A CRISIS-STRATEGY GAME FOR MANAGEMENT EDUCATION

FORCE MAJEURE

Paired with CRISIS · A Global Case Primer

Miklian and Katsos, 2025

Classroom Cohort Report

What thirty MBA students learned by running a company through crisis, twice.

PREPARED FOR

The Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania

LGST 6110 · Responsibility in Global Management

LGST 6120 · Responsibility in Business

Created by Jason Miklian

Force Majeure, the crisis-strategy game paired with CRISIS: A Global Case Primer

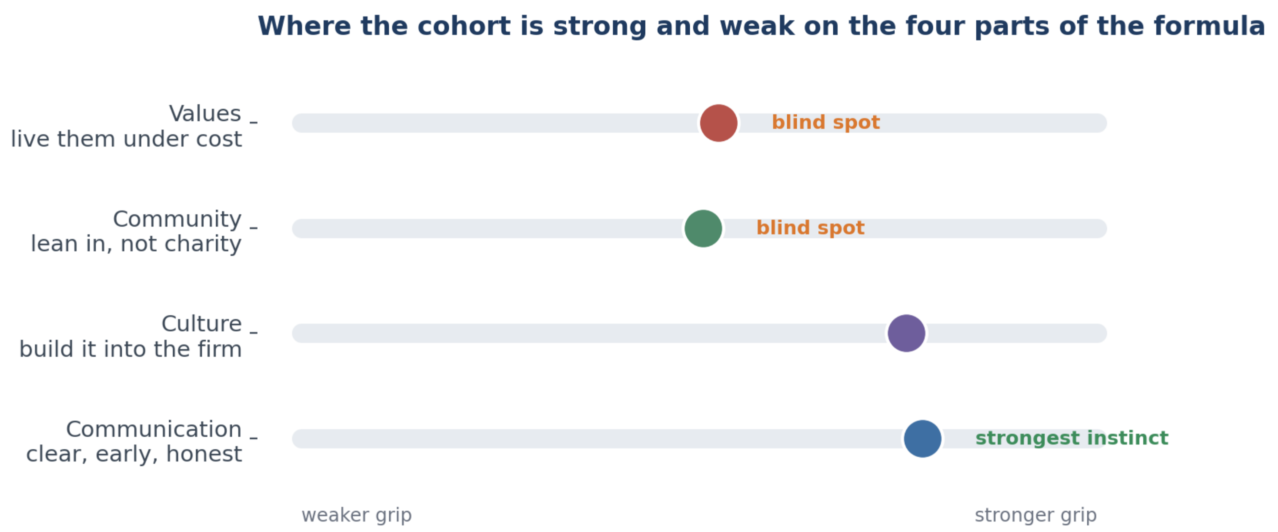
THE COHORT AT A GLANCE

Executive summary

STRONGEST INSTINCT	BIGGEST BLIND SPOT	ACROSS TWO RUNS
Clear communication, early and honest	**Living values and community when they cost money**	**Most of the class improved on the retry**

Thirty students each ran a company through two full games. The short version: they manage a visible scoreboard well and the real health of a business less well, and they got better on the second run. What the game taught them, what it exposed that they still need to learn, where it maps onto your syllabus, and where you can pick the lesson up in class are what this report sets out.

Their instincts were sharpest where business gives fast feedback: clear communication and visible growth. They were weakest where the cost arrives later, in living their stated values when those values cost money and supporting the communities the firm depends on. The game surfaced that gap on its own. The work in the debrief is to name it.



The cohort's grip on the four parts of the formula, averaged across both runs. Communication is the strong instinct; Values and Community are the blind spot.

CONCEPTS THE COHORT LEARNED BY PLAYING

What the game taught them

Playing twice moved the cohort on these core management ideas. The game taught them without a lecture, by making the consequences land.

