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SORT:Ed - An Interactive Educational Game for HealthCare Students

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Abstract

This short paper outlines an academic's entrepreneurial journey from idea conception to the market place. Sort Ed is an interactive board game designed for paediatric student nurses and it set in a child's ward. There is a huge market demand for this type of educational games in the UK especially by institutions that run healthcare management courses. This learning tool is a major contribution to the limited number of interactive educational games currently available to healthcare tutors and students. Simulated learning benefits of the game enables students to develop required transferable skills needed to succeed in the work place.

Keywords: Simulation, Educational games, Entrepreneurship

The journey

In 2007, I came up with the idea for this game on the floor of my office. I developed a prototype and tried it with over 300 students over the next 18 months. I made adjustments and additions as I went along. In 2009 I pitched my idea to Yorkshire Forward and was successful in obtaining a fellowship with them. Over the last year with the help of YEF I have been able to develop my idea into a commercially viable product and am at the stage of launching onto the market. YEF have provided me with 11 expert study days, a mentor with appropriate business knowledge and £10,000 to develop my idea.

I have now placed an order for 100 units of the finished game and expect delivery by July 2010. I already have 5 working prototypes which I use for demonstration purposes. I have developed a website at www.sorteducation.co.uk which although not interactive at present does provide a good marketing outlet.

During June 2010 I attended the METI European conference and launched my game. At this conference I received 15 provisional orders at £200 per unit. I will confirm these orders once I have received my first delivery of stock.

I have developed various promotional materials which are used to market the game at conferences. Please see attached PDF for details of leaflet.

The game

In its first application SORT:Ed is an interactive, student-centered board game set in the environment of a children's ward. Students play the game in groups of between 6 – 10 people. The first game is Paediatric and is set in a child's ward. There are currently 5 levels to the game. Each level can be played in isolation or sequentially one level at a time. Each level lasts exact details of each level will not be disclosed within this business plan for confidentiality reasons.

Learning outcomes for this game are considerable

For example students learn the following transferable skills:

- Team working
- Roles within a team
- Leadership
- Management
- Ward management

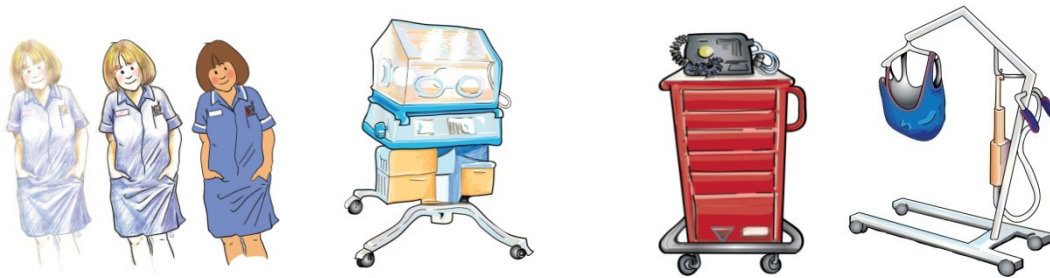
- Priority setting
- Critical thinking
- Risk Assessment
- Risk Management

In addition students also learn about the many idiosyncrasies entailed in the role of the children's nurse and specific concepts such as:

- Family centre care
- Safeguarding and protecting Children
- Professional issues

The game can then be developed to allow students to compare and contrast other branches of nursing such as Mental Health, Midwifery and other specialist clinical areas such as Accident an emergency and community nursing.

An element of the game includes a pack of images which I have developed for students to use in the levels of the game examples of which are below:



(Images are copyright and trademark protected)

The market

The specific target market for my game is universities of which there are 109 in the UK, colleges of higher education, the NHS, Institutions which run healthcare management courses estimated to be 353 in the UK. The interactive educational games market is estimated to be worth £50 million annually in the UK. The market is still immature with total sales still growing at % per annum. The US market is worth around \$381 million.

The cost of training a nurse in the UK is well over £44,000 per nurse. Exact figures on total number of nurses trained in the UK are difficult to obtain however commissioned numbers for nurse training for the year 2009/2010 for England was 23,467. The use of interactive learning tools in nurse education is still relatively limited though it is a growing market. Examples of some blended learning strategies include E – portfolio's; Educational nursing skills DVD'S.

In the UK nurse education is carried out by Universities with student nurses typically undertaking a 3 or 4 year Diploma or degree course. Courses are 50 per cent practice and 50 percent theory.

Route to Market

- Direct marketing to universities and via conferences
- Market to NHS via medipex
- Advertise in HEALTHEDCO – UK and European market
- ICEP international education, research and innovation conference in Madrid in November 2010 – could open opportunities for international market for game.
- Simbionix and Laerdal - USA based simulation large market leaders in simulation - want to approach re licensing /franchise opportunities.

Branding

I believe I have succeeded in developing and designing a distinctive, easily recognizable, easily remembered brand. Recent Market research I carried out at a conference where I

marketed my game highlighted that potential customers were drawn to my stand by its strong brand identity.

The name SORT:Ed is I believe catchy and is derived from an idea around sorting out education. I ran a focus group with a group of graphic design graduates and after several sessions and playing my game with the group, the name SORT: Ed was conceived. The focus groups felt the name was “contemporary” and “Cool”

I then worked with a branding expert and website designer to develop a recognizable brand and logo for my game. The Logo shown below of a wise owl and is I feel in keeping with the learning and education link and I use a small limited range of bright fresh colours which will appeal to my predominantly young target audience for the game.

The wing denotes the concept of nurturing the students playing my games and the idea of having an arm or in this case a ‘wing’ around the student and facilitating their learning.

I have also purchased a domain name and developed a website with holding page see: www.sorteducation.co.uk for details. I then worked with a design company to develop the packaging for my board game and used the colours and Owl logo to ensure a coherent branding image.

I have been successful in producing 100 copies of my game, promotional leaflets and marketing materials and initially launched the game at a simulation conference in June 2010. In the space of 2 hours I took 15 provisional orders from universities, NHS trusts and 3 from universities in Denmark, USA and Sweden. (The conference delegates are not the budget holders of their courses and therefore need to seek advice from managers before confirming orders) However, since the conference 10 days ago I have received a significant number of email enquire about the game.

SWOT ANALYSIS

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Me - excellent experience, have the right qualifications and the desire to succeed. • My Husband - Director of Finance in public sector • First game produced – 100 games in stock • Lots of interest in first game , 15 games provisionally sold after only 2 hours. • Potential for 1200% profit on each game • Limited risk - little capital investment required • Fun • Innovative • Novel – conflict search found no other similar game • Competitive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public sector spending squeeze • Lack of commercial expertise • Lack of time resources to devote to developing game • Lack of resources to properly market the game.
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significant potential for European USA and worldwide market • Possibility of franchise/licensing • Potential for significant development of 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copycat games (although SORT:Ed is copyrighted and trademark protection is underway) • Demand is not guaranteed

<p>website services including consulting.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Potential for web based development to become incorporated into blended learning strategies.• I have other ideas which could be developed within the SORT: Ed brand.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Educational games are a niche market
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