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## 2013 LINKS Global SCM Competition Results

**32** teams with a total of 136 participants competed in the LINKS Global SCM Competition in October-November 2013 with the LINKS Supply Chain Management Simulation. The 32 teams were grouped into five LINKS industries in this competition.



Co-winners ('Gold Medalists') of this LINKS Global SCM Competition 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 SCM Competition industries):

Industry SC1: firms 3 and 6  
Industry SC2: firms 3 and 5  
Industry SC3: firms 2 and 5  
Industry SC4: firms 4 and 5  
Industry SC5: firms 3 and 5

These co-winning firms are from Florida Atlantic University (multiple winners), Pennsylvania State University (multiple winners), Purdue University, and the University of Houston.



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

Congratulations to all!



## Discovering Marketing Principles With Mid-Course LINKS

I teach an introductory marketing class to approximately 25 sophomore undergraduates at Penn State University. This course introduces students to the basic principles of marketing, and I use LINKS for experiential learning. I have experimented with positioning LINKS earlier in the course rather than near the end, which seems to provide three main advantages. First, introducing LINKS mid-way through the course allows me to introduce the key marketing concepts of segmentation, targeting, and positioning and then let students loose to experience these concepts for themselves within the LINKS environment. This timing reinforces these important concepts immediately rather than waiting until later in the course. I feel it also helps students in LINKS – who sometimes can't see the forest for the trees – to keep their focus on strategic rather than merely tactical decision-making.



**Lisa Bolton**  
Pennsylvania State  
University

Second, students gain experience with the marketing mix via LINKS earlier in the course. This experience with the challenges of pricing, product development and launch, promotions, and distribution allows students to discover some of these marketing principles for themselves. Afterwards, the students also have a shared experience in LINKS that supports subsequent discussion of these topics. The “aha” moment may occur during LINKS or during lecture and discussion afterwards related to the marketing mix -- an approach that may work particularly well with students who do not have a lot of work experience upon which to draw. It can be fun to find ways to leverage LINKS after the simulation is over. As an example, I have purchased relatively inexpensive “LINKS souvenir cash cow key rings” and had students buy and sell them during class to ‘bring alive’ concepts in pricing.

Third, positioning LINKS mid-way through the course also provides a few pragmatic advantages. It allows me to break up lecture and case discussion with a few weeks of hands-on marketing activity. (I prefer to provide several weeks of immersion in the simulation, with 2 decisions per week for 3 weeks, rather than spreading it out over the term.) It also helps avoid putting LINKS in the latter part of the course where it tends to compete for students' time with projects/deliverables in other classes, as well as Thanksgiving break (if teaching in the fall).

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So is there any downside to placing LINKS midway through the course? The main disadvantage is probably that some marketing concepts are particularly difficult for students to discover for themselves through experience. For example, students seem to struggle a lot with channel management issues during LINKS – but, on the plus side, our discussion of channel conflict afterwards is enriched by the simulation experience. Where appropriate, instructors can hold mini-tutorials during LINKS (e.g., on breakeven analysis) and LINKS then provides an immediate application of these concepts to reinforce student learning.

As may be imagined, not all students appreciate the opportunity to learn by doing (especially when it involves failure!) ... but the trade-off is the impact of “aha” moments of discovery on student learning.

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## LINKS Global Services Competition 2014

**T**he 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



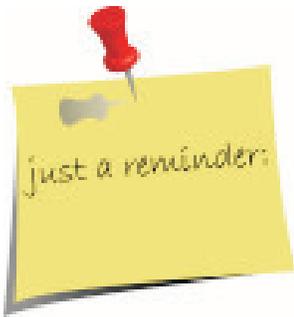
Two separate LINKS Global Services Competitions are offered, with the LINKS Services Marketing Simulation **and** with the LINKS Services Operations Management Simulation. These are integrative, team-based, competitive simulations suitable for upper-level undergraduates and all MBAs.

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).



# LINKS Simulations Test Bank

- A** test bank of LINKS multiple-choice questions supports LINKS instructors in their LINKS events.
- This test bank includes 200+ multiple-choice questions covering all LINKS simulations variants. Each multiple-choice question includes the best answer as well as a brief explanation for that answer.
  - The questions are organized by topical categories and LINKS simulation variant.
  - The LINKS simulations test bank is included in the Instructor Resources section of the LINKS website.

