5-1-2007

Individual Incentives versus Team Performance: Lessons from a Game of Charades

Shawn E. Peacock
Alliant International University

Patricia Denise Lopez
Alliant International University

Marlon F. Sukal
Alliant Internaional University

Individual Incentives versus Team Performance: Lessons from a Game of Charades

SHAWN E. PEACOCK
Alliant International University

PATRICIA DENISE LOPEZ
Alliant International University

MARLON F. SUKAL
Alliant International University

In this article, we describe a modified game of Charades that was developed to facilitate a discussion on the basic principles of effective reward system design. Students are organized into small groups. Incentive schemes are then manipulated so that one player within the group strives for an individual incentive, while the rest of the team play for a group reward. Through this simple and "fun" activity, students learn firsthand what happens when individual and team interests and incentives are not aligned. This experiential learning activity also offers excellent opportunities to discuss group dynamics, communication and coordination, and the importance of maintaining a systemic view of organizational performance.

Keywords: motivation, incentives, teams, group dynamics, experiential learning

Introduction

Teaching and learning about motivation should be a motivating experience in and of itself. In this article, we would like to share an experiential learning activity that we recently designed for a graduate course in Work Motivation. This exercise served as a prelude to a discussion on how misaligned incentive systems are detrimental to overall organizational productivity. The exercise was inspired by various articles on rewards (Pearce, 1987; Kerr, 1995) that were included in the Porter, Bigley and Steers (2002) textbook *Motivation and Work Behavior*, 7th edition.

In particular, one article by Jone L. Pearce (1987) points out that merit pay does not necessarily work in all of today's organizations. Pearce argues that contingent pay plans for individual performance are based on the erroneous assumption that the overall performance of an organization is the simple sum of every individual member's distinct contributions. In reality, the work that needs to be completed within organizations is often complex, uncertain, and involves the interdependence of multiple individuals and groups. Individual incentive plans can be detrimental when they motivate individuals to act in ways that are not helpful to their teams and the organization as a whole.

Steve Kerr's classic article "On the Folly of Rewarding A, while Hoping for B" also emphasizes how well-meaning reward systems do not achieve what they set out to accomplish. Kerr (1975; 1995) provides several examples of how reward systems become "fouled up" such that undesired behaviors are reinforced, while the desired behaviors are ignored or unrewarded. Consistent with reinforcement theory, people pay careful attention to what is being measured and rewarded because these cue them on how to behave. Kerr emphasizes that managers need to be very careful about identifying what they are trying to achieve, and then determining whether or not they are rewarding appropriately. It is noteworthy that a 1995 polling of Academy of Management Executive (AME) advisors 20 years after Kerr's article was first published showed that 90 percent of respondents believe Kerr's folly is still prevalent among corporations. Respondents to the AME poll cite three major reasons for why this folly persists today: a) the reluctance or inability of corporations to rethink and retool their traditional performance management systems and rewards practices; b) the lack of a broader systems view of key performance results for the organization; and c) the continued focus on short-term results by managers and shareholders ("More on the Folly," 1995).

These basic themes continue to be echoed in more recent publications on reward systems. For example, Wilson's (2003) book on innovative reward systems for the workplace stresses the need to align rewards with the organization's strategy and culture. According to Wilson, the purpose of reward systems is to focus the attention of individuals and groups on what the organization as a whole needs to do to succeed. In order to create effective reward systems, organizations must first understand the key drivers of performance, and then identify the behaviors and programs that will yield the most value to the organization. Chingos (2002), editor of a recent compensation book by Mercer human resource consultants, notes further that paying for performance in today's rapidly changing economy has become more complicated, and that organizations need to have a holistic view of the reward system (including how rewards are linked to individual, group, and overall performance). The importance of aligning incentive schemes has been applied most recently to today's global supply chains. In a *Harvard Business Review* article, Narayanan and Raman (2004) describe how supply chains from prominent companies have "imploded" because the interests of the various parties in the chain (e.g., contractors, suppliers) were not aligned. Instead, behaviors that were not in the best interests of the company or the entire chain itself were unintentionally reinforced. Narayanan and Raman conclude that executives must make sure all the companies in their supply chain are "pulling in the same direction" (p. 94) by ensuring that their interests and incentives are simultaneously aligned.

