results available so quickly after the Tuesday evening class also seems to increase student excitement.
4. Finally, having the game run the day after class means that students have the maximum amount of time available to analyze the results and research reports, to contact me to discuss strategies or ask questions, and to prepare their next decisions.

I’ve been using LINKS (and BRANDS before LINKS was available) for about 17 years now, and I have experimented with different timing options. This one seems to work the best for this particular class.



Robert Mackoy
Butler University

Mondays and Wednesdays @ 500pm U.S. Eastern Time

I employed the LINKS Supply Chain Management simulation in the Logistics Decision Making class at Ohio State during Spring 2013. This course is a seven-week (half semester) course offered to our MBA and Master of Business Logistics Engineering (MBLE) students.

The class met twice each week (Monday/Wednesdays). A single class session was dedicated to the game introduction. Soon thereafter each team submitted a short strategy statement. The class played seven rounds.

Decision rounds were due at 500pm on successive Mondays and Wednesdays. I found it helpful to meet with the students on the day in which decisions were due. This provided me an opportunity to remind students of the decision round and to address any clarification questions. The class met in the late morning, and I believe it became common practice for teams to key in decisions following the class, as they found that to be a convenient time to gather as a team and complete the exercise.



Tom Goldsby
Ohio State
University

Thursdays @ 900pm U.S. Eastern Time

Fundamentals of Supply Chain Management at the Wisconsin School of Business is an undergraduate course for juniors and seniors. I use the mid-level LINKS Supply Chain Management Simulation, and Randy has worked with me to create options within this version that have made it challenging and manageable for my students.

Enrollment in my course is between 40-50 students, and I run two industries with 5 teams of 4-5 students. My course meets on Tuesdays and Thursdays, and I schedule the game runs each week on Thursdays at 900pm.

The evening time slot works well, because it provides students with more flexibility to meet and strategize prior to input submissions. Also, providing a week between each submission, at least for the initial 2-3 game runs, has been an effective approach when possible. The LINKS simulations initially can be quite overwhelming, and the weekly schedule is much appreciated by the students because they have more time to develop, analyze, and execute strategy.



Verda Blythe
University of
Wisconsin - Madison

OSU SCM Competition: 24 More Hours In Columbus

The Logistics Association at Ohio State University held its Second Annual Fisher Simulation Competition on April 5-6.

- Six undergraduate and five graduate teams competed in this five-round simulation competition with the LINKS Supply Chain Management Fundamentals Simulation. Undergraduate and graduate students participated in separate LINKS industries.
- One LINKS decision round was scheduled for Friday evening and four decision rounds were scheduled throughout Saturday.

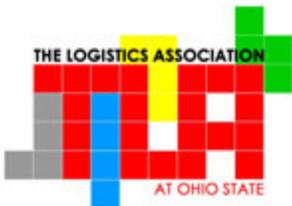
The many LINKS website accesses during the overnight hours on Saturday morning attest to the 53 students' interest and engagement in this simulation competition.

Good “fun” was had by all, and hopefully the “ups” were more frequent and memorable than the “downs.”

John Saldanha, Assistant Professor of Logistics and advisor to The Logistics Association at Ohio State University, was the head “coach” for the teams during the simulation competition.



John Saldanha
Ohio State University



Overall winners were: Siyun Wang, Bill Chen, Eric Cheng, Kevin Gao, and Yue Qian.

Terry Harrison's Spring 2013 LINKS Triathlon



It's been another "interesting" Spring for Terry Harrison (Pennsylvania State University), long-time LINKS user and member of the LINKS Hall-of-Fame. Terry simultaneously taught with three different LINKS simulations ... from the enterprise management, services, and supply chain management branches of the LINKS Simulations portfolio:

1. His regular EMBA class with the LINKS Supply Chain Management Fundamentals Simulation.
2. Co-teaching a Master of Supply Chain Management class with the LINKS Enterprise Management Simulation.
3. As an instructional team member in IBM's internal services sciences course that includes the LINKS Services Operations Management Simulation.



Another notable and noteworthy LINKS triathlon ... and, the second successive year for Terry's (now regular?) Spring LINKS Triathlon!

Help, Please (Keep the Feedback Flowing)

Please do continue to pass along your feedback about ways in which the LINKS experience (for you and for your students) can be improved!

Please e-mail your feedback to Randy Chapman, LINKS author (Chapman@LINKS-simulations.com).

Decision Variables Checks and Messages

With the lengthy reports in LINKS, instructors are challenged to identify noteworthy issues for attention and follow-up after LINKS game runs.

To assist instructors and to increase the visibility of “unusual” developments and questionable student inputs, “Decision Variable Checks and Messages” e-mail is sent to LINKS instructors immediately after game runs to provide top-line reporting of noteworthy but potentially low-visibility circumstances in just-completed LINKS game runs. No new information is reported that is not already in the instructor and firm reports, but this instructor e-mail increases the visibility of these developments.

