



Interstellar Trading: Exercise Description

(c) Stuart Robertson & Associates Ltd, 2011.

Interstellar Trading

Background

This exercise has been designed to investigate participants' negotiation skills. Suitable for graduate to middle managers, this is an 'assigned role' group exercise where participants are split into two teams of trade representatives whose aim is to negotiate the best possible outcome for the planet that they represent. The planets are located in neighbouring galaxies (M81 and M82).

The exercise tests the capacity of candidates to work within their team to quickly get to grips with a brief and formulate a negotiation strategy and together with their team to communicate good arguments and work cooperatively with the opposing team to achieve a beneficial outcome. The exercise is set against the backdrop of an extended trade war that has left the planets and their neighbours prone to the effects of economic recession and multiple shortages of important supplies and resources.

The competencies that are relevant to this exercise and can be used as rating dimensions are as follows:

Communication Skills

Creativity

Business Awareness

Results Orientation

Users may substitute versions of the competencies above from their own existing competency framework as desired.

A five minute briefing is required in which candidates are provided with their materials and assigned to a team to represent and negotiate for one of the two planets. This is followed by a 15 minute private team meeting to formulate a negotiation strategy. Following this the two trade negotiation teams meet for 15 minutes, followed by a further 10 minute own team review and then a final 10 minutes concluding negotiation. At the end of the exercise parties must agree terms and provide a summary of the negotiation and outcomes. We recommend that the exercise is run with two teams, each of between 3 and 4 participants.

Exercise Content

The 3-page participant brief (a separate version for each team) provides all necessary background information including a description of the setting and problems facing their planet, and an inventory of the commodities and resources needed or which are surplus to requirements and can be traded.

The instructions to participants outline the scenario as follows:

“You are asked to negotiate with representatives from [other planet] to obtain the supplies, commodities and resources you need, and to trade those in which you have a surplus. You have an inventory developed on [your planet] to indicate the balance of availabilities and needs for each item involved in the trade. The inventory is attached below”

	Available	Need
Technical Support	12	20

[inventory continues with 13 items]

The participants are advised that at the end of the exercise their team’s performance will be scored. A point scheme is set out and includes:

2. One point for each unit of surplus items traded off
5. Five points for each unit gained of the three most important items listed below...

Neither team knows the requirements of the other. There are some items that both teams need and so inevitably there will be a shortfall.

Assessor Brief

The Assessor Brief provides background information (i.e. an Overview, Relevant Competencies, Timing, Exercise Materials and Key Issues). The Overview provides a table of the needed and surplus items for each group and highlights the strategies that teams could adopt to gain maximum points. The brief also suggests the focus that the teams should adopt for the final negotiations.

A separate full set of Administration Instructions is provided. General advice is also provided on observing and rating the exercises, along with rating guidelines, and details of how to conduct a Post Exercise Review.

Quantities

The Administration Pack contains the following items:

- 12 Participant Briefs
- 2 sets of Admin Instructions
- 12 Observation Sheets
- 12 Rating Forms
- 4 Assessor Briefs

After initial purchase of the Admin Pack, a Refill Pack may be purchased which contains the following consumable items:

- 12 Participant Briefs
- 12 Observation Sheets
- 12 Rating Forms

Current pricing can be determined by reference to <http://www.sr-associates.com/pricing.html>

If desired, further queries as to the exercise demands and content can be made to:

Stuart Robertson & Associates Ltd
Empress Buildings
380 Chester Road
Manchester
M16 9EA
Tel: 0161 877 3277
www.sr-associates.com
mail@sr-associates.com