We also note that one popular approach that many private, public, and nonprofit organizations currently use for strategic management, organizational performance measurement, and rewards is Kaplan and Norton's (1992) Balanced Scorecard. The Balanced Scorecard system encourages managers to pay attention to the most important metrics driving their organization's success. A key contribution of the Balanced Scorecard is the inclusion of other metrics beyond the traditional financial measures, namely customer, internal business processes, and learning and growth outcomes. In their recent book, *The Strategy Focused Organization*, Kaplan and Norton (2000) include a discussion of individual and team rewards, and highlight the importance of linking these incentives to organizational metrics. They cite specific Fortune 500 companies such as CIGNA, Winterthur, and Citicorp which have a

mixture of individual and group rewards, and Mobil, which does not have individual rewards (only group rewards.) Kaplan and Norton emphasize that these companies promote team-based rewards to encourage cooperation and group problem-solving, which in turn facilitate the attainment of the organization's overall objectives.

In deciding to design and use this exercise in our Work Motivation class, we felt it was important for students not only to read about the above ideas and examples provided by the articles in their textbook, but also to be part of a short but memorable experience that illustrates these points effectively. We wanted to engage our students to *perform* as part of an "organization," *observe* what happens when there are misaligned goals and reward systems, and then *reflect* on the implications of incentives to individual and group behaviors as well as overall organizational performance.

Description of the Charades Exercise

Overview and Learning Objectives

The basic foundation of this exercise is the game of Charades. In the form most commonly played today, Charades is an acting game in which one person acts out a word or phrase which the other players would have to guess. The objective is to use gestures rather than verbal language to communicate the meaning of the word or phrase to the other players.

In this Charades activity, we organize the players into small groups. Each group is asked to identify individuals to play the following roles: a) "writer" (who is told to come up with as many words and phrases as he or she could); b) "actor" (who will mime the words or phrases produced by the writer); and two or three "guessers" (who will have to identify the words or phrases acted out). We manipulate the reward systems so that the writer who produces the most words or phrases out of all the writers from the groups wins a prize. At the same time, the group that identifies the highest percentage of words and phrases from the total produced by their writer also wins a prize. The writers are briefed separately and are not made aware of the group prize. The actors and guessers do not know about the individual prize for the writer. In this way, we create a misalignment of reward systems.

While this activity was initially designed for a graduate course in Work Motivation, we believe this activity can be adopted for almost any student level (i.e., high school, undergraduate, graduate). It can also be used for employee groups with a learning objective of understanding motivation, rewards, and group behavior.

The specific learning goals for this exercise are:
- To experience firsthand what happens to overall organizational performance when individual and team goals and reward systems are not aligned;
- To learn basic principles about reward system design, especially the importance of maintaining a systems view, aligning individual and group goals, and communication and coordination;
- To observe and discuss group dynamics during a performance task.

Timing

The estimated time needed for the exercise, debriefing, and discussion is 60 minutes. This assumes a class size of 25 students, organized into five groups of five. The time allotments are as follows:

- Introduction of activity: 5 minutes
- Instructions: 10 minutes
- Performance of Charades activity: 20 minutes
- Debriefing and discussion: 25 minutes

Additional time will be required for class sizes that are significantly greater than 25. Should the class be too large (e.g., 50 or 60 students), the facilitator may decide to ask for volunteers to form groups that can perform the exercise for the rest of the class. This is not the ideal scenario however, since we believe students enjoy participating in games, and will also learn more as a result of actual experience.

Materials and Room Set-up

The list of materials needed for the Charades activity is provided below. This is followed by a description of the room set-up and the use of the materials.

