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THE TEACHING CASE FOR PRODUCT MANAGEMENT IN THE ELECTRONIC COMPONENT INDUSTRY -USING COMPANY WAS A CASE STUDY.

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ABSTRACT

Company W is one of the biggest Electronic Component Distributors in Taiwan. In the electronic component industry, W company plays a buffer role between upstream and downstream companies. It coordinates order quantity and production time. In addition, it can also reduce loss caused by uncertain situations like urgent or rescheduling orders. While an electronic component distributor may face many uncertain situations, product managers in the company face tremendous challenges in making ordering decisions. Currently, product managers in the W company only depend on their experience and intuition to make choices. In other words, W company does not have a clear rule or method to educate their product managers. According to Harvard Business Publishing (2015), "using case method teaching can let students enjoy the lively, participatory nature of an approach that enables them to play an active role in the learning process." Thus, W company collaborates with us to design a teaching case for their product managers.

Roberts, M. J. (2001) pointed out some tips for writing a good case. In addition to prepare an outline, it is important to use a time line for understand the logical relationships between events. Simulation can easily be built in case by means of spreadsheet or data, which is available over the web as "courseware". Analysis of financial data is often helpful to make available in spreadsheet. There are many teaching cases on Harvard Business Pub.. Gourville, J. T. (2011) made a pricing simulation software to simulate rental car agency. Students can check the dashboard to overview several cities' market share and set each price to maximize inventory and profit. For every pricing decision, students must consider competitive reactions. Instructors can help students using varied scenarios to experience different pricing challenges. Other teaching cases like Hammond, J. H. (1994) extended beer game to a board version that made it easier to understand how supply chains work. Frei, F. X., & Shapiro, R. D. (2009) used some simulation models teaching in executive education programs. Students can increase their intuition and understand core operation concepts via group discussing. Mollick, E. (2014) has developed simulation for students to learn starting a new company. While incorporating simulation and games into teaching case is helpful for students to understand difficult concepts, rules and theories. We aim to use this approach to design our teaching case for students to understand how to determine order amount and time in an uncertain environment.

We started this research in July, 2015. Our research plan will go through one year and be divided into three stages. First, we will conduct interviews with product managers in W companies. In this stage, our goal is to identify questions for students and prepare potential answers. Second, we will incorporate the questions and answers into a simulation or game. We will invite employees to test the simulation model and refine it. At the last stage, we will prepare teaching tutorial to illustrate the theories and concepts behind the simulation model and the teaching goals of this case. We expect this research will deliver three outputs:

1. The implicit knowledge about ordering amount and time extracted from from product managers.
2. A case with simulation and gaming design.
3. A teaching tutorial that illustrates how to use the case to educate product managers.

Keyword: Teaching case, simulation, electronic component industry, product management.

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