These LINKS simulations test questions are provided to LINKS instructors in Word doc format to facilitate use throughout LINKS events. LINKS instructors may freely use these questions for testing or for in-class discussion purposes by appropriate cutting-and-pasting from this Word doc file.

These multiple-choice questions are categorized by LINKS simulation variant. Instructors should select multiple-choice questions for only the LINKS simulations variant being used. “All” variants questions are appropriate for use with any LINKS simulation.

These multiple-choice questions might be used for in-class discussion purposes, for testing/assessment usage, and for an instructor’s personal review and refreshment before a LINKS event.

## In-Class Usage

When used for in-class discussion, selected questions might be drawn from this test bank and interspersed within the in-class activities ... as discussion points, “ice-breakers,” or just-in-time LINKS “moments.” For each selected question in in-class usage format, use two “slides”:

- First, show the question and solicit answers (with rationale) from the class.
- Second, show the complete question with the answer and explanation, and then entertain some class discussion.

## Testing/Assessment Usage

When used for testing and assessment purposes, this test bank provides the basis for an element of individual student grading within LINKS events. Most traditional LINKS assessment elements (within-simulation performance, written reports, and final presentations) are team-based, not individual-based.

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There's a need for some measure of individual-student grading within LINKS events, and this test bank of closed-ended questions (with answers provided) is one practical means for such individual student grading. Here are some within-event usage testing possibilities and timings:

1. As a pre-event, post-manual reading test of students' initial reading and understanding of the LINKS manual.
2. As a mid-event test of students' current level of understanding of LINKS.
3. As part of a final examination, to provide structured test questions about LINKS.

## Instructor Personal LINKS Review Usage

Several LINKS instructors have noted an additional use for these test questions ... as an instructor review tool prior to beginning a new LINKS event or as an instructor review tool before a particular class session where LINKS will be referenced in some detail. This style of usage for the instructor may be especially useful when some time has passed since the instructor's last LINKS usage event.

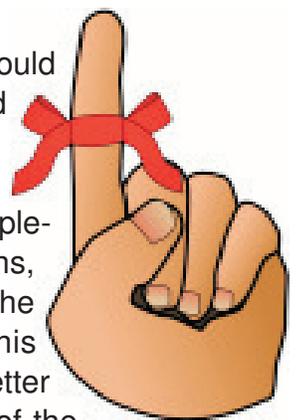
## Organization

These questions are organized by appropriate LINKS-related topics and are coded for the LINKS variants for which they are relevant. It is hoped that this organization will permit instructors to conveniently identify questions of interest for these own usage purposes.

## Using These Questions In Examinations

Most of these multiple-choice questions are sufficiently interesting that they could be cast in the form of short-answer discussion questions. Students could be asked to choose the best answer and to briefly justify the choice of that answer.

When used on examinations, I have found it desirable to preface these multiple-choice questions with the phrasing: "For the following multiple-choice questions, choose the best answer from among those available." This helps to reduce the normal student complaining when examination results are returned. With this phrasing, dissatisfied students have to argue that their answer is demonstrably better than all available answers. They cannot just attempt to make the case that all of the available answers are poor or inappropriate.





## November 1 in Hilton Head

**W**hile at the 2013 SMA Conference in Hilton Head, I had the opportunity to attend a “Teaching Moments” session. The eleven five-minute mini-presentations were on a variety of teaching approaches. I found a couple of these presentations very interesting as they could be used in the LINKS world.



**Kris Smith,**  
**LINKS Operations Manager**

“Speed Dating for MBAs: No Matches Made in Heaven But Better Teams” by Barbara Wooldridge from the University of Texas-Tyler was about an interesting approach to forming teams. Dr. Wooldridge had observed that if the students didn’t really know each other, most students would form teams based on classroom proximity. If she assigned teams, she might ultimately be blamed for poor team performance since she had put them together. The solution came to her in the form of a “speed dating” exercise.

To prepare for this “speed dating” exercise, she had the students prepare questions beforehand. Dr. Wooldridge found that a “dating sheet” was helpful for this exercise. The dating sheet would be set up in table format with the students’ names in one column, comments in a second column, and ratings in the third column. Every student would have the chance to meet with everyone and then rate them. If there was an odd number in the class, then the students would also have a chance to question Dr. Wooldridge. Typically, if the average group had five students, students would be put in groups with at least three of the people that they desired to be with. Dr. Wooldridge found that this method of forming teams made for stronger, more successful teams. As an added bonus, she also found that this exercise led to increased class participation by familiarize students with each other, leading to a higher comfort level in the classroom, which in turn increased class participation.

