

11

LINKS After-Action Review

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Revised July 18, 2019

When an instructor reviews LINKS results after a game run, key things to look for are notable results (e.g., substantial unfilled orders) or extreme results (e.g., negative profitability by multiple firms in an industry or consistent/substantial market share decreases for a LINKS firm). While the LINKS Instructor Reports and Instructor Excel Charts (both accessible within a LINKS instructor's "firm-0" webpage) are important instructor resources, the LINKS After-Action Review is another tool that LINKS instructors can use to monitor on-going performance of LINKS firms.

With a few minutes of effort, LINKS teams can provide an on-going paper-trail of key decisions and marketplace assessments for instructor review and potential follow-up. And, the LINKS After-Action Review is more time-economical for students and instructors than, for example, a required one-page memorandum from each team to the instructor as part of each simulation round's deliberations.

What?	<i>Immediate post-action systematic review creating a written record of noteworthy highlights.</i>
When?	Completed LINKS After-Action Reviews are submitted by a scheduled LINKS game run time as an e-mail message attachment sent to the LINKS instructor.
Why?	<p>Participant Benefits:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Natural conclusion to a team's decision-making deliberations for a scheduled game run. • Continuity of Actions: Later follow-up on previously-identified issues is facilitated. • Longer-Term Perspective Encouraged: Easy-to-follow issue-evolution over time. • Paper Trail: Past LINKS After-Action Reviews are resources for crafting a final written report or team presentation. • Time Effective: LINKS After-Action Reviews can be completed in a few minutes of team effort at the end of each decision round. Lengthy "essays" are not required. <p>Instructor Benefits:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fill-in-the-Major-Gaps Feedback: Useful and timely feedback since the LINKS instructor isn't present to observe and participate in all team deliberations. • Cross-Sectional Review: Common cross-firm and "interesting" issues identified at any point in time might be spotlighted by the instructor in a subsequent classroom session. • Longitudinal Review: Team progress and evolution can be observed. Issues identified earlier can be tracked to see the degree of progress over time in resolving an issue. • Rich basis for instructor conversation with teams before/during the next decision round. • Early alert to teams with problems requiring instructor intervention. • Time Effective: LINKS instructors can review LINKS After-Action Reviews in a few minutes.
How?	<p>Instructors distribute the LINKS After-Action Review form (a Word doc file) to all teams at the beginning of their LINKS events.</p> <p>Instructors require completion and submission of the LINKS After-Action as part of each simulation round's activities. Submissions are due at the same time as the input submission deadlines for scheduled game runs.</p>

LINKS After-Action Review

Firm?
(3-character industry code and firm #)

Regarding Decisions For Round #?

Instructions

1. LINKS teams complete a thoughtful After-Action Review after inputting all decisions for the next round.
2. Your firm's answers to **each** of the following questions are limited to about "about" two sentences. One-sentence answers are acceptable and preferred.
3. Attach this completed Word doc file to an e-mail message sent to your LINKS instructor.

1. What was the most important thing that your LINKS management team did in the just-completed decision session?	Most Important Thing We Just Did
2. What major challenges (maximum of three) now lie ahead for your LINKS firm and for your LINKS management team?	Major Challenges Ahead
3. What process improvement(s) should your team make to increase your management team's effectiveness in the next LINKS decision session?	To Improve Our Management Process
4. Based on the just-completed LINKS decision session, what one specific key insight on best-practice analysis, planning, strategy, tactics, or management should be remembered for the future?	One Key Insight

Further Reflections

There is, of course, nothing sacrosanct about these particular four questions for a LINKS after-action review. And, even the “four question” format isn’t fixed in stone. For example, Mark Jacobs (University of Dayton) suggests these questions as candidates for an after-action review:

1. What is the most important decision you made?
2. Why is it the most important decision?
3. Why did your performance deviate from expected last round?
4. How is this insight reflected in your responses this round?

And, after-action review questions might, of course, vary through time in a LINKS event.

To encourage thoughtfulness and timely task completion, it is recommended that a consulting fee bonus (a negative consulting fee, since consulting fees are costs) of \$300,000 be awarded for thoughtful LINKS After-Action Reviews submitted by the specified time deadline.

- If used, instructors can input these special bonuses via the “Special Consulting Fee Adjustments” function in the “firm-0” webpage for a LINKS industry.
- Here’s a suggested wording for this bonus, for instructors who wish to use such a bonus for LINKS After-Action Reviews:

Attach the completed LINKS After-Action Review (Word doc file) to an e-mail message sent to your LINKS instructor. “Thoughtful” submissions, time-stamped in the e-mail header no later than a LINKS input submission deadline, are eligible for \$300,000 LINKS bonuses.

The length and associated workload (for students and instructors) of the LINKS After-Action Review is especially notable. The short nature of the LINKS After-Action Review encourages student teams to do it together ... and not “staff it out” to individual team members over time. As Jeff Thieme (University of Memphis) notes: *“I used to require a brief (1-page) memo for teams that either introduced a product into a new region/channel and/or reconfigured a product in a quarter. In the memo, the team would state their strategy and expectations. I required 1-page memos because most teams had trouble clearly defining their strategy in their marketing plan at the end of the course. I haven’t required the memo in the past couple semesters because, unfortunately, I didn’t see any improvement in the written marketing plans. Teams tended to rotate responsibility for the memo among their team members. In my weekly debriefing with each team, I would discuss the memo and make suggestions for improvement, but any learning that took place wasn’t transferred into the written document.”*