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# Bill Jasper's First Night

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Bill Jasper was teaching his first course for University of Maryland University College, a course in "Productivity and Quality Control." Because he did not want to waste a lot of time the first night of class, he immediately introduced himself and said a few words about his background. Then he launched into the course requirements, explaining that students without the catalog prerequisites for the course would have to drop. "I believe in student attendance," he stated firmly. "I will take 1% off the final grade for every class you miss, and I will not give make-up exams."

Next, he discussed the class schedule (Exhibit 1). As he handed it out, Bill told his thirty-three students: "Don't worry about your grade; I'll curve the exams so that no one will flunk." He also explained that he hadn't had time to develop the complete schedule beforehand, but that he would distribute one later in the term.

"So far, so good," thought Bill, but he was disturbed by the unexpected "traffic flow" in his class. Six students straggled in as much as twenty-five minutes late. He decided that during the break he would explain to the late comers what they had missed. He felt rather insulted that several times students got up and left the classroom with their books.

About forty minutes into the session, several students raised their hands. Bill called first on an earnest-looking, elderly woman near the back of the room. "How many exams will we have?" she asked. "When will you give

them?" Bill was a little surprised, since he thought he had covered that information, but he went over it again.

"What about grading?" asked another student. "What if my term paper is late?" Bill responded that the final grade would be calculated as follows: 50% for exams, 30% for class participation, and 20% for the term paper. "The term paper must get to me on time," he stated. "I will take off one letter grade for each week your paper is late."

After answering all questions, Bill announced a ten minute break, during which he talked to a few of the late students. He was pleased to learn that one of them was involved in a productivity improvement program at her workplace and wanted to learn how to manage such a program. "Her overview of an actual work situation would be a terrific way to kick off next week's lecture," thought Bill, but as he called the class to order, he realized he had forgotten to ask the woman her name.

Now that the "logistical concerns" were out of the way, Bill began discussing the topics for the evening. To give the students a good course overview, he read the summary paragraphs from the chapters of the textbook. He also distributed a skeletal outline (Exhibit 2) of his introductory lecture. He moved along at a good clip. To obtain additional student input after he got few volunteers for his open-ended questions, he called for comments from a few students listed on the class roster. None of those responding seemed to have more than a minimal knowledge of the basics. Unfortunately, few of the students from the roster were in class, so Bill then started pointing at those seated near the front of the room for responses.

As Bill was launching into his favorite part of the lecture—how quality control and productivity need to mesh—a student raised his hand and said, "That isn't how it is in the real world where I work. All they want is quantity; they don't care about quality." Bill said that he knew this was a problem for many organizations, putting them in a vicious cycle of creating mediocre products, which then required more work later to correct problems. The student seemed satisfied. A few minutes later two students, one after the other, stood up, mumbling apologies about having to leave and walked out the door.

Bill plunged ahead, asking only a few questions. He was surprised at how fast he covered all the material he had prepared for the first night. That morning he had told his wife that he had enough material for at least two meetings, but when he reached the end of his final page of notes, he had to end the class about forty-five minutes early. "I guess there's no harm done," he thought. "I went over all the key points on the handout."

As Bill drove home, he reflected on his first night of teaching for

University College. When he was a student, he had felt that he could teach many of the classes better than some of his ivory-towered, removed-from-the-real-world teachers. But now that he had an opportunity to teach his own class, he wasn't so sure.

## BILL JASPER'S FIRST NIGHT
### *EXHIBIT 1:*
### SYLLABUS

Instructor:  Bill Jasper
Course:    TEMN 350, Productivity and Quality Assurance
Section:    4031
Text:      James H. Harrington. The Improvement Process: *How America's Leading Companies Improve Quality.* New York: McGraw-Hill, 1987.

### Schedule - First Half of Term

| Date | Topics | Chapter Assignments |
|------|--------|---------------------|
| 1/31 | Introduction to course Importance of productivity improvement and quality assurance | |
| 2/7 | Introduction to productivity improvement The changing environment of work and organizations | 1 & 2 |
| 2/14 | Management and employee awareness and commitment | 3 & 4 |
| 2/21 | Evaluating and describing work and organizations Work measurement | 5 & 6 |
| 2/28 | Work-distribution analysis Operations auditing | 7 |
| 3/7 | Operations auditing results Quality control concepts | 8 |
| 3/14 | Midterm Exam - to be continued | |