A sample “Decision Variables Checks and Messages” e-mail is shown below.

```
Decision Variables Checks and Messages for Quarter 10 are included near the end of the financial reports of each LINKS firm in industry SAM. To provide convenient instructor access and to ensure the visibility of these Decision Variables Checks and Messages, this instructor e-mail message reports the Decision Variable Checks and Messages for each firm in industry SAM in Quarter 10.
```

```
Status of Decision Variables Checks and Messages For Industry SAM Quarter 10:
```

```
Firm SAM1: No decision variable checks and messages to report.
```

```
Firm SAM2: Decision variable checks and messages reported in the attachment SAM2.txt
```

```
Firm SAM3: Decision variable checks and messages reported in the attachment SAM3.txt
```

```
Firm SAM4: Decision variable checks and messages reported in the attachment SAM4.txt
```

```
Firm SAM5: No decision variable checks and messages to report.
```

```
Firm SAM6: No decision variable checks and messages to report.
```

```
Firm SAM7: No decision variable checks and messages to report.
```

```
Firm SAM8: Decision variable checks and messages reported in the attachment SAM8.txt
```

```
DISTRIBUTION DECISION VARIABLE CHECKS [Firm SAM2]
```

```
DC2 closed; DC2 inventory has been disposed (@ 80.0% of current book value).
```

```
DC2 inventory disposal costs = 11,400 (recorded as Consulting Fees).
```

```
SERVICE DECISION VARIABLE CHECKS [Firm SAM3]
```

```
Service outsourcing now exists in region 1 so 34 CSRs are fired in region 1.
```

```
FORECASTING DECISION VARIABLE CHECKS [Firm SAM3]
```

```
4 forecasts are unchanged. Forecasts are normally changed every quarter.
```

```
FORECASTING DECISION VARIABLE CHECKS [Firm SAM4]
```

```
4 forecasts are unchanged. Forecasts are normally changed every quarter.
```

```
RESEARCH STUDIES DECISION VARIABLE CHECKS [Firm SAM8]
```

```
No research studies have been ordered.
```

```
Research studies are normally ordered every quarter.
```

Based on this sample “Decision Variable Checks and Messages” e-mail, instructor follow-up would be appropriate with firms SAM3 and SAM4 regarding their unchanged forecasts. Forecasts are normally changed in every LINKS round, reflecting most-recent sales history, competitor actions, and a firm’s forthcoming business/operating plan. And, for firm SAM8, a watchful and inquisitive LINKS instructor might converse with this firm about the value of research studies and the implausibility/inappropriateness of ordering no research studies.

Frequent messages included in these “Decision Variable Checks and Messages” are “forecasts are unchanged” and “no research studies have been ordered.”

Updated FAQ: Failure Rates Are Higher Than Expected

***“Why are our failure rates so high (e.g., more than 20% in the current round)?
The failure rates seem much higher than the base rates described in the
LINKS participant’s manual.”***

“Failure Rate” is defined as total replacement parts demand in the current round divided by current sales volume. Thus, a high Failure Rate can be due to high replacement-parts demand or low sales volume.

Replacement-parts demand is principally based on failure rates of sub-assemblies provided by suppliers. Note that a strategy of using low-priced suppliers might reduce procurement costs but lead to higher replacement-parts demand (and higher associated replacement-parts costs).



Changes in sales volume affect Failure Rate. For example, a LINKS Supply Chain Management Fundamentals Simulation firm’s sales volume changed from 72,287 to 41,844 units from round #6 to round #7 (apparently due to a set of price increases), resulting in a substantial increase in Failure Rate. But, total replacement-parts demand decreased from 5,436 to 5,006 units from round #6 to round #7. So, the round #7 Failure Rate of 12.0% (compared to the round #6 Failure Rate of 7.5%) was due to the dramatic sales volume drop, not to an increase in replacement-parts demand.

Your firm is responsible for providing free replacement parts for sub-assembly component failures within your warranty period as per the original configuration of products when they are sold. Thus, with a warranty=3, sub-assembly component failures from sales for the current round and the previous three rounds are reflected in your current-round replacement parts demand. This warranty-period effect leads to much higher levels of sub-assembly component failures than indicated by the base rates described in the LINKS participant’s manual. In addition, natural random variation can occasionally yield particularly high failure rates in sub-assembly components.

Googling LINKS

If you Google the phrase “LINKS simulation” (without the quotes), more than 55,000,000 hits are listed. The phrase “LINKS simulations” yields more than 14,000,000 hits. *What is the first link that appears (in both cases)?*



LINKS Train-The-Trainer Seminars

June 3-7 and August 12-16, 2013

LINKS Simulations Immersion Experience

Five Teleconferences and Four-Round LINKS Simulation Events

Registration is available for the next five-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. These intensive-mode seminar formats includes 2-3 hours of work per day during each of the five days of the distance-learning seminars.

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 this LINKS Train-The-Trainer seminar may be accessed via this URL:

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

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), the LINKS author, to obtain the username and passcode.



The LINKS Newsletter is a bi-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.



Editor: Cyndy Winkler

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