- Stopwatch or watch with a second hand (for the facilitator)
- Small table and chair (to be placed in the front of the room)
- Post-it pads or small notepad
- Pen/pencil
- Two baskets (one labeled "For Actor" and another labeled "Completed")
- Blackboards/white boards (or 2 flipcharts and marking pens)
- Individual reward for writer (e.g., gift card, cash, etc.)
- Group reward for winning team (e.g., gift cards, cash, etc.)

The room should have enough space to accommodate all participants and facilitators. There should be sufficient space in the front of the room (10 feet deep or more) to accommodate each group of four to five students who will be playing Charades in front of the rest of the class. There should be a small table and chair in the front of the room, where the writer will be seated. The writer's table and chair should be positioned facing away from the area where the actor and guessers will be playing. The table should have a pad of Post-its (or a small notepad), a pen or pencil, and a small basket for the writer to place the words and phrases he or she has written for the actor to mime. This basket will be labeled "For Actor." The table should also have another basket labeled "Completed" for the actor to place the words and phrases already acted out.

The room should have a blackboard where the scores of the different groups can be posted by the facilitator. A sample scoring template is provided in the appendix. Another blackboard should be available for the facilitator to record observations and insights during the large group discussion. (White boards or flipcharts can serve as alternatives to the blackboards.)

There should be an individual reward for the best writer, and a group reward for the best group. These rewards can be tailored for the particular groups undergoing this exercise. For example,

a $5 coffee shop gift card can be awarded to the most productive writer, and similar $5 gift cards can be awarded to the members of the best group. Other good rewards for students or employees include cash, gift cards for other popular restaurants, and movie tickets.

Facilitation

This activity can be administered by one facilitator (e.g., the instructor). However, we recommend having two facilitators (the instructor plus an assistant, such as a teaching assistant or a student). The lead facilitator will take charge of giving instructions, keeping time during the exercise, enforcing game rules, leading the debrief of the activity, and facilitating the general discussion. The co-facilitator (the assistant) will help by assembling the materials, making sure the room is set up according to instructions, keeping score during the activity, and helping coordinate the "changeovers" between groups. The co-facilitator can also help enforce game rules and provide additional feedback regarding the dynamics of the groups during the general discussion.

Having an assistant or co-facilitator to help with scoring and logistical arrangements is advantageous because it reduces the task load of the lead facilitator. Rather than having one facilitator juggle multiple activities, two individuals working together will have more control of the activity, be better able to observe participant behaviors, and offer multiple perspectives and insights during the discussion session.

Prior to the session, the facilitators should read the Pearce (1987) and Kerr (1995) articles in Porter, Bigley & Steers (2002) textbook. The facilitators should also review the instructions for the exercise carefully. These are outlined in the appendix.

The facilitators will assign the Pearce and Kerr articles for students to read prior to the class. This will enhance their ability to integrate their observations during the activity with the course material on reward systems. We anticipate that other instructors or trainers may wish to use this activity for other classes, such as Organizational Behavior or Group Dynamics. In this case, they will wish to link this activity to appropriate chapters in their respective textbooks (e.g. chapters on motivation or reward, or group behavior). Having students read relevant material prior to the session will aid in integrating the results of the exercise with the class discussion.

Procedure

Please refer to the appendix for detailed instructions for this activity, including guide questions to be used for the discussion. A sample scoring template is also included.

Outcomes

Due to the differing individual and group incentives in this exercise, facilitators can expect that the individual writers will be highly motivated to produce as many words and phrases in order to win the separate prize. Indeed, in our experience, most writers tend to produce words and phrases at a rapid pace particularly during the first two minutes, such that the actors and

guessers have difficulty keeping up. There is usually confusion and strain among the actors and guessers, who are under the impression that their group will win based on the percentage of "correctly guessed" answers. The three-minute time limit per group pressures all participants to perform as best and as fast as they can. In a few groups, we have noticed actors and guessers falling very much behind the production of their writers that they actually "passed" on several words and phrases. Some actors have crumpled papers with difficult words and phrases, throwing them on the floor. Another actor specifically told his writer to slow down, even though talking between actors and writers is technically not allowed.

