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LINKS Marketing Research Simulation

Add a team-based, competitive simulation experience to your marketing research courses with our newest LINKS simulation:

LINKS Marketing Research Simulation

What?	<i>A small (two-week), hands-on, engaging, team-based course “project</i>
Why?	<i>To enhance and encourage fact-based analysis and marketing decision making</i>
How?	<i>“Emphasizes marketing analysis and interpreting marketing research data</i>
Where?	<i>Typically scheduled in the latter part of a marketing research course</i>

About the LINKS Marketing Research Simulation:

- In each simulation round, students analyze and manage their firm’s performance in the simulation’s competitive marketplace, interpret marketing research results, and (in light of their firm’s financial performance and competitive market position) order new marketing research studies.
- Students are challenged to use the simulation’s rich marketing research resources to improve the performance of their simulation firm over the next four quarters (simulation rounds) of the competitive simulation exercise.
- The instructor frames the LINKS Marketing Research Simulation exercise as a new product development and management scenario: launch a new product



successfully (positioning and market entry strategies/tactics) in the presence of vigilant competitors while profitably managing existing products.

Like all LINKS simulations, the LINKS Marketing Research 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), and **fully-administered by LINKS Simulations** (instructors teach; we run LINKS for you according to your schedule).

Full details about the LINKS Marketing Research Simulation are accessible via the LINKS website.

Randy Chapman (Chapman@LINKS-simulations.com), the LINKS author, welcomes the opportunity to converse with LINKS instructors to provide assistance in selecting the most appropriate LINKS simulations variant for courses of all types, lengths, and levels.



Kris Smith,
LINKS Operations Manager

September 19 in New Orleans

LINKS Simulations teamed up with the MMA Foundation Legacy Fund to sponsor the “Third Annual Outstanding Teacher-Scholar Doctoral Student Competition.”

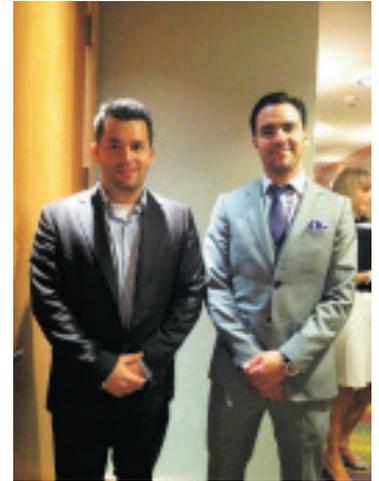
There were 17 applicants for this competition and three finalists were selected to give a mini-teaching presentation at the Fall MMA Conference in New Orleans. The three finalists were:

1. Hristina Dzhovlega (University of Pittsburgh)
2. Adam Mills (Simon Fraser University, Canada)
3. Phillip Rauschnabel (University of Bamberg, Germany)

Since Hristina was unable to attend, there were two final presentations.



Adam Mills spoke about his personal teaching strategies and mantras. He also gave examples of what he has done in past courses. For example, instead of assigning a business plan to his students, he gave student groups \$100 to start a business. This \$100 gave them some startup money while giving him 15% interest in each business. The students still had to do all the research and ground work, as they would have in a business plan. This project has had great success with 12 student groups generating \$4,285.20 with 50% profit margin. At the end of the course he would get his \$100 back, his 15% investment goes to a charity chosen by the class, and the students had a great integrative learning experience.



Philipp Rauschnabel gave a sample lecture from his Consumer Psychology class on the topic of anthropomorphism. The flow of the presentation was divided into three parts. The first part reviewed the concept and applications. The second part discussed an example case, the Opel Adam, which proved to be a great illustration for anthropomorphism. I don't think I'll ever look at cars the same way again! The third part provided questions, readings, and literature on anthropomorphism, along with an assignment that he would give students. The case assignment was to develop an anthropomorphic smart phone. The cell phone would need at least ten anthropomorphic features and they would have to explain their benefits. Students would also have to create a rough draft of their smart phone and of an ad showing how they would implement their ideas.

Both doctoral students gave energized presentations that were injected with humor and great visuals. The unique projects that they assigned their students showed great thought and ingenuity. Thus, the judges had great difficulty deciding on just one winner ... so they were judged to be co-winners. Congratulations to both students! LINKS Simulations is proud to sponsor and support doctoral students on their educational journey.

We can truly appreciate Adam and Phil's approaches to teaching because, at LINKS simulations, our mantra is: *"Learning is not a spectator sport."* — D. Blocher





Teaching With The Forecaster Simulation

Last spring, I taught the MBA Operations Management course using the LINKS Supply Chain Management Fundamentals Simulation. Overall the feedback from the student's perspective was excellent. However, a common theme frequently mentioned was that students struggled with forecasting and getting up to speed quickly. Determined to get students off to a better start, I turned to Randy for suggestions.