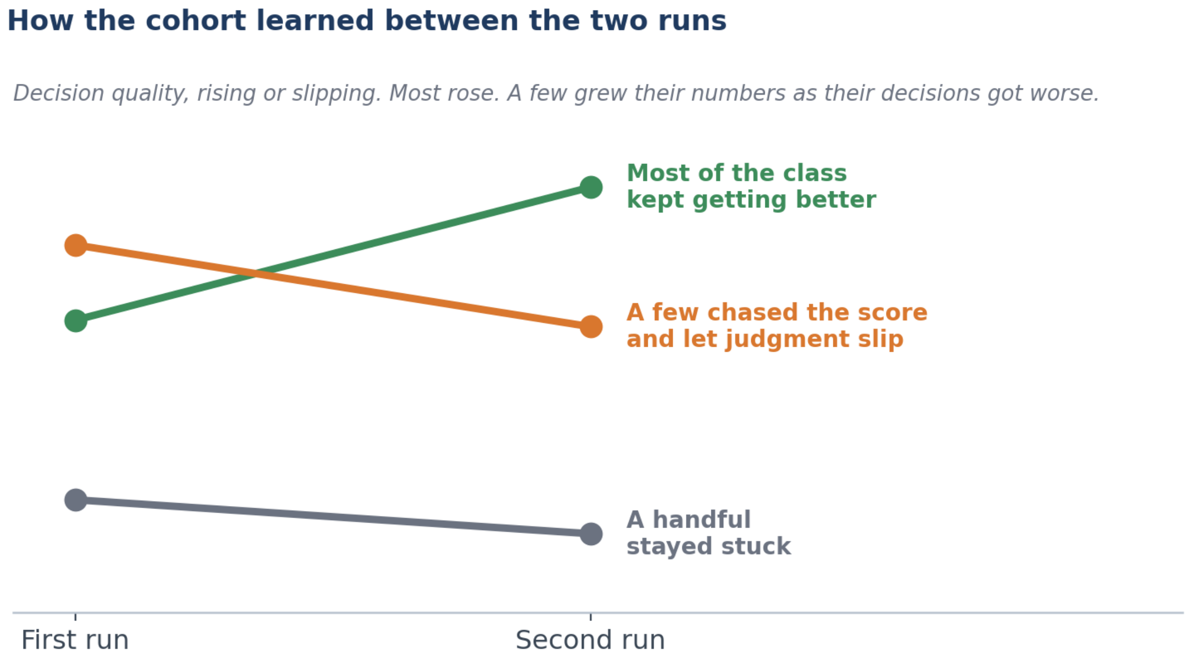
Scope a decision before committing to it. On the first run many acted on instinct. By the second, most gathered information first and made steadier calls, because the game charged them, in time and in worse outcomes, for guessing (Simon 1955).

Communicate clearly when things go wrong. The cohort's surest skill throughout: name a problem early, in plain words, to the people who need to hear it. The game rewarded the firms that did and punished the ones that went quiet (Weick 1988).

Recover from a failure instead of repeating it. Most firms that collapsed on the first run came back on the second, having changed approach rather than doubling down on the move that sank them.

Read a foreign business culture on its own terms. Students grew better at treating local customs and obligations as real constraints to work with, which is what the cross-cultural scenarios reward.

Hold a steady strategy over a bold one. Across the cohort the steadiest hands ended strongest, and by the second run more students grew at a pace they could sustain.



The cohort's learning between the two runs. Most students kept improving; a few grew their numbers while their judgment slipped; a handful stayed stuck.

CONCEPTS THE GAME EXPOSED BUT DID NOT FINISH

What they still need to learn

These are the ideas the cohort has not yet grasped. This is where your teaching adds what the game cannot.

A value you drop when it costs money was never a value. The cohort treated stated commitments as free and let them go under financial pressure. Closing the gap between what a firm says and what it does is the lesson the formula is built around (Carroll 1991; Miklian and Katsos 2025).

Community standing is insurance, not charity. Students spent down the goodwill they started with and never tied it to surviving the next crisis, though in the game the firms that kept it weathered crises far better (Gunningham, Kagan and Thornton 2004).

Managing the scoreboard is not managing the business. Most students optimized the company value the game shows them and took it for the health of the firm. The two came apart, and few noticed (Freeman 1984).

One bad quarter is not a verdict. Several abandoned a sound plan after a single setback, and a few stuck with a reckless one because it paid off once. Telling a real signal from noise is a skill they have not built (Staw 1976).

Grow from a base, not on hope. The cohort's failures came from pushing into the hardest markets before building what it takes to survive there (Barney 1991; McGrath 1999).

WHAT STUDENTS WATCHED	WHAT ACTUALLY MATTERED
The company-value ladder. It climbed, and climbing felt like winning.	The quality of their decisions and the trust they built. It often did not climb with the ladder.

A company can climb the ladder while spending down the trust that keeps it standing. Several did. Most did not notice.