By the end of the first two minutes, most writers significantly slow down, particularly when they notice their groups are unable to keep up with the number of words and phrases produced. We have also observed some writers deliberately writing words and phrases that are "easier" to act out and identify. Other writers even stop writing until their actors and guessers get the ones they have produced correctly. This indicates that the individual writers are being "selfless," sacrificing their own potential rewards for the sake of the group.

We must point out that some groups may attempt to gain unfair advantage over others, and that facilitators should be highly observant during the entire activity. For example, a writer and actor from one group may develop a strategy to "prewrite" words and phrases before their group's turn for the exercise, so as to give themselves an advantage. Facilitators must be very careful about separating the writers and the actors/guessers and not allowing them to communicate with each other before they take their turn to play Charades.

In our first run of this exercise, the group that won the prize for the highest percentage of correct answers had four members who were close friends. This group appeared to have a higher level of "unspoken understanding" in the way the members communicated with each other that propelled their high level of performance. The other groups in the class were more heterogeneous and lacked the same synergy. This illustrates the importance of group cohesiveness, communication, and coordination in interdependent tasks.

After the exercise, participants typically comment that they enjoyed the competition and were motivated to win the prizes. They liked watching the actors trying to mime out the different words and phrases, and observing how team members deal with the unexpected behaviors of the writers. There is a lot of energy and enthusiasm generated by this exercise. In most groups, the members (particularly the actors) appear hesitant and self-conscious at first, but approximately 30 seconds into the game, they completely forget the audience and are focused on the task. Overall, participants describe the activity to be "fun," "different," "interesting," and "challenging."

During the debriefing and discussion, we reveal the differing instructions and incentives for the writers and the actors/guessers. We also confirm from the participants that these incentives in fact drove their differing behaviors. The writers acknowledge that they were motivated to write as many ideas as possible. The actors mention that they tried to act out as many words and phrases as possible. Some actors say that they tended to be conscious about picking the easiest words and phrases to mime, so as to increase their percentage score. The guessers were simply trying to blurt out as many possible answers as they could till they got it right.

Most participants will comment that while they did not realize that there were differing instructions and rewards during the game, they sensed a "disconnect" between what the writers were doing, and what the rest of the group were trying to accomplish. And in the end, most writers did tend to "sacrifice" their own potential gains for the good of the group. The typical theme that emerges during the post-activity discussion is that the needs of the group were more important than the individual rewards.

When asked to cite the factors that were most influential to their performance in the game, participants typically mention the following: the rewards or incentives; the writer' ability to come up with words and phrases that are easy to recognize and act out; their actor's miming ability; the guessers' knowledge of movies, famous people, and places; and whether or not the actor and guessers had discussed strategies on how to communicate nonverbally with each other, particularly how to interpret certain actions and gestures. All these factors point to the importance of individual abilities and contributions, as well as teamwork and communication (before and during the exercise).

When asked to reflect on the activity and its link to the readings, the participants are quick to note how the incentives for the writer and the rest of the group were not aligned with each other, thus leading to differing goals and behaviors. Our students often point out that this could happen in actual organizations where work is often conducted within and between teams. When one individual or team acts without coordinating with the rest, stress and conflict could occur, and overall performance is hampered. Facilitators can bring up the idea of "functional silos" and how, in the "ideal environment," each functional department within the organization aims to perform well for their department as well as for the good of the company. However, the different groups or departments often do not know enough of what the others are doing or are rewarded for different things, and they sometimes counteract each other's efforts. One common example of the "silo" mentality and the effect of misaligned reward systems is when the sales group of an organization is rewarded simply for generating a high level of orders. There is often insufficient coordination with the manufacturing group, which may not have the capability of fulfilling these orders within the set amount of time. As a result, the overall performance of the company suffers, and customer satisfaction plummets.

