

6-1-2010

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Recommended Citation

Gibson, Donald E. (2010) "Best experiential exercise for 2009: a focus on justice," *Organization Management Journal*: Vol. 7: Iss. 2, Article 9.

Available at: <https://scholarship.shu.edu/omj/vol7/iss2/9>



Introduction

Best experiential exercise for 2009: a focus on justice

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ELASI Editor

Organization Management Journal (2010)
7, 153–154. doi:10.1057/omj.2010.21



Organization
Management
Journal

The Eastern Academy of Management (EAM) annually features a competition for the “Best Experiential Exercise” from those submitted to the conference. For this competition, it is not enough to simply submit your written paper describing an exercise; rather, the writers of these exercises must present them to a live audience, involve that audience, and receive the decision of secret judges who determine a winner based on usefulness in the classroom, the academic importance of the ideas presented, and the potential to create a meaningful experience for students. Unlike the academic sessions – certainly worthy in their own quest to display cutting-edge advances in theoretical and empirical work in management – the Experiential Learning Association (ELA) sessions insist that presenters *involve* participants in their presentation; it is not enough to describe or analyze an exercise, it must be lived and felt.

In this issue, we present the experiential exercise that was chosen as the “Best” in class by reviewers for the 46th EAM conference, held in Hartford, Connecticut, May 13–16, 2009. We received 17 submissions of experiential exercises to this conference, accepted 16 for presentation, and among those 16, selected two exercises as the best in terms of their “potential to make a solid impact in the classroom,” and to “provide students with a meaningful learning experience” according to criteria provided to the Best Experiential Exercise reviewers. The theme of the 2009 EAM conference was “Facing the Future with Heart and Mind,” emphasizing that the mind/body duality that has dominated social psychological and organizational discourse is a thing of the past: now, as educators, as researchers, as presenters, we are seeing the impact of emotions as a central variable as never before.

For 2009, the best exercise chosen was, “Developing the Competencies of Interactional Justice” by Kevin Farmer and Steven Meisel. This is an exercise focused on interpersonal and informational justice, and is designed to “facilitate observational skills in seeing the consequences of Interactional Justice (IJ) in organizational life and how its presence or absence affects the communication flow in interactions between managers and their subordinates.” The exercise includes students viewing an introductory video, followed by role plays involving participants acting as students who have potentially damaged a dorm room and their meeting with the Dean of Students to determine action steps. The exercise delves into critical issues such as, “What does it mean to treat someone ‘fairly’?” and “Why are the concepts of interpersonal



and informational justice important in organizational life?" Consistent with the theme of the EAM conference, the exercise also explicitly explores the emotions participants would feel if they confronted this situation, highlighting the essential influence of emotions in fairness decisions.

To be accepted into this special edition of *OMJ*, the authors had to submit their exercises with revisions based on reviews from the 2009 conference. Their submissions were then reviewed by at least two *new* reviewers unfamiliar with the work, who offered further suggestions for revision. In

that process, one reviewer commented that "The concepts [in this exercise] are important ones and have extensive implications for everyday interactions in organizations You are obviously very knowledgeable about interactional justice, its organizational justice theoretical roots and how it is reflected in speech and action." I offer my congratulations to the authors for writing, presenting, and revising their work so effectively. I encourage readers to think about using this exercise in your classroom when you are addressing issues of fairness and organizational behavior.