BABSON COLLEGE
Babson Academy for the Advancement of Global Entrepreneurial Learning

THE ONE HOUR ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATOR

A Guide to Designing Games and Simulations to Amplify Learning

Keith Rollag, Professor of Management, Babson College

In the classroom, highly effective games and simulations don't have to be expensive, complicated, computer-based learning experiences. In fact, you can turn almost any learning objective into a simple game or simulation—and often the simplest ones are the best.

Game-based learning is a powerful technique that allows students to ideate, collaborate, work through problems, receive feedback, and even experience failure in a nurturing environment. Encountering a challenge in a game or simulation presents students with an opportunity to exercise creativity and critical thinking, providing them with a new perspective on a familiar topic.

To begin designing a game or simulation for your classroom, identify a learning objective you hope to achieve as a result of the game. With that objective in mind, utilize the following elements to build out your activity:

Action

What is the main task the participants need to be doing during the simulation to achieve your learning objectives?

The primary action you want your students to take in the activity will dictate its structure. Here are a few actions that may spark your imagination:
Decide, Persuade, Solve, Trade, Destroy, Create, Prioritize, Build, Calculate, Rate, Search

Roles

What are the minimum number and type of roles to make the primary action possible? Will students need to work in teams?

Consider effective personas for students to take on that will advance the activity. Roles you may utilize could be:
Boss, Subordinate, Seller, Customer, Coach, Teammate, Referee, Leader, Follower, Builder, Activist, Creator, Owner, Criminal, Entrepreneur, Analyst

Continue on page 2 »

Success Criteria and Rewards

What are the simplest success criteria and rewards that will lead the participants (in various roles) to act in ways that achieve your learning objectives?

This could take many forms depending on your primary action and role structure. Consider what determines who wins or succeeds, and how they will be rewarded during or after the game or simulation. Criteria and rewards could include:
Time, Ratings, Points, Quantity, Profit, Money, Share Percentage, Number of Interactions, Votes, Number of Purchases, Survival

Process and Rules

What is the simplest set of processes and rules to generate the kind of action, reflection, and learning I want?

Determine the flow of the game, including its steps and order. Rules and processes could include:
Deadlines, Internet Use, Margin of Error, Time Limits, Information Sharing, Number of Tries, Share Percentage, Quantity, Size, Communication Methods, Help, and Resources



As you design your game or situation, ask yourself:

If I were playing this game, what would I do?
Is it what I want participants to do? Are there other ways? Is that good or bad? Do I need rules to prevent alternative strategies?

How can I simplify?
What elements of the game are nice to have but don't really impact behavior and learning?

How does the game or simulation connect to the real world?
Can participants see the connection?

Does it achieve my learning objective?
Will participants learn what I want them to learn, or simply have fun?

02-2022 / EM2-3597

Want more Babson Academy resources for entrepreneurship educators? Check out babson.edu/babsonacademy