During the discussion, participants should be encouraged to come up with their own examples. For instance, one of our students who had experience working in a major supermarket cited a recent experience about a store manager who was offered incentives by a consumer goods company to order a particular brand of potato chips. The incentives were not based on actual potato chip sales by the supermarket, but on the size of the store manager's order. Because there were no rewards for the other store personnel to "move" the stock, the supermarket ended up with pallets of unsold potato chips in their backroom.

The session should end with a reiteration of the key points about designing and implementing reward systems:
- Be clear on the behaviors you wish to reinforce. Desired behaviors are those that are clearly linked to the company's strategy and objectives (what it needs to accomplish in order to succeed);

- Be careful about what you measure and what you reward in the workplace;
- Individual incentives can enhance individual performance, but make sure these do not interfere with teamwork and broader organizational objectives;
- Maintain a systems view of the organization. Make sure the goals and incentives of individuals and teams are aligned, so that everyone is working toward the same overall objective.

Variations and Other Teaching Ideas

There are a few obvious variations to this activity that facilitators may wish to try out. One variation is to alter the reward system by significantly increasing the size of the individual reward. In our original game, we offered the individual writers a $5 gift card for the most number of words and phrases generated. We offered each of the group members a $5 gift card for the highest percentage score. Raising the amount of the individual prize to $10 for the writers, while maintaining the same incentive for the group, could induce more individualistic behavior. This should reduce the writers' tendency to "sacrifice" their individual goals for the teams' gain.

A second variation on reward systems would be to add incentives for the guessers. For example, each individual guesser could be rewarded by how many words or phrases each of them gets right during the session. This individual incentive should create competition among the guessers, who should now be less likely to share ideas and potential responses among each other. Another option would be to reward guessers simply on how many responses they give (whether right or wrong). The most guesses by each individual within the three-minute session would be rewarded. This variation could significantly increase the number of guesses made by each participant, without necessarily increasing the quality or accuracy of the answers. In fact, because the individually focused guessers are more set on simply making as many guesses as possible, this could undermine the overall speed and productivity of the group.

Still another variation would be to purposely vary the composition of the teams. Facilitators could create some groups where the members have a strong, positive, and prior relationship with one another; other groups could have members who do not know each other very well. The objective here is to determine the extent to which the level of group cohesion affects teamwork and productivity. This could be an interesting activity for a session focusing on group dynamics.

Finally, facilitators could provide an external "benchmark" for group performance. The actual benchmark could be manipulated depending on the instructional objectives. For example, in addition to stating that the winning team is the one with the highest percentage of correctly identified words and phrases, the facilitators could say that the average percentage score of previous teams was 80 percent. This would cue the teams to try to match or even beat this mark. Or the facilitators could mention that an "excellent" percentage to aim for in this activity would be 90 percent. Once again, this would provide a specific challenging goal for the participating groups. The inclusion of a benchmark parallels the current reality of teams and

organizations operating against existing standards or working to achieve specific performance objectives.

In general, this exercise could be treated as an "experiment in practice." The design is simple enough to allow variations in incentive systems and group composition. Facilitators may wish to create "experimental" conditions with varying rewards and a "control" condition with no rewards. Students will have the opportunity to observe, compare, and contrast behaviors under these varying conditions.

Should there be additional time remaining in the session after the activity, facilitators may also wish to show participants video clips from relevant movies. These can serve to reinforce their learning by providing additional and memorable examples. Some excellent films on reward structures and human behavior are *Rat Race* and *Glengarry Glen Ross*. In the movie *Glengarry Glen Ross,* "loser" salesmen in a real estate office are given a strong individual incentive to succeed. Because of competitive pressures, one of them is forced to resort to robbery, which affects the entire office. *Rat Race* is a comedy wherein six pairs of contestants in Las Vegas are involved in a high-stakes race to retrieve $2 million stashed in a locker in New Mexico. The movie effectively illustrates the effect of rewards on individual and team behavior.