“Videos with a Big Bang and More from Pop Culture” by Kesha Coker from Eastern Illinois University was centered on how to get students’ attention in the classroom setting by using videos from pop culture to which students can relate. Dr. Coker uses these videos to communicate concepts in a language that the students understand. She finds these videos very effective, especially in early morning classes as they tend to “wake-up” the students and keep them engaged.

Many of these video clips can be found on the internet. Dr. Coker has found many of her videos at YouTube.com. She has also found that many students will bring other video clips related to classroom

material to her attention, thus expanding her video collection. An example is an introduction to RFID video clip that could be used with a LINKS supply chain management simulation:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m5pTKqKaEIA>

In this video clip, Sheldon from The Big Bang Theory is putting RFID tags on the contents of his luggage. This clip is a humorous way to get your students attention on the concept of RFID.

This session was a very interesting format since the presentations were only five minutes long. All the speakers had interesting topics with unique perspectives on teaching. At LINKS Simulations, we are constantly trying to expand our knowledge of the latest teaching challenges and needs so that we can continue to offer products and services that meet instructors' teaching needs.

## Where In The World Is LINKS Simulations?



**L**INKS 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:

February 21-23	AMA Winter Educators' Conference @ Orlando
March 26-28	MBAA Conference @ Chicago
May 9-12	POMS Conference @ Atlanta
May 21-23	Academy of Marketing Science Conference @ Indianapolis
June 12-14	INFORMS Marketing Science Conference @ Atlanta
June 27-29	Frontiers in Service Conference @ Miami

If you're attending any of these conferences, please do stop by our exhibit to chat.

# Reminder: Game Run Schedules With Embargos

In processing LINKS game runs, our normal administrative protocol is that the results are “publicized” immediately after the game run is executed. “Publicized” includes uploading the new results to the LINKS web-server and sending e-mail to everyone in a LINKS industry (students and the instructor) to announce the availability of the new game run results. For most LINKS instructors, immediate game run processing and turnaround after the input submission deadline is desirable.

It is possible to “embargo” the availability of LINKS results until an instructor-specified time after the input submission deadline and subsequent game run. With an embargo, LINKS is run in the normal fashion (normally within two hours of the input submission deadline) and the LINKS results are uploaded to the web server so that the LINKS instructor has immediate access to the results. However, embargoed results are not available to students until the instructor-specified embargo time.

Embargoing is useful for instructors who wish to release results only after a class has concluded (for example, to retain students’ undivided attention throughout the class) or for instructors wishing to have early access to the results, before their students can access the results.

To embargo results, encode your embargo schedule within the game run schedule that you submit before your LINKS event begins. Here’s an example entry on a game run schedule for an embargoed game run:

***November 7 @ 200pm: Round #7; results embargoed until 900pm.***

Everyone in a LINKS industry always receives an e-mail announcement of the availability of new results immediately after a game run has been executed, regardless of whether embargoed results exist. And, embargoed results are “immediately” uploaded to the LINKS Simulation Database after a game run. However, students can’t access embargoed results until the specified embargo time limit has passed because the results’ links are inactive until that time.





## LINKS Train-The-Trainer Seminars

January 6-10 and March 3-7, 2014

LINKS Simulations Immersion Experience

Five Teleconferences and Four-Round LINKS Simulation Events

**R**egistration 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.)

# Printed LINKS Manuals

**L**INKS participant's manuals are freely accessible (downloadable pdf files) from the LINKS website. Some instructors prefer to provide their students with printed/bound hardcopy versions of the LINKS participant's manual, rather than relying on website downloading and local printing. We're happy to provide this service for domestic LINKS users (i.e., instructors teaching courses in the continental United States).



We do need at least **three weeks advance notice** to arrange for printing and shipping of manuals from our on-demand printer.

Manuals are shipped directly to the LINKS instructor by our on-demand printer. The LINKS instructor then distributes the manuals to LINKS students after verifying that a LINKS student has paid for LINKS usage (i.e., the student shows the instructor a LINKS registration/payment receipt).

