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PRODUCE YOUR OWN VIDEO CASES FOR CLASSROOM USE: A DEMONSTRATION

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ABSTRACT

Video-recorded incidents and cases are very effective for focusing class discussion on specific concepts. They convey visual and emotional impacts that written cases cannot rival. Although video recordings are commercially available, it is difficult to find precisely what is needed to address the specific topics you may wish to teach. Most universities have video production facilities and technicians that can produce excellent quality video tapes. Drama departments usually have faculty members and students who are delighted to apply their talents to useful projects.

An instructor can be the catalyst and coordinator that brings these resources together to produce interesting and effective classroom experiences for students.

Wright State University has produced a series of video-recorded incidents and short cases about specific concepts in basic management. This demonstration will show some of these and tell how they can be used to stimulate classroom discussion.

VIDEO: AN EFFECTIVE MEDIUM FOR LEARNING

This is the age of television. Most of what we know about current events, places, and problems is learned by watching video programs. Their visual and aural effects stir our senses and our emotions more than printed words could ever accomplish.

This medium is particularly useful for presenting case situations to students. Written cases require each student to conceptualize the situation described. If the case setting and circumstances are unfamiliar, a student may envision a situation quite different from that intended by the writer. Since individuals can tie new ideas only to what they already know, a classroom of students with heterogeneous backgrounds may have many different conceptualizations of a single written incident. This leads to confusion of ideas and poor communication. Discussions tend to center around the facts of the case instead of the issues.

When video cases are used, everyone sees and hears the situation as it is. Students who have never worked in an office, hospital or factory can observe the setting and better conceptualize the situation. If the case is well-done, its visual and aural impact stirs emotions and incites strong reaction. This promotes spontaneous discussion and makes it much more interesting for students. All members of the group have seen and heard the same thing so everyone starts with the same picture of the situation. The instructor can concentrate on emphasizing and summarizing important concepts.

HOW TO MAKE VIDEO CASES AT YOUR UNIVERSITY

To produce video cases, at least three departments must

cooperate: the department offering the course in which the cases will be used; the department in charge of video instruction and production and the drama department. These organizations must be convinced that the project is worthwhile and will benefit them. They must be willing to work it into their programs and schedules. If this is done, each will probably contribute to the cost through normal budgeting channels. If money is a problem, it may be necessary to justify a grant or find commercial sponsors who will underwrite the project in exchange for use of the products or as a donation to the University.

Once the coordination and funding are settled, the many tasks necessary to make it happen may begin.

1. The idea for the case (situation, setting, and action) should be written, then expanded into a script.
2. Actors and actresses must be assigned to the characters in the script.
3. Locations, settings, props, lighting and costumes must be assembled.
4. Video equipment and supplies must be prepared and scheduled.
5. Rehearsals are necessary.
6. Scenes are taped, reviewed, and re-taken.
7. Tapes must be edited.
8. The final product should be reviewed and approved by the using department.
9. Classroom testing is essential to assure a useful case.
10. Copies of the master tape should be made so the master can be preserved for additional copies.

HOW TO USE VIDEO CASES

The video cases should be used to teach specific concepts in a course. Since it is impractical to include large volumes of data or details, they cannot take the place of comprehensive or analytical written cases. However, they may be augmented with detailed handouts to expand their usefulness and provide students with opportunities to practice quantitative and analytical techniques.

They are best used as a basis for discussion of important ideas that are basic to the course being taught. For example, principles of organization, delegation, communication, individual behavior, leadership styles, group dynamics, conflict management, and many others are easily illustrated by "live" incidents portrayed on the video screen. Following is an example of an incident on video tape and a lesson plan for using it.

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“SUBOPTIMIZATION: A DIRTY WORD”

Instructor Orientation

The video tape you are about to see is a situation involving a supervisor who must decide between her own department's interests and the needs of the larger organization. The key concept here is the system view of the organization, which is the main theme of this module. The leading character, a supervisor, faces the choice of spending her additional budget allocation on much needed departmental resources, or giving up some of the money to assist another department's needs which are important to the organization but Impact only indirectly on her department. She decides to keep the funds within her department, and thus places her department's needs ahead of the organization.

It is important to view this situation because the system concept and the consequences of suboptimization are important ideas for supervisors. Participants can see how selfish decisions can affect the organization. If the effect is adverse, the supervisor's esteem and influence will be reduced and her own department will suffer as a consequence of her suboptimizing decision.

The main point to generate from this tape is that every major decision, as well as many minor ones, has an impact on other departments. To be effective, supervisors must consider the organizational consequences of their own departmental decisions.

DISCUSSION OF VIDEO TAPE

(15 minutes)

Start by asking such questions, such as: “what is the central problem in this situation?” (Note: the central problem is the most important one; the one that causes most of the others. Once it is solved, other problems disappear.) You probably will have several answers. Accept them all (without necessarily agreeing with them) and encourage discussion by asking, “why?”, “what do you think?”, or “does everyone agree?”

After two or three minutes of discussion, proceed with either Plan A or Plan B, below, whichever seems better for you.

PLAN A. Divide the class into groups of four or five. Assign each group to discuss the viewpoint of one of the characters in the case. Also, groups could be assigned to express the viewpoints of patients and doctors. Ask them to prepare a defense of their viewpoint to the class. Make sure that the viewpoints of Sally, Mr. Robbins, Mr. Simms, and the technicians are all assigned to groups. Allow five or ten minutes for group preparation. Have the groups report, starting with one that will present Sally's viewpoint. The reports should generate questions and discussion among the groups because the three viewpoints are different. Encourage the discussion with questions, if necessary. End the discussion with a summary of the main points you have noted in the discussion. Make sure you emphasize the preeminence of the organizational system over the welfare of any particular subsystem. The main idea is that the smooth and successful operation of the entire system is more important than the success of one of its components.

PLAN B. Encourage discussion by asking participants to relate similar events in their own experiences. Keep the discussion going by asking questions, such as:

“When one department of an organization gives poor service, how is the organization's reputation affected? What will be the long-term impact?”

“Do you think Mr. Simms and Mr. Robbins should have been more firm and allocated the money where it was needed most without giving Sally a choice?”

The main purpose is to get people talking and exchanging ideas. Compliment the group when a good point is made. Do not abruptly disagree when you think someone is wrong. Leave it to the group to correct the idea. You can help by asking, “does everyone here agree with this viewpoint?” Or select someone you can count on to speak out and ask, “What do you think about this ?”

When time is up, summarize the main points of the discussion. Be sure you emphasize the fact that it is important for the total organizational system to function well than for any specific part of it to be outstanding at the expense of other parts.

Suboptimization is a dirty word.