Title:

Experiencing Business through a Business Plan Project and Entrepreneur Computer Simulation

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PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Student teams create a business plan in computer applications using Microsoft Office applications. This project provides hands-on experience in applying skills learned with Microsoft Office applications. It exposes your students to other areas of the business curriculum and helps recruit students for future business classes. This class gives students the HOW and WHY to use the Microsoft Office Tools for success in the business world. I have taught Microsoft Office using this approach at both the high school and college level. Build a Business include a "hands-on" capstone computer simulation entitled "GoVenture – Live the Life of the Entrepreneur" published by Media Spark.

PRESENTATION ABSTRACT

I developed a comprehensive project entitled "Build a Business" which teaches entrepreneurship, marketing, advertising, finance, management and teamwork. This is a project I have created and refined over the years I have taught. "Build a Business" is a complex long-term project that features short and long term goals.

Short-term goals include:
1. Brainstorm ideas for the business plan and complete the planning guide.
2. Brainstorm each student's role in the planned business and complete the planning guide.
3. Brainstorm each student's responsibility in the project and complete the planning guide.
4. Use both guides to draft a letter informing the project supervisor, me, about the project.

Long-term goals include:
1. Begin developing team skills in my students.
2. Recognize how their individual work contributed to the teams work.
3. Learn to solve problems, set goals and accomplish a task in a team environment.

There are individual reports from students in the form of memos that tell me about the student's progress and memos from the team that inform me of the team's progress. I have individual assignments for each team member in Word, Excel and Power Point. Parts of the Excel and Power Point individual work are included in the team's final written report and presentation.

Developing a detailed business plan involves the skills of planning, organizing, communicating and managing. The disciplines covered include marketing, management, financing, human resources and entrepreneurship. It also accomplishes my goal of making learning fun so that it sneaks up on the students. They get totally involved in the project and are motivated in many cases to go above and beyond project requirements in completing their work.

The end of this long-range project is to prepare a formal business plan report. Teams also prepare a Power Point presentation of their business plan to present to the class. This semester I have invited several adults from either local businesses or the community to play the role of investment bankers for whom these presentations were developed. This will further involve the community in my class and demonstrate the connection between the real world and the material studied in my classroom.

CASEstudy

GoVenture "Hooks" High School Students

"Kids today are grabbed by the graphics, the animations, and the look and feel of the GoVenture interface. It speaks to them," says Michael Perry. "But the interface Mediaspark developed," he hastens to add, "is also appropriate for adults who use the program for business training." www.goventure.net

Michael Perry

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The End User

👉 An award-winning teacher, Michael Perry teaches business education in high school and business at the University level.

Michael Perry, 43, is a full-time business education teacher at Chapel Hill High School in Douglasville, Georgia in suburban Atlanta. He also teaches business at the Coles College of Business at Kennesaw State University. In 1999, Perry received one of three state-wide Honor Teacher awards in the middle-school category sponsored by the Atlanta Journal Constitution newspaper. Later that year, he was recognized as Innovative Teacher of the Year by the Phi Delta Kappa Education Fraternity of the State University of West Georgia.   In 2001, he was again recognized by Phi Delta Kappa Education Fraternity of the State University of West Georgia as their Teacher of the Year.

The Challenge

👉 He was looking for a multi-media simulation game that would engage and instruct his students in entrepreneurship.

After teaching business communications and computer skills for 14 years, Michael Perry was looking for a multimedia simulation game that would not only engage his high school students, but also show them what it's like to be an entrepreneur.

👉 Years ago, his students had been hooked on an interactive game in which they ran a lemonade stand. Now, he was looking for the next generation business simulation game.

"Not long after I first started teaching, I brought in a rather simple program that let them run their own lemonade stand," Perry recalls. "They could see who would make the most profit, based on pricing, weather conditions (the rain clouds would appear and disappear), and I saw how hooked they were. Since that day, I've been hooked on them using technology. Over the years, I'd been looking for something more sophisticated on the graphics end, to upgrade that lemonade stand. The more realistic you can make it, the more they enjoy it and learn from it."

👉 He spotted GoVenture at

The Solution

It was at the National Education Computer Conference in Atlanta, in the summer of 2000, that Perry first came across *GoVenture*. "I thought, 'This is what I've been looking for,'" he recalls, adding that the game combines deep educational content with engaging interactivity.

Using GoVenture in the Classroom

Perry introduced *GoVenture* in late November, 2000 to 4 classes of 28 ninth, tenth, and eleventh graders in his Microcomputer Applications course. While writing their own business plans, his students learn and demonstrate their ability to use PowerPoint, Excel, and Microsoft Word. Having completed the business plan project, the next step was to ground their theoretical understanding in actual experience.

"I had installed the *GoVenture* icon on their desktop," Perry relates, "and it caught their attention. Before I even assigned it, some had already discovered it, and they were enthralled. You could tell they were excited with what they were doing. I said to myself, 'I have found the right tool.'

Once the students set up shop within the game, they immediately began comparing to see whose business was doing better than the others. They found out the hard way how important it was to have reliable employees because they had to fill in when an employee failed to show up for work."

Learning Outcomes

"It's a high-quality multimedia simulation that fills in the knowledge they don't have," observes Perry. "That's why I use it as a capstone. As an educational product, it ties everything together."

Asked what learning outcomes he attributes to *GoVenture*, Perry replies: "Balance. They see it's important in life to balance what you're doing. One of the things about the newer generation is they've already experienced much more stress about how to balance things, than we ever did. So here, they're getting a reinforcement; the real world is like this, but there are ways to handle the stress."

For Perry, another key learning outcome is teamwork. "This is something we don't teach much in school," he says, "but the main reason people get fired from their first job is because they can't work with other people. Here, they learn they're not doing everything by themselves. In the simulation, they're having to hire and delegate work. As entrepreneurs, each of them is the head of a virtual team. This reinforces the actual team skills that they learned in the business plan project." He adds that they're also learning what it means to take care of customers and how to price a product, as well as basic business terminology.

In addition to his busy schedule of teaching a full course load at high school and teaching two nights per week at Kennesaw State University, Perry has promoted *GoVenture* at several conferences for Alabama, Georgia and Florida teachers. The three questions that are normally asked are: 1) Can I apply this to my classroom?, 2) Is it easy to use?, and 3) Will it hold the students' attention? "It passes all three questions," he reports.

Michael Perry has moved on from the lemonade stand—and now he's spreading the word.

by Andrew Safer, Freelance Writer

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GoVenture - Live the Life of an Entrepreneur has won numerous awards in the United States and Canada and was recently given a 5-star rating by PC Magazine. *GoVenture* is available on CD-ROM and can be run on both PC and Macintosh computers. The program is supported by a comprehensive set of Instructor/Student print materials and a companion website.