



Research Summary Number 10

## **Development of a Simulation Classification System**

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**Abstract:** A system for classifying simulations has been developed to make their use more reliably successful. Use of this system can help consultants and trainers determine which simulations are appropriate for a stated situation given the desired level of participant interactions and the predictability of outcomes as well as the facilitator's own level of competence and skill.

# Development of a Simulation Classification System

**The Problem:**

How to insure trainer/facilitator success when using simulations by matching trainer skill level and needs with simulation requirements?

**The Need:**

Trainers and facilitators indicate that they are concerned about using simulations for the following reasons:

- Complexity of preparing for the simulation
- Complexity of administering the simulation
- Anxiety about generating conflict and emotions
- Lack of experience with simulations
- Concern for inadequate facilitation skills
- Lack of predictability of outcomes
- Not enough time
- Difficulty selling idea of a simulation to client
- Past negative experience with a simulation

**The Goal:**

Create a system that alleviates many of these concerns and accomplishes the following outcomes:

- Ensures that less experienced trainers and facilitators start with simulations with which they can be successful.
- Helps trainers and facilitators build their skill level through use of simulations.
- Guarantees a match between the facilitator’s skill, simulation complexity, and participant learning objectives.

**The Process:**

The process of developing the simulation classification system involved several steps. First, trainers who were reluctant to use simulations were interviewed in an attempt to identify their concerns. Second, successful users of simulations were interviewed in an effort to identify the criteria they use when deciding upon a simulation to use. Third, different simulations were observed in use. Fourth, all the information was organized and reviewed by experienced users of simulations.

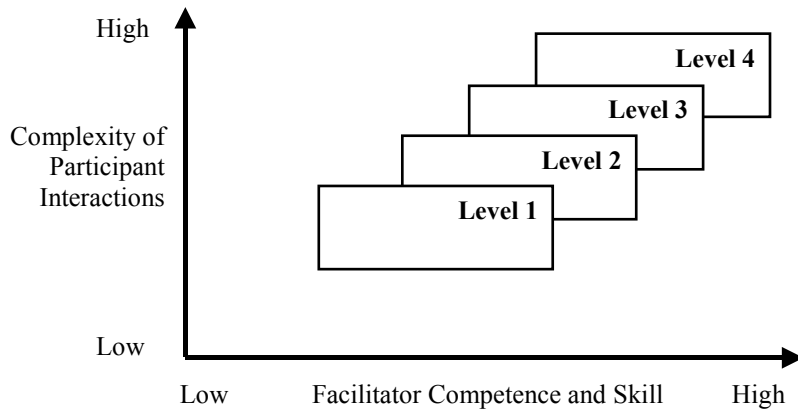
**The Outcome:**

The criteria for selecting a simulation as well as the concerns for using a simulation fell into two basic categories: Issues around participant interactions and facilitator concerns. Participant interaction issues included degree of interaction, predictability of outcomes and potential for conflict and emotion. Facilitator issues related to administrative concerns and skill level, including time to prepare for the simulation, complexity of running the simulation, number of facilitators required, level of feedback expected, and the overall observation and debrief skills required. The results yielded seven criteria for matching simulations to trainer and participant needs. These criteria have been grouped in two categories; participant interactions and facilitator skill. From this analysis four levels of simulations were identified; levels 1, 2, 3, and 4. Four levels provided an adequate differentiation among the criteria. Table 1 presents a summary of the criteria matched to the levels and Figure 1 compares the four levels in relationship to participant interactions and facilitator skill.

**Table 1: Simulation Level Classification Criteria**

Criteria	Participant Interactions			Facilitator Competence and Skill			
	Participant Interactions	Predictability of Outcomes	Emotional Arousal/ Conflict Potential	Ease of Administration	Individual Behavioral Assessment & Feedback	Team Assessment & Feedback	Observation, Facilitation, Debrief Skills
<b>Level 1</b>	Interactive	High	Unlikely but Possible	Little Complexity	No	Possible	Entry Level
<b>Level 2</b>	Highly Interactive	Intermediate	Somewhat Likely	Some Complexity	Minimal	Likely	Intermediate
<b>Level 3</b>	Complex	Low	Very Likely	Moderate Complexity	Possible	Yes	Good
<b>Level 4</b>	Complex	Low	Expected	Complex	Expected	Yes	Very Good

**Figure 1: Simulation Levels in Relationship to Participant Interaction and Facilitator Skill**



**Applying the Model:**

Clearly some subjectivity is required to assign a simulation to a Level. In Table 2 the model is applied to four simulations, one for each class.

**Conclusion:**

The simulation classification system is proving helpful in the selection of Discovery Learning simulations and can be applied universally to interactive simulations. The model has proven effective with a number of non-Discovery Learning simulations such as Looking Glass from the Center for Creative Leadership. The input of someone who is familiar with the simulation is critical for effective classification.

**Table 2. Applying the Simulation Classification System**

Criteria	Participant Interactions			Facilitator Competence and Skill			
	Participant Interactions	Predictability of Outcomes	Emotional Arousal/ Conflict Potential	Ease of Administration	Individual Behavioral Assessment & Feedback	Team Assessment & Feedback	Observation, Facilitation, Debrief Skills
<b>Level 1: The Acquisition</b>	Interactive individual small group relationships	High	Unlikely but possible	No facilitator input after simulation starts until debrief	No	Team interactions and participant inclusion	Can be run with no prior experience
<b>Level 2: Paper Planes, Inc.</b>	Highly interactive individual and team relationships	Some variability of outcomes within a highly structured process	Occasionally with ample opportunity to intervene	Some complexity in set-up and considerable movement of participants	Typically only to the supervisor role and this is minimal	The group assesses its overall effectiveness in their debrief	Good questioning and crowd management skills
<b>Level 3: EdgeWork</b>	Complex team, cross-functional and cross-organization relationships	Participants define the outcome	Frustration and disagreement are likely	Moderate complexity in set-up, multiple rooms required, some need for facilitator to interact with participants	Optional	Opportunity for teams to give each other feedback on their perceptions of each other	Good facilitation skills critical to the success of the simulation
<b>Level 4: PressTime</b>	Complex cross-functional inter-team relationships	Participants completely define the outcome and there can be considerable variation	Frustration and disagreement can be strong at times. Intervention may be necessary	Complex to administer, unique space requirements, multiple trainers required for groups over 8	Opportunity for each participant to receive peer and facilitator feedback	Team self assessment along with facilitator assessment of team effectiveness	Excellent facilitation skills critical to the success of the simulation

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