### Requirements

Exams: Midterm and final
Term paper: 20 pages

BILL JASPER'S FIRST NIGHT
*EXHIBIT 2:*
LECTURE OUTLINE

## Importance of Productivity to Quality Assurance

— Productivity improvement — what is it?
— How does it relate to quality assurance?
— Exactly what is quality assurance?
— Where's the beef? or why should a firm or individual care about them?
— Quality assurance and control may sometimes be opposed to high output.
— Ways the two can coexist.
— Techniques to be examined include:

— work measurement
— work distribution Analysis
— operations auditing
— sampling

— statistical control charting
— Quality measures
— specifications to standards
— Quality & productivity monitoring

# Use of the Case entitled "Bill Jasper's First Night"

## Barbara Millis

University of Maryland University College

Each semester about fifty new adjunct faculty at The University of Maryland University College receive a letter inviting them to our New Faculty Orientation. Because a major goal of the session is to get participants to reflect on the effective teaching of adult learners and because the case study has proved to be a useful approach for accomplishing this goal, the letter also asks potential participants to read and reflect on a case study that is enclosed. The case, entitled "Bill Jasper's First Night," is useful for focusing attention on issues related to getting a class off to a good start.

When using the case study, I try to model cooperative learning techniques, active learning, appropriate time on task, and respect for diversity. At the beginning of the three-hour orientation session, I greet each arrival with a welcoming smile and a playing card. The cards have been presorted into groups of six (e.g., six aces, six two's, etc.). I try to divide the teams evenly by gender and to mix faculty from various disciplines, just as in a traditional classroom faculty might form heterogeneous teams by mixing students by achievement level, gender, ethnic background, and age. To initiate the discussion of the case, I ask each faculty member to gather at a table with a tent card displaying the number of her/his playing card.

When faculty are seated in their respective teams, I explain, using an overhead projector, the procedures we will follow (for a description of the procedures, see Appendix A). The projected transparencies are also available as handouts at each table; on the tables we also put extra copies of the case. These are the instructions I give:

1. Take two minutes to review the case;
2. Prepare to discuss the first two questions as a whole group, with responses from any individual in any team;
3. After we conclude a five-minute group discussion on the two general questions about Bill's performance, begin working together on the specific question assigned to your team on the transparencies and the handouts. Be certain to introduce yourselves to other team members and to identify two people who will assume the roles of recorder and reporter. Each team should determine three major points about your specific question that your reporter can share with the whole group. Take twenty minutes for this exercise.

As the teams discuss their respective questions for twenty minutes, I circulate among them to monitor progress and to head off any potential problems, just as faculty would do in a cooperative classroom. I can also discover if any groups need extra time and encourage those finishing early to tackle another team's question.

The ideas generated by each group in response to their questions are typically recorded by each team on a flip chart or consolidated on an overhead transparency as they are reported out. After all teams (usually seven or eight) have reported, we distribute "The Return of Bill Jasper" for at-home reading as a way of encouraging ongoing collaboration among participants and further reflection about effective teaching in the initial stages of a course. (The case entitled "The Return of Bill Jasper" is also included in this volume immediately following "Bill Jasper's First Night.")

With a smaller number of participants, we use teams of four. In that case, we have the option of assigning the roles—a faster process—based on the suit of the cards. (e.g., I want the "heart" in each group to be the recorder and the "club" to be the reporter). This is a common cooperative learning technique called "Numbered Heads."

New Faculty Orientation concludes with an evaluation, a practice emphasizing the importance of feedback. Faculty consistently indicate that the case study session is the most valuable part of the evening. Comments usually indicate that faculty are well aware and appreciative of our modeling efforts.

BILL JASPER'S FIRST NIGHT
# Appendix A

## The University of Maryland University College New Faculty Orientation

### *General Instructions*

Please consider using the suggested small group roles to help focus your discussions.

Each group should determine 2 major points they want to share with the larger group.

The recorder should note these points.

After all groups have finished, each reporter briefly explains the points.

### *Questions for All Groups to Discuss*

1. Are there any grounds for Bill's uneasiness about the next class?
2. Did Bill do a good job? Why?

### Group 1 and Group 5

How could Bill improve his syllabus?

### Group 2 and Group 6

What course expectations, requirements, and grading policies should Bill establish in this case and how could he present them?

### Group 3 and Group 7

How could Bill address the problems and concerns of older students and capitalize on their class-related experiences?

### Group 4 and Group 8

What classroom procedures or policies should Bill initiate to avoid the difficult situations that arose?

### *Group Roles*

*Facilitator:* Makes certain that all members have an opportunity to contribute constructively; monitors the time and helps the group stay on task.

*Recorder:*  Carefully summarizes and records the group's ideas.
*Reporter:*  Shares group's ideas with others.
*Checker:*  Makes certain that all members understand the task(s) and their outcomes.