**ABSTRACT**

*A ‘business simulation’ - with a difference.*

In XB participants are responsible for producing an unusual ‘product’ - ‘their own learning’. They take up roles in one of 4 Departments that reproduce the action learning cycle: Doing, Responsibility, Observing, Understanding. They exercise current skills and acquire new knowledge and capabilities through cooperating to learn with - and from - each other. Chaos, conflict, mis-understandings are all experienced, until persistence gradually moves the class through the forming / storming / norming / performing stages (Tuckman) of group dynamics. The ‘Senior Manager’ (facilitator/teacher) provides a stable core around which activity circulates as find that “The major cost in XB is the Act of Taking Responsibility Its associated problem is - Accountability. XB asks us to take responsibility and accept accountability for our own learning and contribute to that of others.” [extract from student assignment]

**KEYWORDS**

Action learning/research; Organisational behaviour theory; Deep learning; Reflective practice

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**AUDIENCE/GROUP SIZE**

Groups from 12 to about 36 work well. Less than 12 may encounter task overload, while more than 36 are better run as parallel “XB companies” of approximately equal size.

XB is used with engineers, adult educators, entry level business studies and MBA students in the USA and Australia.

**LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES**

Participants learn a great deal about themselves with special focus on their performance in groups/teams. They also have access to a very broad range of theories about human behaviour in organisational contexts.

Specific choices, about analysis and acquisition of relevant theoretical content, are the responsibility of each new “XB company” and are usually determined by their immediate needs, goals and interests as the semester proceeds.

**TIME AND SETTING**

XB is currently conducted as a semester long academic subject. In different contexts it occurs as block attendance or weekly mode, with major aspects of ‘in role’ participant interaction occurring online.
RESOURCES

- Participants purchase the XB manual as a text book. The ‘Manual’ contains all necessary structure and theoretical resources.
- An online Learning Management System is essential, however may be useful to keep in mind that this has evolved over the years from very basic email to advanced LMS support.
- Room space must allow for both small and large group activity during all classes.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

The XB Manual contains essential theories around which participants cooperate to teach and learn -with and from each other. Participants choose their Departmental ‘roles’ based on skills and/or learning interest, and face the task of learning how to work together to convey its essential theoretical basics, while being bombarded by the efforts of the other three Departments to do the same.

Participants examine the Departments and the assigned tasks, then chose a role from within which to contribute to creating their “XB”. The activity unfolds in accord with actions and decisions of individuals and Departments –face to face and online.

Weekly ‘memos’ (assessment tasks) act as regular reflection tools. Other tasks include development of a class ‘vision/mission statement’, affirmation of (and heated debate about) the XB Oath, peer assessment of weekly memos via the ‘control cycle’, and introduction, explanation of an extensive array of management and organisational behaviour theories, together with assessment of their applicability to class performance as an organisation.

Scheduled ‘XB’ meetings, occurring in class, address such issues as current performance standards, planning of course content and analysis of achievements. The final meeting reviews the overall achievements of ‘this XB’.

In Australia participants also create a ‘three dimensional representation of their learning’ for discussion in the final class.

FACILITATOR EXPERIENCE

The ‘Senior Manager’ (teacher) models Theory Y (McGregor) leadership behaviour. Remaining ‘in role’ for most of the time, the facilitator may at any time signal a shift to ‘educator’ and use this mode to draw attention to issues requiring reflective analysis or action.
REFERENCES
Website - http://academics.smcvt.edu/rputzel/