SHOPPING FOR SERIOUS GAMES

Finding a serious game can be as easy as picking a movie.

By James Chisholm

Inside **Intelligence**:

In response to growing demand from organizations, the offerings of serious games stores have expanded rapidly in recent years. Now, there are many different types of simulations and games available from a wide range of companies. As a result, workplace learning and performance professionals may find it increasingly difficult to cut through the clutter and make sense of what is available.

However, connecting your organization's learning needs to the offerings can be as easy as picking a DVD from your local video store. Almost all simulations fit rather neatly into one of three categories: strategy, execution, or situation. And while some games may have elements in more than one category, most are easy to classify.

Strategy games, epitomized by the classic business school strategy game, are designed to provide insight into how and why a company should position it-

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self in relation to its competition. These games typically pit teams of participants against each other in a marketplace. The teams prioritize and allocate financial resources across various budget categories, such as marketing, manufacturing, and research and development.

In addition to fostering teamwork, these games challenge participants to understand customers' needs to craft a winning strategy. Although available in a variety of off-the-shelf formats, strategy games also can be customized to a specific company's market.

Strategy games often are used when an organization needs to develop business acumen and financial literacy among executives or managers. For this purpose, the games traditionally are delivered in intensive three- to five-day workshops.

Once your organization develops a strategy, it needs to ensure it is successfully implemented. That's where execution games come in. These games challenge participants to analyze a situation, create an action plan, implement the plan, and learn about the quality of their decisions from game feedback. And as with strategy games, many execution games are team-based and have a strong group process dimension.

Execution games are sometimes referred to as leadership simulations because they challenge participants to assess a situation and identify the most appropriate course of action from a wide range of available options. However, they can be used at all levels of the organization—among executives, managers, and frontline employees—when change management or project management learning is needed.They typically are delivered in one-day intensive workshops.

Situation games teach participants how to navigate day-to-day activities that are critical to success. Most use a decision-tree approach that presents players with a short scenario and challenges them to navigate each node of the scenario by selecting from a list of options.

Unlike strategy and execution games, which tend to be team-based, most situation games are single-user online experiences. They usually are deployed as skill-builder modules and take less than an hour to play.

Most of the business titles in serious games stores are situation games. They often are used in frontline and management-level training in which specific knowledge or skills need to be developed. Popular topic areas include customer service and health and safety.

The next time you are looking for simulations for your organization, think about the strategy-execution-situation framework. Understanding how these games are classified will greatly speed up the time it takes to find the right aisle for products that will match your group's learning needs. And like the process of choosing a movie from your local video store, once you are in the right aisle, you'll discover a wide range of titles from which to choose.

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Serious Games at a Glance

Type	STRATEGY	EXECUTION	SITUATION
Teaches	where and why	who, what, when	how
Typical duration	multiple days	3 to 6 hours	up to 1 hour
Learning need	general business acumen and financial literacy	change management and project management	skill-builders, such as customer service and negotiations
Typical delivery mode	team-based blended (workshop and online)	team-based or individual blended (workshop and online)	individual (online)
Typical audience	executives and managers	executives, managers, and front-line employees	managers and frontline employees
Examples	*Marketplace* from Innovative Learning Solutions *Capstone* from Management Simulations	*ExperienceChange* from ExperiencePoint *Project Management* from the Palatine Group	*Virtual Leader* from SimuLearn *SkillSims* from SkillSoft

Myths About Job Sharing

Kelly Watson, founder of Career Partners, a talent management and human capital services company, says that job sharing is the most effective and underused flexibility option to retain workers, particularly women who are opting out of the workforce to raise families.

To get more employers on the job-sharing bandwagon, she identifies and dispels these five myths:

Myth #1—It's too expensive.

Some employers fear that job sharing will force them to pay benefits twice. However, few executive moms need them. For the ones who do, the added cost does not compare to the expense of turnover and retraining, which some experts estimate to be 1.5 times an individual's salary. It is true some insurance premiums may increase by adding headcount, but those premiums are a tiny portion of most exempt employee pay packages.

Vacation time, sick days, and 401(k) matching are all programs in which benefits are accrued based on the number of hours worked. In a job-sharing situation, these are cut in half for each individual, so the total cost is the same. Further, many employers have found that job-sharing employees have fewer absences and work more productively when they are in the office.