Conclusion

This experiential learning activity is aimed at hammering home some very basic lessons for managers and students of organizational behavior. The frequency with which we hear or read about reward "follies" today suggests that these basic principles are still not understood or remain overlooked in practice. Finding new ways to teach these fundamental reward concepts, beyond using readings and cases, is thus a useful endeavor for management educators.

Our own objective was to design a simple activity that would stir students' interest in discussing the serious topic of rewards and incentives in the workplace. Our experience with this simple modified game of Charades has been a positive one, allowing us to generate an unusual level of energy and excitement within the class. The activity not only allowed our students to perform a competitive task as part of a team, but also to experience what happens when individual and team rewards are not aligned. Because of this, the insights gained from the exercise are more personal, meaningful, and memorable. And as a result, our students have developed a more critical eye when it comes to performance goals, measurements, and reward systems, and they will continuously seek to maintain a broader systemic view of organizations.

REFERENCES

Chingos, P. T. (2002). *Paying for performance: A guide to compensation management.* New York, NY: John Wiley & Sons.

Kaplan, R. S. & Norton, D. P. (1992). The balanced scorecard: Measures that drive performance. *Harvard Business Review, 70* (1), 71-79.

Kaplan, R.S. & Norton, D. P. (2000). *The strategy-focused organization: How balanced-scorecard companies thrive in the new environment.* Boston, MA: Harvard Business School.

Kerr, S. (1995). On the folly of rewarding A, while hoping for B. *Academy of Management Executive*, *9* (1), 7-14.

Kerr, S. (1975). On the folly of rewarding A, while hoping for B. *Academy of Management Journal*, *18* (4), 769-783.

More on the folly. (1995). *Academy of Management Executive*. 9(1), 15-16.

Narayanan, V. G. & Raman, A. (2004). Aligning incentives in supply chains. *Harvard Business Review*, *82* (11), 94-102.

Pearce, J.L. (1987). Why merit pay doesn't work: implications from organizational theory. In D. B. Balkin & L. R. Gomez-Mejia (Eds.), *New perspectives in compensation* (pp. 169-187). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Porter, L.W., Bigley, G.A. & Steers, R.M. (2002). *Motivation and work behavior* (7th ed.). New York, NY: McGraw-Hill/Irwin.

Wilson, T. B. (2003). *Innovative reward systems for the changing workforce.* New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.

Appendix

Instructions and Discussion Questions for the Charades Game

Note to Facilitator(s):   These instructions are written assuming there is a lead facilitator/instructor and an assistant/co-facilitator. The lead facilitator will take charge of giving instructions, keeping time, enforcing game rules, and leading the debrief and discussion. The instructions and discussion questions are italicized below. The assistant or co-facilitator will help with logistical arrangements and coordination, as well as score-keeping. We point out that this activity can certainly be administered by one facilitator only, though it will require some careful preparation and the ability to multitask. Hence we recommend soliciting the help of another individual, such as a student or teaching assistant.

Phase 1: Introduction: 5 minutes

Start by reading this to the group:
Today's exercise will focus on how rewards affect team productivity. It will be important that you follow the instructions through this exercise. Please feel free to ask questions during the instruction phase of this exercise.

We will be playing the game of Charades for this exercise. Some of you may have played Charades before and thus may be familiar with the objective and rules of the game. But let me review this game so that all of us have a common understanding of what we will be doing today.

Charades is a game in which people guess the phrase or name that the actor is thinking. The actor cannot talk, but like a mime, he or she can use body gestures to give clues to the guessers.

Phase 2: Instructions: 10 minutes

Step 1: Break the group into groups of four or five. Read this to the group:
        Please take the next two minutes to break into groups of four or five people each.

Step 2: Ask each group to select an actor and a writer. The lead facilitator reads this:
        Now please choose one person in your group who will act out the phrases for charades. This person is the actor and will also be considered the leader of the group. After you choose an actor, please choose a writer to write down the phrases. The rest of the people in the group will serve as the guessers. Once you have chosen your actors and writers, I'd like to ask everyone to leave the room except for the actors.