I had noticed the Forecaster Simulation link on the LINKS Simulations website while reading through the instructor resource materials, but was not clear as to how it might work. I needed a short exercise that could not only familiarize students with the simulation but could also direct their efforts more purposefully towards the business of understanding the importance of demand forecasting.

Because our semesters are condensed into 8-week sessions, class time is at a premium. Due to the shortened time frame, we were also faced with the challenge of building the operations management foundation in the first week or two. By combining the forecasting lecture with the Forecaster Simulation as an in-class exercise, I anticipated that I would be able to introduce forecasting as a topic as well as apply the concepts in principal before the first round of the simulation. Not only did it give the students an opportunity to ask more directed questions but it also exposed them to the simulation environment without having to allow extra time for a demo run.



Carol Cagle
Mercer University

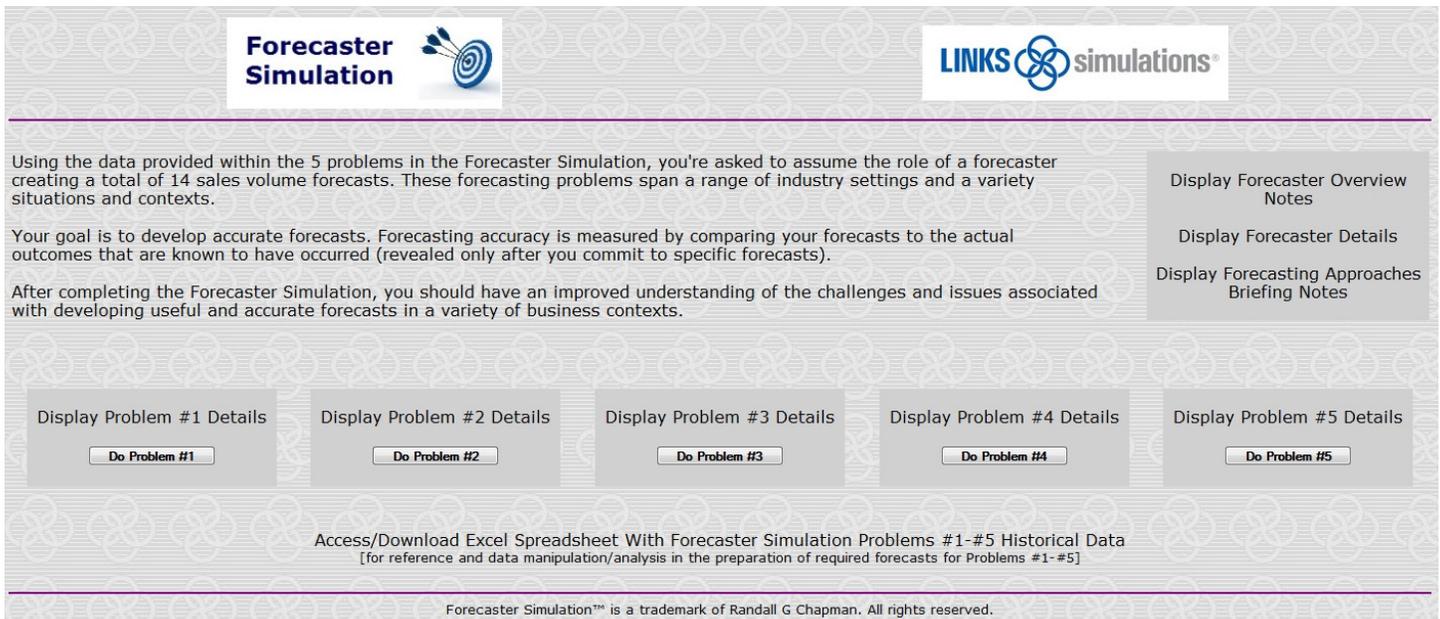
To begin, students were instructed to complete the Forecaster Simulation and provide a paragraph or two describing what they learned. What I had not anticipated was the unintended benefit that team collaboration would start sooner.

Of course, the final results and evaluations are several weeks away at this point, but my initial impression was that students appeared to be floundering less. They say that a picture is worth a thousand words. I would argue that an experience could be even more powerful. The students' comments speak volumes.

· “Our group realized how hard forecasting is and how many unpredictable events interfere with your expectations. We learned that we will need to study forecasting more and practice it more in order to do it well for our LINKS simulation.”

· “We went into this [Forecaster] simulation with the goal of learning more about the simulation process itself as well as how to improve on our forecasts as each simulation took place. We began initially with a naive approach and had some success by analyzing the data presented in terms of a trend (upward or downward). We graduated to using a linear approach and actually calculating some averages and applying them to our forecasts. We then tried some of the more complex models and learned more about what they are used for and how they relate to each situation.”

