Double-Team Final Presentations

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We all probably agree that ending the LINKS simulation with a team presentation is a very good way to get students to look back over their experiences and think about what they learned. However, if you have many students, it is unrealistic to ask every team to present in class. The class's attention span disappears and no one gains anything.

A solution is to assign double presentations – that is, assign two teams to prepare and present together. I first employed this method for practical reasons – to make sure I could fit every team into the presentation schedule. I discovered an even greater benefit – the learning that occurs when two teams discuss their experiences together.

In the course syllabus, I inform the students that on the last day of class, teams will be doing a presentation regarding their experiences and lessons from participating in LINKS. No further information is given and students are told not to prepare; instruction will be given on that day. Inevitably, students ask questions and I simply advise them to come to class with their LINKS materials and to be thinking about what they have learned.

The double-presentation method works especially well if you have more than one industry but it can work even if you have just one industry. Prepare index cards and at the beginning of the last class period, let each team from Industry A select a card which reveals its partner team in Industry B. (This shows the students that the pairings are random and that you didn't assign them based on how well they performed in LINKS.)

Then, instruct the pairs of teams to leave the classroom for 60-90 minutes and prepare a 15 or 20-minute presentation answering two questions: (1) What was your team's strategy and how did you execute it? (2) Firm-specific questions such as "What was your most difficult decision in LINKS?" "What was your easiest decision?" "If you could change one thing, what would it be?" "What two or three pieces of advice would you give to the next management team that takes over your firm?" In other words, ask the teams to discuss questions that will encourage them to reflect on their experiences and what they learned.

I evaluate the presentations on how well the students integrate marketing concepts and lessons from the course into their LINKS experiences. It always seems difficult for teams to do this. They inevitably take a descriptive approach, e.g., "First, we did this, and then we did that." That earns an average grade on the presentation. An excellent grade on the presentation is earned by teams who integrate broad lessons from the course. (Because the preparation time is so short, I never grade on the look/feel of the presentation, just on the content.)

I encourage you to think about the double-presentation method, even if you have a small number of students. The learning that occurs is well worth it.