Step 3: Once all other participants have left the room, read this to the actors:
        You will be playing the game of Charades on the topics of movies, famous people, and places. Your writer will be responsible for providing you with words and phrases around these topics. Your writer will be writing these words and phrases on small sheets of paper and placing these in a small basket labeled "For Actor." Your

own role as actor will be to pick each word or phrase from the basket and act these out for the rest of your team to guess. When you are done acting a word or phrase, put the paper in the second basket labeled "Completed."

Each team will have three minutes to guess as many correct words and phrases as possible. The team with the highest percentage of words and phrases guessed correctly versus the total written will win. For example, if your writer gives you ten phrases and your group only guesses six phrases, your score will be 60 percent. Any team having better than 60 percent will beat you. You and your guessers are not allowed to talk to the writer during the three minutes.

Every member of the team with the highest percentage score will receive a $5 coffee shop gift card.

Are there any questions? [Answer any questions the actors may have.] *Now please go outside and send your writers in. Once the writers have come into this room, please explain the rules to the rest of the team.*

Step 4: Brief the writers once they have entered the room and the other team members are outside:

Your team will be playing the game Charades. We will be focusing on the topics of movies, famous people, and places. Your role is to write as many phrases as you can in a three minute period. You will be seated in a small table in front of the room, and will have a notepad and pen to use. Write each word or phrase on a separate sheet, and then place these in the basket for the actor to grab and act out. This basket is labeled "For Actor."

Your reward will depend on your own individual productivity. The writer with the most phrases written will get a $5 coffee shop gift card.

Now please sit outside until your team is called to play. Once your team has played their three minutes, you can stay in the room as part of the audience.

Step 5: Ask the other members of the groups to come in. Only the writers will sit outside until it is time for their group to play.

Phase 3: Game: 20 minutes

Step 1: Randomly pick teams by having actors pick a piece of paper out of a hat (or basket) that has the rank in which they will go. The first group remains in front of the room, while the rest of the participants, except for their writers who are outside the classroom, take their seats.

Step 2: Call the writer of the first team to come in and take a seat at the table. Instruct the writer to sit facing away from the rest of the group. Then read these instructions:

> *You have three minutes to play Charades. Once I say "Go," the writer should start "writing," the actor then starts "acting," and the rest of the group should start "guessing." Are you ready? Go.*

Step 3: Begin timing. After two minutes of playing, call out:

> *You have one minute left. Writer, you can turn your chair now so you are facing your group.*

[At this point, call out how much time is left every 15 seconds. At the final ten seconds, do a countdown. For example:]

> *Forty-five seconds left...*
> *Thirty seconds left...*
> *Fifteen seconds left...*
> *Ten, nine, eight, seven, six, five, four, three, two, one.*
> *Stop!*

[During playtime, the assistant or co-facilitator should keep track of how many words and phrases the writers produced and how many words and phrases the guessers got correctly by using the scoring template (see Table 1).]

Step 4: Once the group has stopped playing, note the total number of words and phrases the group guessed correctly. Then, count up all the words and phrases written by the writer on the post-its. Divide the number of correct guesses by the total number of words and phrases to get the group's percentage score. Record this on the scoreboard.

Step 5: Have the group take a seat in the audience. Ask the next group to come to the front. The assistant or co-facilitator will call their writer to come in from outside the classroom. Repeat Steps 2 to 5 of Phase 3 until all the groups have played.

Step 6: Review the scores, determine the individual and group winners, and hand out the prizes.

Phase 4: Debrief and Discussion: 25 minutes

Step 1: Ask the group what they thought of the game.
> *What did you think of this activity?*

[Ask for general reactions. Was it fun, challenging, interesting, etc? Did they think there were lessons to be learned from it?]