· “Going through this helped us realize that it is important to read all of the information given to us before we made our forecast. It is also important not to factor in outliers or irregular numbers into your averages when calculating later forecasts. We found that example #5 was difficult because there was a lot of information that was relevant and not relevant, so it was hard to weed out what we actually needed to use. Our highest accuracy rating was 99.1% and our lowest was 71.8%, and the lower score is because we didn’t read the question completely. All in all, it was a pretty good practice exercise.”



Forecaster Simulation

LINKS simulations

Using the data provided within the 5 problems in the Forecaster Simulation, you're asked to assume the role of a forecaster creating a total of 14 sales volume forecasts. These forecasting problems span a range of industry settings and a variety of situations and contexts.

Your goal is to develop accurate forecasts. Forecasting accuracy is measured by comparing your forecasts to the actual outcomes that are known to have occurred (revealed only after you commit to specific forecasts).

After completing the Forecaster Simulation, you should have an improved understanding of the challenges and issues associated with developing useful and accurate forecasts in a variety of business contexts.

Display Forecaster Overview Notes

Display Forecaster Details

Display Forecasting Approaches Briefing Notes

Display Problem #1 Details Display Problem #2 Details Display Problem #3 Details Display Problem #4 Details Display Problem #5 Details

Do Problem #1 Do Problem #2 Do Problem #3 Do Problem #4 Do Problem #5

Access/Download Excel Spreadsheet With Forecaster Simulation Problems #1-#5 Historical Data
[for reference and data manipulation/analysis in the preparation of required forecasts for Problems #1-#5]

Forecaster Simulation™ is a trademark of Randall G Chapman. All rights reserved.

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

LINKS Global Services Competition 2014

The 2014 LINKS Global Services Competition is scheduled for March-April 2014. Student teams participate in either of two separate services competitions ... either with the LINKS Services Marketing Simulation **or** with the LINKS Services Operations Management Simulation.

These mid-sized simulations are appropriate for students in **introductory or elective courses** in marketing, services, or operations management.

Highlights of the LINKS Global Services Competition:

- Cross-Institution 6-Round Services 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
- Targeted at Upper-Level Undergraduates and All MBAs



Two separate LINKS Global Services Competitions are offered, with the LINKS Services Marketing Simulation **and** with the LINKS Services Operations Management Simulation. These are integrative, team-based, competitive simulations suitable for upper-level undergraduates and all MBAs.

Further details about the March-April 2014 LINKS Global Services Competition (scheduling, student eligibility, costs, and registration procedure) are accessible via the **LINKS Global Competition** link on the LINKS Simulations website:

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

Participating in a LINKS Global Services 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).

Questions? Faculty members with questions about the LINKS Global Services Competition are invited to contact Randall G Chapman PhD, the LINKS author (Chapman@LINKS-simulations.com).



Managing LINKS Student Payments



To request students to pay for LINKS, I implement a series of four steps over two weeks. The process begins one week before the simulation is initialized. First, I request that my payment web-screen be setup by LINKS early so that my students can start paying before the simulation even begins. Second, I hand-out a series of pre-initialization memos, one of which is a "LINKS Payment Memo." This memo provides the students with detailed steps on how to pay for LINKS including how much the simulation will cost. I have also found it very helpful to include hyperlinks to both the payment screen and "Paid With Different E-Mail Address?" screen because many of my students have PayPal accounts that pull email addresses that are different than their school account. I warn them up front that this is an issue, and then I monitor payments through the LINKS Instructor Payment Screen to make sure that the e-mails I provided are matching up to the emails provided by LINKS. During this time, I also remind my class that we do not have a textbook and that the cost of LINKS is much less expensive than a textbook, "You're welcome!" I say, but I do express to them that I expect them to pay before the game is initialized.



Kyle Huggins
Belmont University

- Third, I send them an e-mail a day before initialization, again reminding them to pay as soon as possible, if they have not done so already.

- Finally, if some students still have not paid after initialization, I scold their teams during class in front of every other student for accountability's sake, and warn them according to LINKS Guidelines that their next quarter results will be suspended if they do NOT pay before the next game run.

Through the implementation of these four steps, rarely do I have a student that lags in payment.

"There is no such thing as a free lunch." — Milton Friedman and others.