The LINKS manual price is added to the LINKS usage fee to determine the total student price for a LINKS event. The prices for LINKS manuals vary from \$16/manual for the smallest (4-round) LINKS variants, to \$20/manual for mid-sized (6-round) LINKS variants, to \$25/manual for larger (9-round) LINKS variants, to \$30/manual for "extreme" (12-round) LINKS variants.

Contact Randy Chapman ([Chapman@LINKS-simulations.com](mailto:Chapman@LINKS-simulations.com)) with any questions about LINKS manuals or to order LINKS manuals for your students in a forthcoming LINKS event.

# Presidential Review Meetings

## Best-Practice Presidential Review Meetings

### What?

- o Private, pre-scheduled 30-minute meetings with each LINKS team to permit the LINKS instructor to review a team's LINKS business, to answer team members' questions, and to sense the progress that teams are making in the simulation. This is one-with-a-few style of teaching/coaching, rather than the one-to-the-masses lecture-hall style of instruction.
- o "Private" due to the competitive nature of LINKS

### Why?

- o Provides a different kind of powerful teaching/learning opportunity (instructor as coach) at key points during the simulation event.

- o Simulates business review meetings with a "boss" or senior management official.

### Who?

- o Instructor and all members of a single LINKS team.
- o Instructor plays multiple roles during a presidential review meeting: "firm president," instructor, coach, and encouraging/proud/supportive "parent."

### When?

- o Re-assigned class time is recommended, with teams not meeting with the instructor using that time for their own private firm deliberations. In most cases, meetings will extend beyond class time, due

to the number of firms involved.

- o In shorter LINKS event, a single round of review meetings might be held, perhaps just before (or no later than just after) the second decision round. In longer LINKS events, several waves of presidential review meetings might be scheduled with the second round of presidential review meetings occurring at about the mid-point of the simulation event.

### Where?

- o Private meeting space is required, possibly the regular course classroom for presidential meetings scheduled during class hours.

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### How?

- o Meeting Scheduling
  - Pre-scheduled meetings, normally permitting students to pick their own times from a range of available meeting times.
  - Classroom-hours meeting times might be rotated around all teams, if multiple presidential review meetings waves are held. With a single set of presidential review meetings, classroom-hours meeting times might be randomly assigned.
- o Instructor Preparation: Bring printed firm results output to the meeting, to reference during the discussion.

- o Meetings Format Options:
    - No Student Prep [Not recommended]: Just discussion and Q&A.
    - Some Student Prep [Recommended]: Team members collaborate and submit (via e-mail) questions/issues to be discussed. Submissions are due at least 12 hours before the scheduled presidential review meeting to permit the LINKS instructor time to review and prepare.
    - Substantial Student Prep [Optional]: SWOT Analysis. Submissions due at least 24 hours before the scheduled presidential review meeting to permit LINKS instructor review and prep.
  - o Some Instructor Questions To Pose During the Meeting:
    - What are the largest problems that your firm faces?
    - What's been your best and worst team decision to date?
    - Who is the best performing competitor in your industry? Why?
    - To customers, what differential advantage does your firm offer compared to competitors?
    - How is your firm currently organized (e.g., by function, by region, as a committee of the whole)? Is this organization "best" for the current problems/challenges faced by your firm?
- 

## Likely Outcomes Arising From Presidential Review Meetings

### For Students:

- o Greater emphasis on research study needs going forward.
- o More attention to prioritization of issues.
- o More focus on the really important issues.
- o More systematic attention to division of labor and responsibility assignments.

### For Instructors:

- o Deep appreciation for team and individual-student progress.
- o Ideas for in-class discussion and in-class tutorials, based on common issues and concerns arising across teams.
- o Follow-up meeting scheduling for "lost"/"deeply troubled"/"unprepared" teams.

## Variations on Private, Single-Team, Scheduled Presidential Review Meetings

- o With many industries in very large courses, schedule joint meetings with each firm 1 from all industries meeting with the LINKS instructor simultaneously. Repeat for firm 2, etc. Note that non-competing teams are jointly meeting with the LINKS instructor.
- o In distance learning, use teleconferences for meetings.
- o Automatic presidential review meetings must be scheduled immediately by any firm with two successive rounds of losses (negative net income).

# 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 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](mailto:Winkler@LINKS-simulations.com).



Editor: Cyndy Winkler

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