Step 2: After a brief discussion of initial thoughts and reactions, discuss with everyone the differing reward conditions for the writer and the rest of the team. You would debrief as follows:

> *Essentially, we wanted the class to experience what happens when the reward systems within an organization are not complementary to each other. So we manipulated the instructions and reward conditions. The individual writers were instructed to write as many words and phrases as possible. The writer who could come up with the most words and phrases (compared to all other writers) would win a $5 gift card. Meanwhile, we told the rest of the group that a reward (a $5 gift card per*

member) would be given for the group with the highest percentage of words and phrases that were guessed correctly. We anticipated that differing reward conditions would lead to differing goals and behaviors and create some level of confusion within the groups. We also wanted to observe how group members would react.

<u>Step 3</u>**:** Probe in more detail for the motivations of the writer versus the rest of the group. Then ask the group to share what they observed in their teams over the course of the game.

> *Let's break down what was happening in this activity. Writers, based on how you were going to be rewarded, what were you motivated to go for? What were your initial goals for the activity?*
>
> *Actors and guessers, what were your own goals and expectations for the activity? Before the game, did you have any discussion on how you were going to work together?*
>
> *For everyone, what did you observe in the first two minutes of your activity? What were the writers doing? What problems occurred and why? How did the actor and guessers react?*
>
> *Did behaviors change over time? For example, what happened in the final minute, when the writers were allowed to face the actors and guessers? Did things change? If so, how?*
>
> *Why do you think these changes occurred?*
> *What factors contributed to the performance of your group?*

<u>Step 4</u>: Ask participants to come up with suggestions on a better reward system.

> *If you were to go back and redesign the activity (or the "work process"), what are some things you could do to ensure that your group performs better?*
>
> *What kind of reward system would have produced the best Charades team? Why?*

[Have the participants discuss their recommendations and the reasoning behind these. During this discussion, make sure to probe on the kinds of outcomes expected from a high-performing Charades team, and check that the suggested rewards are appropriate for these desired outcomes.]

<u>Step 5</u>: Invite participants to reflect on what they learned from this exercise. Encourage them to think of other real-life examples and applications.

> *Upon reflection, what did you learn about motivation and reward systems?*
> *Can you think of real-world scenarios where similar problems occur?*
> *What other aspects of good management can we derive from this activity?*

<u>Step 6</u>: As an option, you may wish to ask for additional suggestions on how to improve the exercise.

> *What ideas do you have to make this game a better learning experience for future participants?*

Table 1

Charades Scoring Template

Group Number	Words and Phrases By Writer	Words and Phrases Guessed by Group	Percent of Correct Guesses

Shawn Peacock, is a doctoral student in Industrial-Organizational Psychology at Alliant International University, Marshall Goldsmith School of Management. He holds an M.A. in Marriage and Family Therapy and teaches classes on parenting and anger management. Shawn is also working in culture change projects at Southern California Edison's Organizational Change Management Office. He is co-founder of *Peacock-Sukal & Associates Consulting,* offering strategic consulting and practical team-building. Email: peacock8@earthlink.net

Patricia "Denise' Lopez is Assistant Professor at the Marshall Goldsmith School of Management, Alliant International University, California. She earned her Ph.D. in Organizational Psychology at Columbia University Teachers College. Her teaching and research interests are in organizational behavior, employee motivation, leadership, and organization development. As a teacher, trainer and consultant, she is constantly experimenting with new ways to help managers and students effectively integrate theory and practice in organizations. Email: dlopez@alliant.edu

Marlon Sukal is a doctoral student specializing in Industrial-Organizational Psychology at Alliant International University. His research interests are work-life balance issues—the topic of his in-progress dissertation. True to his beliefs of proper "balance," Mr. Sukal has recently resigned his place of employment (after 13 years of service) to raise his 3-year old son. As co-founder and partner of *Peacock-Sukal & Associates Consulting,* he offers clients practical initiatives translated from complex academic theory. Email: MarlonSukal@aol.com