I have been using various versions of the LINKS Supply Chain Management Simulation in undergraduate, MBA and Executive MBA programs at Bauer College University of Houston since 2010. My newest project is incorporating the Extended Edition of LINKS SCM into the Supply Chain Strategy course for graduating seniors. The quote (above) is part of my first day introduction to the course and highlights the experience that I have planned for the students. As soon to-be graduates, they will be faced with numerous decision making opportunities. Many will be somewhat routine but the rest will be challenging and, in many instances, difficult. Decision making involves trading-off one goal or option for another. Taking this thought one step further "to get one thing that we like we must give up something else that we like". Regarding the free lunch, I explain that one of the best ways to understand how to manage a business and understand the strategic foundation of supply



Gordon Smith
University of Houston

chain management is to “do it”. This course will allow them to have hands-on experience developing business strategy and supply chain execution plans. To have the opportunity to “do-it”, they must give up some “lunch money” and, in return, they will gain valuable experience and talking points for internship and job interviews. My success rate (KPI) regarding sign-up and payment before the due date is steadily improving ... yet to achieve 100% but improving. Lastly, keep in mind that I have one more influential tradeoff that I present to my students. LINKS participation is an integral part of the course ... between 25% and 30%. If any student hasn't paid for LINKS by the due date, a “0” for the LINKS portion of their grade is easy to award. Needless to say, my KPI reaches 100% soon after the last announcement.

Most instructors using LINKS face the problem of insuring that all students pay the LINKS fee. This is one of the more difficult things to accomplish in a course. There always seem to be a few students who for some reason or another do not pay on time or try to not pay at all. Perhaps it is because some students today try to get by without buying textbooks, hoping to do the same with LINKS. In addition to the LINKS payment email notification and follow up email reminders that LINKS Simulations sends and the payment hyperlinks at the LINKS Simulations website, the following are suggestions for improving timely student payments of the LINKS fee.

Prior to the first class meeting, I assign students to teams of three or four students per team. Because I am using LINKS in a sophomore-level Principles of Marketing course in which only 10% to 15% of the students are marketing majors, I use the detailed class list to make sure that each team has a balance of majors. In this way, each team has at least one accounting or finance major and one marketing major. Obviously there are drops and adds the first week of class, so the final LINKS team roster formulation often goes into the second or third week.

During the first two weeks of the semester, time in every class meeting is dedicated to forming and reforming teams and instructing students as to the basics of LINKS. In-class discussions incorporating both PowerPoint slides and in-class visits to the LINKS website provides students with information as to available material such as manuals, pro-forma analysis, etc., ways in which to pay (PayPal, credit card, etc.), and the importance of entering alternate email addresses that may have been used when making payments. After the majority of students have paid, I send email to delinquents only notifying them that they need to pay.



Paul Sauer
Canisius College

A significant part of the syllabus discusses LINKS and the importance of LINKS with respect to the course material. In particular, under *Required Textbooks* the course syllabus states: Failure to pay will result in a grade of 0 for the LINKS project, which is worth 475 of the 1000 points in the course.



“Adding Limited Reconfigurations To LINKS” Revisited

The LINKS Supply Chain Management Simulation has been a part of my Fundamentals of Supply Chain Management course for five years at the University of Wisconsin - Madison. Every year in evaluations, I'm told that the LINKS simulation is students' favorite part of the course. I also ask students for suggestions to improve the simulation experience, and what I've regularly heard is that they would like more levers with which to differentiate themselves in the marketplace, beyond price and operational efficiency/cost.

I didn't know if this would be possible because only the LINKS Supply Chain Management Simulation [Extended Edition] includes product development decisions. In my case, this version is too advanced and time intensive. I was looking for a hybrid and, after discussion with Randy, he was willing to make it happen. The solution we came up with was a minor tweak that delivered significant benefits to the student experience: allowing limited reconfiguration (product development) decisions for bandwidth and packaging only, with the other set-top box product attributes always remaining fixed at their original values for all firms.



Verda Blythe (University of Wisconsin - Madison) is a longtime LINKS user. This is an update/revisit of her Professor's Column in the January 2010 LINKS Newsletter.

And, in addition, I wanted to have no patent royalties and no reconfiguration costs. While these are critical considerations in any product development decision, I disabled these functions to limit complexity. I want students to focus primarily on the concept of how product strategy (i.e., functional vs. innovative products), drives operational decisions (suppliers, quality, distribution) and market decisions (pricing, demand patterns, service, market share).

A few benefits I observed from the fall semester:

1. When determining strategy, teams can design their products to fit that strategy. For example, are they positioning themselves as the Dell or Apple of the set-top box industry?
2. Allows students to apply concepts about functional vs. innovative products/industries, and the different supply chain design each requires.
3. Requires students to look in more depth at the markets to determine which product-quality “level” and corresponding pricing structure customers wanted.
4. Allows students to incorporate sustainability, and the value consumers are willing to pay for sustainability, in the packaging decision. (The students loved this.)

The enhancements did not require any significant changes in how I managed the simulation, but they enhanced the student experience by making the simulation a bit more robust, comprehensive, and meaningful. Many thanks to Randy and his development team for working with me on this change!



LINKS Train-The-Trainer Seminars

December 9-13, 2013 and January 6-10, 2014

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.)

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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