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Simulation: Cesim Retail and Cesim Global Challenge

1. In which program and semester do you use our business games?

I use the business games in both the spring and fall semesters, but only with my business students. The specific simulation I use depends on the specialization of the class. For instance, if I have a class that is focused on luxury or fashion, I tend to use Cesim Retail. However, if the class is more general or a mix of different specialties, then I usually go with Cesim Global Challenge.

2. How many students are participating?

I have classes of diverse sizes. For instance, I have some classes with up to 50 students, while others have as little as 15 students. Because of this, there's a significant difference in terms of group projects. For example, when I did the Cesim Retail simulation project, there were only 18 students involved. In contrast, when I used Cesim Global Challenge, 35 students participated.

3. How many hours are allocated to the business game?

The simulation is just one component of the overall course, which usually lasts around 30 hours. I would typically spend between 10 to 14 hours on the simulation. Depending on the level of the students, this includes a workshop with the students where we go through each one of the variables.

Typically, I work with undergraduate students who don't have much experience with these kinds of simulations. As a result, it requires more time and effort on my part. Additionally, I usually assign a couple of assignments between the simulation rounds where they must present their strategies and logic to me. This is because I want to use the simulation to its fullest.

4. What is the structure of the courses using the simulation?

We try to strike a balance between theory and simulation. I don't just focus on the simulation alone because students may become fatigued with it over time. Therefore, if I have a three-hour class, I will spend around 1 1/2 hours on theory, whether directly or indirectly related to the simulation, and the remaining 1 1/2 hours on the simulation itself. Initially, they may need around 45 minutes to an hour and a half to make a decision in the game, but as they get better, I give them less time to accelerate the process. We usually don't spend the entire class on the simulation, as I like to mix it up.

This approach allows students to immediately apply the knowledge they gain from the theory component to their decision-making in the simulation. However, I must remain flexible since students may have specific needs that I didn't plan to cover in the course. Therefore, I may need to create a special unit or exercise to meet their needs.

5. What educational goals are associated with using the business game?

Regarding educational goals, my objective is not just to use the Cesim simulations, which are very focused on financial analysis. Financial literacy is a major objective as it helps students become comfortable with numbers. I try to explain to them that it's not hard to work with numbers, but it is hard to understand what story the numbers are trying to tell you. That's what I use the simulation for.

Another objective is communication. Each student must make their own decisions and then communicate them to the group. This requires negotiation, as the team must agree on which decisions to make. I facilitate the negotiation process by having a team leader centralize all the information.

Learning to fail is also important because things don't always go as planned, so students must learn how to fail and how to recover.

Budgeting is the fourth objective, and I give them a goal of having a forecasting error of less than 15%. They typically start with a 5000% error rate and end up with a 10-15% error rate by the end of the simulation.

6. What is the feedback from your students?

The feedback is generally positive, but it also depends on how I sell the simulation to my students. I make sure to explain the simulation in advance and go over how each component works, since some components may be more advanced than others.

I find that the simulation may not be suitable for first or second-year students without a special workshop on each variable. In the past, I used to explain all the details at the beginning, but that didn't work out well as the students did not understand the relevance of the information.

Instead, I now let the students do the first practice round, which tends to be a disaster, and then explain the theory before doing a second practice round. This approach helps the students understand how the knowledge is applicable to a real situation. I have noticed that business students tend to be competitive, and that's why I offer a certificate of achievement and a small prize for the first place. This recognition motivates the students and makes them feel accomplished in front of the others.

7. How do the chosen business games fit the profile of the participants?

As I work with a wide range of programs and student profiles, I find that the simulation generally fits their needs well. However, there are always exceptions, which can be challenging to address.

For instance, in one of my retail management courses, I had a small class of six students, which is quite uncommon. One of the students who chose the course selectively is a finance specialist, so he's much more advanced than everyone else in the class.

He was actually tutoring other students in several of the components, which is impressive but makes it difficult to create a level playing field in the simulation. I can't establish a handicap for him, so I decided to have him play alone in the simulation against all the other students. To make things interesting, I created two teams for him, one in a separate universe where he has to play against myself, and one against all the other students.

I challenged the other students to beat him, which created pressure both for him and for the others. So, I told the class that whoever scores better than this finance specialist will receive an A grade, which created a competitive spirit among the students.

In addition, I created a second universe where he and I are competing against each other because I wanted to give him a more challenging opponent. He was quite happy to have that opportunity to develop his skills on a more advanced level.

8. In a few words, what are the main reasons why you would recommend our solutions?

I think the main reason the simulation works well is because it brings a lot of interaction to the course. It's not just about learning, but students can immediately apply the knowledge they gain. It also fosters teamwork and negotiation skills, which are important in real-world situations. The learning curve is also easy.

Although the simulation can get complicated when we delve into the settings and start changing all the numbers, the package provided by Cesim is well prepared and ready to use. It doesn't take much time to learn how to use it well, and the teacher interface provides most of the information we need. So these are the main reasons why I think the simulation is effective.