

GLOBAL EXCHANGE

Game Concept Document
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August 2, 2013

Global Exchange is a game in which players work together to complete business tasks with people who may operate by different sets of rules.

This game concept takes the form of a simple *role-playing game* melded with an *online trading card game*, in which players earn virtual “cards” through engagement in activities with CIBER-related programs, and then play these cards in challenges with other players. Through play, participants will “level up” their avatars, unlock new experiences, and gain badges. Users of the CIBER site and programs will be able to create persistent, online avatars that cut across content, akin to a small-scale *social media* site. Through activities on the CIBER site, players will gain virtual “cards” that can be bartered, gifted, and played against other players in order to unlock new activities and new content.

This game concept is simultaneously a *gamification* of the CIBER site(s) and a small-scale application of *social media* to connect players to each other and the content of the site(s), with the game integrated throughout IU CIBER in order to motivate connections between multiple programs and activities.

Game Genres: *Collectible card game; role-playing game; social media game*

Implementation: In-browser game, HTML5 or Adobe Flash

Game Inspirations: *Pokémon Trading Card Game; FarmVille; Steam Trading Cards.*

Overview of Learning Goals

In *Global Exchange*, players work together to acquire and then employ virtual “cards” to complete simulated international business tasks. Players in the game take on the role of *managers* who marshal *employees* tasked to work with other players on overcoming *challenges*. Through play, participants will develop cross-cultural competencies by resolving difficulties that arise in attempting to overcome these challenges.

In this game, development of *cross-cultural competencies* is modeled through players’ interaction with others who are playing *under different sets of rules* as part of “Clans” in the game. Players will be assigned to groups that unknowingly use different sets of rules that modify each player’s choices, the specific details of which are obscured from all players. Players will not initially know how many sets of rules there are, nor will players be able to identify whether or not another player operates under the same or different sets of rules to him or her. Only through playing the game and through *interaction with other players* through online forums provided with the game will players begin to understand how the learning of those rule sets will be beneficial.

The key learning goal of the game will be for players to determine the ways that rule sets differ for each Clan. The game will give players a consequential play space within which they must work together, learn from mistakes, theorize about the systems at play, and seek to understand the hidden rules that guide players’ actions.

Description of Gameplay

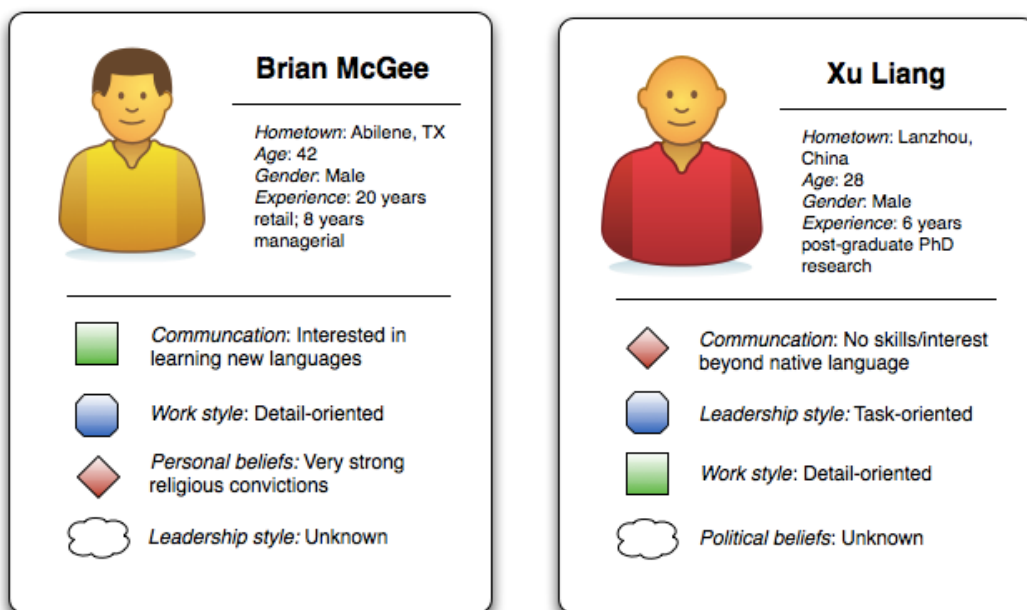
New participants to the CIBER site(s) and programs will be provided a profile and online avatar, connected through each of the programmatic elements of the site through a common interface, such as a header bar. For each profile page, multiple sources of information about the player and his or her progress through the game will be displayed, including player “level” (indicating progression in the game), player badges (indicating goals achieved and accomplishments), and player *Cards*.

Cards

Through activity on the CIBER site and through CIBER-related programs, players will earn cards as they participate in CIBER offerings online. These cards will be displayed on their profile page, as a means of introducing new players to the game. Users of the site will have the option to opt-out of the game, but will be recruited to

play through receiving cards for participation in other elements of the CIBER site and CIBER-related programs.