Career Partners suggests splitting the total compensation package for a shared role proportionately, appropriate to each candidate's experience and contribution to the role. Individuals who require medical benefits can cede salary or other elements in exchange. With this kind of flexibility, employers can get the benefits of two collaborative brains for little more than the cost of one.

Myth #2—It's more difficult to manage two workers.

By seeking candidates who are closely matched—pairing their shared values, complementary skills, experience, and personality styles—companies can create powerful work teams that communicate so well they act like a single individual. In fact, most job-sharing partners feel a vested interest in making the team successful.

Myth #3—If we offer it to one person, everyone will want it.

Some companies worry that allowing flexibility will create a workforce of slackers, or accommodating one employee will lead to other requests and ultimately break down all of the standardized processes and HR procedures they have worked hard to build. However, job sharing is one flexibility program that is easy to implement logistically and provides companies with more than what one single employee can contribute. Companies get built-in backup, more combined hours, refreshed workers, and the collaborative brainpower of two.

Myth #4—Recruiting is more difficult.

Contacting former employees who have retired or opted out for family reasons is a great start for finding ideal candidates. These workers already know the company and may need less training.

Existing employees also may be able to provide excellent referrals. There are many closely-knit alumni associations and networks in which potential candidates connect to each other every day. When companies find such creative avenues to advertise a job-sharing program, they often reach a hidden pool of exceptional talent and build substantial brand equity.

Myth #5—There is no accountability.

Some companies believe that job sharing sets up the ultimate finger-pointing situation. However, offering work flexibility has the powerful effect of motivating individuals to make the situation work. Further, treating the teams as single employees by rating and rewarding their collective effectiveness can ensure individuals hold themselves accountable to their partners.

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SLEEP EFFECTS

EMPLOYEES ARE PAYING A HIGH PRICE FOR TOO LITTLE SLEEP WHEN IT COMES TO WORK PRODUCTIVITY, ACCORDING TO NEW STATISTICS FROM THE BETTER SLEEP COUNCIL (BSC).

Respondents to the BSC's 2007 Better Sleep Month survey reported a decline in quality of work, poor judgment, and trouble retaining information as the top work-related consequences from sleep deprivation.

"Some people believe they can accomplish more if they spend less time sleeping, but limited sleep can affect every aspect of your life, including job performance," says Bert Jacobson, spokesperson for the Better Sleep Month campaign. "In fact, sleep deprivation affects your level of alertness, your productivity, and your ability to socially interact with colleagues."

According to the BSC, sleep deprivation costs American businesses nearly $150 billion annually in absenteeism and lost productivity. Thirty-one percent of the survey respondents reported that it impairs the quality and accuracy of their work. Another 31 percent said it limits judgment and their ability to think clearly. Thirty percent said sleep deprivation affects their memory of important details.

"Our survey indicates that companies would be more productive and offices would be happier places if employees got more of the sleep they need," says Nancy Shark, executive director of the Better Sleep Council. "Everyone who wants to improve their daily work performance could benefit from improving the quality of their sleep."

Yet only 13 percent of Americans are willing to make the commitment to get more sleep to feel more awake and productive at work. Instead, survey results showed that tired employees are turning to quick-fix performance enhancers such as drinking coffee or other caffeinated drinks, taking naps, and going outside for fresh air.

MORE/www.bettersleep.org

// FAST FACT //

Self Taught

Entry-level accounting and finance professionals may need to find a mentor on their own, a new survey suggests. The majority (58 percent) of chief financial officers polled recently said that it's uncommon for their organizations to match new hires with mentors.

The survey—developed by Accountemps staffing service—included responses from more than 1,400 CFOs from a random sample of United States companies with 20 or more employees. Only 13 percent said that the practice was "very common."