How the cohort's weak points map to your courses

The game exposed where the cohort is weak, and those weaknesses are the core material of LGST 6110 and 6120. Each gap below names the course and the topic that closes it, with one move for the room.

LGST 6110 · Responsibility in Global Management. Ethical frameworks (rights, consequentialist, virtue), conflicting interpretations of corporate responsibility, local cultural traditions and host-country mores, legal compliance and corruption in global markets.

LGST 6120 · Responsibility in Business. Responsible firm-level and individual decisions when duties, loyalties, rules, norms, and interests conflict, with weight on personal values.

Values that held only while they were free.

Closes it: *LGST 6120 builds ethical analysis for when duties, norms, and interests conflict and weighs personal values; LGST 6110 supplies the rights, consequentialist, and virtue frameworks to test them.*

In class: run a decision where a student dropped a stated value to hit a number through the three frameworks, then ask what a virtue-based manager does instead.

Community treated as charity, not standing.

Closes it: *LGST 6110, on corporate responsibility, local cultural traditions, host-country mores, and corporate responses to global poverty.*

In class: pair a student's community-cutting choice in a specific country with the host-country material, and ask what the firm owed that community beyond what the local law required.

Managing the scoreboard, not the business.

Closes it: *LGST 6110's conflicting interpretations of corporate responsibility, and LGST 6120's duties owed to employers, clients, suppliers, and customers.*

In class: use the two-scoreboards finding to stage the corporate-responsibility debate: whose interests does the value ladder serve, and whose does it hide.

Abandoning a responsible course after one bad quarter.

Closes it: *LGST 6120, on holding to a wise and responsible course when loyalties, rules, and interests pull against it.*

In class: take an overcorrection from the game and separate the commitment from the outcome. Was the responsible course wrong, or only the quarter.

Scaling into hard markets without the base to operate cleanly.

Closes it: *LGST 6110, on diverse legal compliance systems, bribery and corruption in global markets, and conflicting demands between home and host country.*

In class: tie the cohort's expansion failures to compliance and corruption exposure: fast growth into weak-rule jurisdictions is a legal and ethical risk, not only a strategic one.

TAKE THESE TO THE BOARD

Where to open the discussion

Each card pairs the cohort's gap with a named idea and a question that opens the room. Pick the lens that fits your course.

Stakeholder thinking and business ethics

Communication outshone Values and Community, and the cohort let its founding community goodwill erode.

Teach from: *the CSR pyramid and what gets deferred under pressure (Carroll 1991); who the firm actually serves (Freeman 1984); values that count only when lived against cost (Miklian and Katsos 2025).*

Ask the room: Your communication outshone your values. Which stakeholder did each clear, low-values decision quietly bill, and when is good messaging standing in for a promise you did not keep?

Decision-making under uncertainty

Many students committed with little or no information, and a few swung hard after a single bad quarter.

Teach from: *satisficing under information limits (Simon 1955); sensemaking, where an early read shapes how the crisis unfolds (Weick 1988); escalation of commitment and its mirror, overcorrection (Staw 1976).*

Ask the room: Find a decision you made with no information-gathering. What would three questions have cost you, and what did skipping them cost? Where did one bad quarter make you drop a sound plan?

Strategy and competition

Decision quality and company value pulled apart. The steadiest firms led; the boldest expansions failed.

Teach from: *advantage from a capability base built before scaling (Barney 1991); staging risky bets to keep the upside and cap the downside (McGrath 1999).*

Ask the room: Rank yourselves by company value, then by decision quality. Why do the orders differ, and which would your board actually reward?

Political risk and business for peace

Community standing tracked crisis survival, and the firms that cut community corners paid when crises hit.

Teach from: *the social license to operate a firm needs beyond compliance (Gunningham, Kagan and Thornton 2004); business that builds local stability and its own resilience (Miklian and Medina Bickel 2020).*

Ask the room: Name a market where you cut a community corner to save money. When the next crisis hit there, what did the corner cost you?

METHOD AND SOURCES

How this report was built, and the ideas behind it

Thirty students were run through two full games each and scored on the game's own terms: the four meters of the Four-Part Formula, its run-score and company-value formulas, the signal it uses to mark a culturally sound decision from a misaligned one, and the way gathering information narrows risk. The figures here are drawn from each student's full run logs across both games, not the end-of-game summary alone.

The ideas this report draws on

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