MORE/www.accountemps.com

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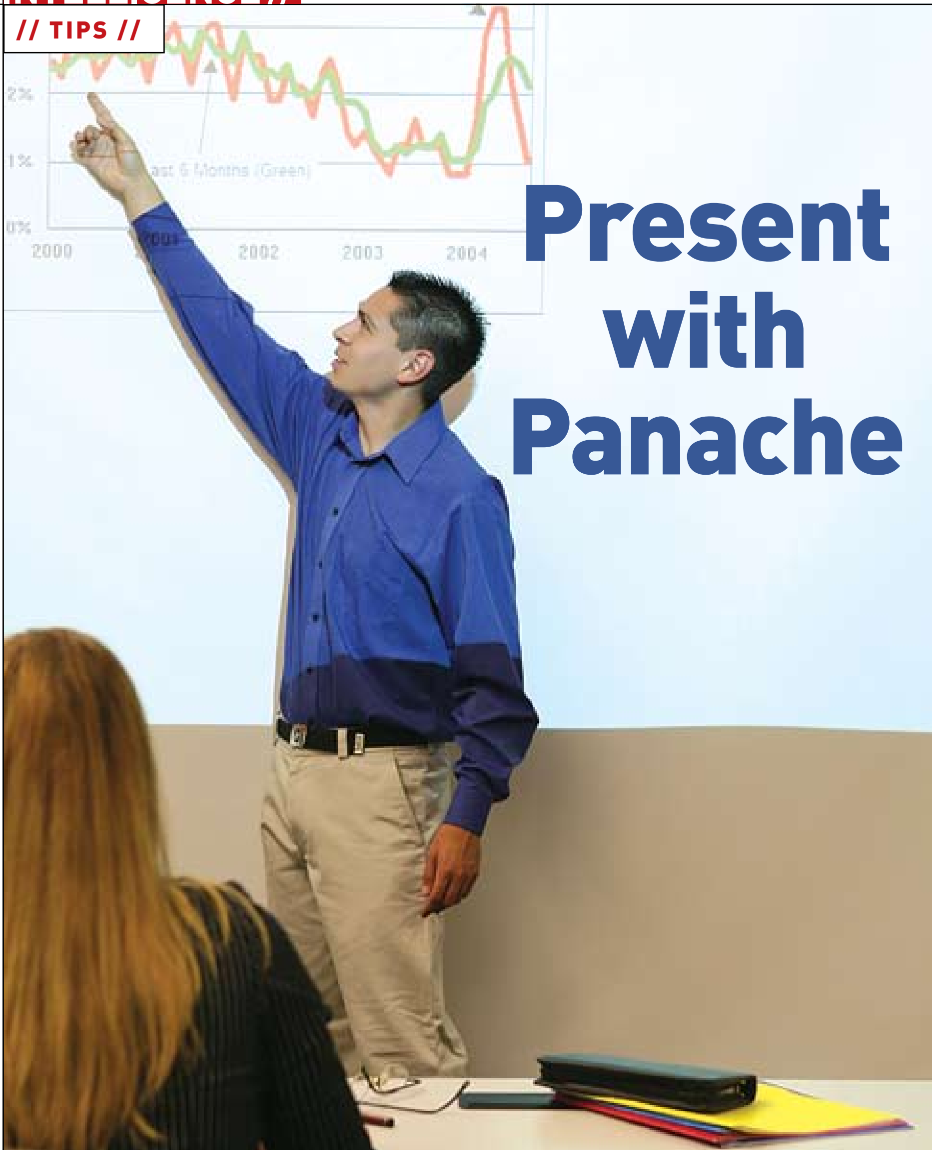

Present with Panache

Presenters, salespeople, and even CEOs have embraced PowerPoint, but they're using it incorrectly and undermining their messages, says Paul LeRoux, author of *Visual Selling*. He offers six tips for regaining control and delivering presentations that truly persuade.

Use pictures, not words. Researchers tell us that the brain stores and retrieves pictures more efficiently than words. A face is easier to remember and recall than a name. Cognitive psychologists call this phenomenon "the picture superiority effect." You can leverage it to sell your ideas by presenting powerful images to your audience, unsupported by text, as you give your pitch.

Use PowerPoint, but avoid text. "If you don't read text aloud, you can bet your audience is reading it and not paying attention to what you're saying," says LeRoux. "If you do read it aloud, your audience is insulted. Aren't they smart enough to read for themselves? Either way, PowerPoint text takes the focus off of you and drains the persuasiveness out of your presentation."

Don't sell your ideas with a handout. Providing a written summary of your main points before your presentation draws your audience's attention away from you and directs it toward the piece of paper. "I'm not saying you can't give your audience a handout at all; I'm saying that you should delay doing so until after your presentation," LeRoux points out.

Give out an "image deck." You'll satisfy your audience's need to follow along without distracting them. If your group demands a handout, print full-page versions of your image slides and duplicate them to create your handout. This is an acceptable compromise. With an image version, your audience will not be overly distracted from reading. They will rapidly peruse the entire document and return their attention to you. Images need a presenter to fill in the details. As a result, your participants will listen that much closer to you and your presentation.

The brain stores and retrieves pictures more efficiently than words.

Use hand gestures. When you're under pressure, your adrenaline surges and you want to do something with your hands. Don't try to squelch this natural impulse by hiding them behind your back or jamming them into your pockets. Instead, use gesturing to help you burn off energy, look professional, support the message, involve listeners, and maintain a conversational pace.

Speak up. Enthusiasm sells. Yet, it's the hardest of all delivery skills to learn or to teach. "Increase your volume and, like magic, enthusiasm usually appears," says LeRoux. "It is a direct, one-to-one relationship. When you speak louder, you also are more likely to display body language that communicates your enthusiasm." LeRoux notes that microphones do not help to induce enthusiasm. "It's a crutch," he says. "Unless you're in a large room speaking to 40 or 50 people, I suggest that you don't use one at all."

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// INFO GRAPH //

LEADERS, how many of your organizations effectively:

U.S.		GLOBAL
26%	DEVELOP LEADERS BEFORE THEIR NEXT PROMOTION?	17%
29%	MAKE DECISIONS ABOUT PROMOTIONS?	21%
29%	SUPPORT NEW LEADERS TO HELP THEM COPE?	32%
31%	SET CLEAR PERFORMANCE EXPECTATIONS?	32%
31%	IDENTIFY HIGH FLYERS?	36%

Source: DDI "Leaders in Transition" study, 2007

// EXECUTIVE UPDATE //

North American Technology Companies Tap Foreign Talent

Citing exceptional employees as the key to their success, CEOs of technology companies admit that finding, hiring, and retaining qualified employees is their biggest operational challenge. That's why they are tapping overseas markets for talent, a trend that will increase during the next five years, according to a Deloitte CEO survey. At the same time, however, these CEOs are shying away from doing business outside of North America.

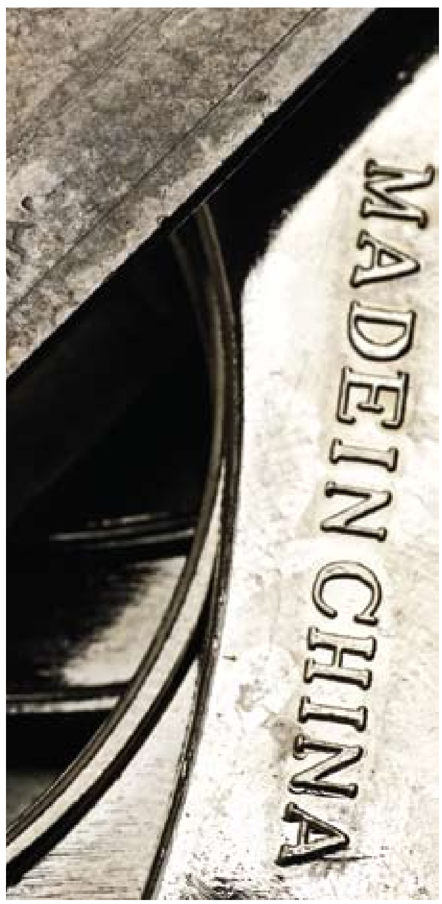
The survey was conducted during the first quarter of 2007. The executive participants represented companies from Deloitte's 2006 Technology Fast 500, an annual ranking of the fastest growing technology companies in North America.

"It's not unexpected that CEOs of fast-growth companies would look offshore for the talent they need to continue growing in a tight market," says Tony Kern, managing principal of Deloitte's Technology Fast 500 program. "What is counterintuitive is that their interest in selling to overseas markets is waning, with more than three-quarters of CEOs saying North America represents the best opportunity for significant growth during the next five years."

According to the survey, high quality employees are the biggest contributors to company growth for 67 percent of the CEOs, and finding, hiring, and retaining qualified employees is the biggest operational challenge for 48 percent. To attract employees, 51 percent offer flexible hours, and 38 percent give training programs and educational opportunities to their workers.

"When it comes to talent, supply and demand are out of balance, making employees more like consumers," explains Jeff Alderton, a principal of Deloitte Consulting. "And like consumers, if employees with those in-demand skills sets are not receiving the satisfaction they seek, they will find it elsewhere."

CEOs said their companies are turning to overseas talent, with 45 percent of those surveyed reporting that they are currently offshoring, and 55 percent saying they plan to do so in the next five years. Overall, 43 percent of the CEOs said it was critical or very important to look overseas for talent.



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