These virtual “cards” are the main components of the game, serving both as a desired collectible (in the same fashion as, say, the *Pokémon Trading Card game*) and also as the central “playing pieces” of the game. Each card represents a different “employee” for the player to use toward the completion of a *Challenge*. Each employee will have a number of individual abilities and statistics associated with his or her card — these would be cast to represent individual attributes relevant to cross-cultural business contexts. For instance, please see a rough mockup of potential employee cards below:



Cards indicate personal details about each “employee” but more importantly, factors that can influence the success or failure of a particular task. Brian McGee may have very strong religious convictions that, paired with some other cards, may not be a problem, but for others may cause difficulty in completing tasks. Similarly, other elements, such as Brian’s interest in learning new languages could, paired with the right other cards, bolster another employee’s cards communication skills. The exact combination of factors present on cards will be determined through playtesting, with reference to relevant literatures on cultural competencies.

Cards can be traded or bartered through the game, and akin to other physical games of this nature, no player will be able to amass an individual collection without interacting with other players to build their card collection. To extend the life of the game, additional cards representing additional resources or conditions can also be designed, cards can be “retired,” and unlike a physical card game, new statistics

can easily be added to cards as time goes on. The card model provides a flexible approach to the iterative redesign of the game for new challenges and new CIBER goals.

Challenges & Rewards

Linked off of the central Global Exchange page (accessible from every profile page) will be a “Challenge Hub,” or a list of collaborative tasks for players to try their hands at. Challenges can be rotated out at random or for themely reasons, perhaps tied to specific CIBER events/initiatives, or even for seasonal reasons.

Challenges are tasks for multiple (at least two, no more than four) players to collaborate on together. Using their sets of employee cards, players may propose to attempt to complete a challenge with another player and his or her employee cards. Each challenge will have clear criteria stated for completion, in the terms of the employee card statistics. Please see a mockup below for an example of a potential challenge:

CHALLENGE: A new manufacturing site requires a new team of two employees to help construct a new plan for construction of a new plant.	
NEEDS:	REWARDS:
 <i>Communication: Very high compatibility</i>	Up to 30 experience points each
 <i>Work style: Detail-oriented</i>	Two new employee cards each
 <i>Leadership style: Task-oriented</i>	The "New Plant" Badge 

Challenges will vary in terms of number of requirements, complexity of requirements, and flexibility of players to put forth a number of employee cards that could potentially satisfy the requirements. Unfortunately for the player, successfully satisfying each challenge also involves the game completing a set of calculations hidden from the player.

Each challenge will have unique rewards, ranging from an accrual of experience points for each player (to increase a player’s “level”), acquiring digital “badges” which can both signify accomplishment and enable new abilities for each player, and additional employee cards. Failure on a challenge will also be variable, but can range from no effect for simple challenges, to the loss of cards in more complex

challenges, and will introduce feedback to all players engaging in a challenge (perhaps as a pop-up window). The feedback will also connect players back to the online discussion forum where they can discuss what strategies worked, what did not, and begin to engage in understanding how different *Rule Sets* work in the game.

Rule Sets

The game models cross-cultural misunderstandings as problems for the player to uncover and work through. This is realized through the interaction of different rule sets employed by each “Clan” in the game, which model different cultures in the game.

Each player will be a member of a different Clan — and only one Clan — which in the underlying mechanics of the game represent unique modifiers that constrain and affect how individual employee cards work in collaborative tasks. For instance, a player using the “Brian McGee” card example from above may be a member of, say, “Green Clan” which could double the impact that one’s “Communication” has in a particular challenge. The player using the “Brian McGee” card may not know this at first, but through repeated play and discussion of the game in the game’s online forums, a player can develop an understanding of his or her own Clan’s effect on employee teams, while also understanding how to work with players of other Clans.

Clan names will be known to players, but the individual rule modifications (e.g., doubling the effect of “Communication”) will be unknown to players before play. Clans will be randomly assigned to players as they begin the game, and in order to avoid potential cultural insensitivity, Clans will be crafted in such a fashion as to not map upon any real world national, ethnic, or cultural groups.

Game Narrative

Of the concepts provided, this game features the least in terms of overt game “narrative.” There is not a meaningful, fictional story for the player to engage in with this card game beyond his or her own advancement (through leveling, the accrual of badges and cards) and his or her own traversal through the process of understanding other Clan rule sets. The goal of this game concept is not to impart a particular *story* about cross-cultural competencies, but to provide players with (1) a *play system* in which they must manage understanding others’ goals and worldviews; and (2) create a *reward system* that will drive engagement with other CIBER programs.

Summary & Key Features

Summary:

- *Global Exchange will feature collaborative play*, in that players will work to complete challenges together, with rules that affect the outcome of those challenges hidden to the players
- *The game will necessitate discussion*, in that the combination of Employee Card choices and different Rule Sets will lead to a complexity that players will need to discuss in order to achieve their goals
- *The game provides impediments to player success*, both in terms of meta-game leveling and badges, but also in terms of badges and additional cards that can benefit their future gameplay.

Key Features:

- *Site Integration* — The game is not a separate experience from participation within the CIBER site(s) and programs, but is driven by participation in CIBER programs. It thus serves to bind engagement through multiple parts of the CIBER site.
- *Modifiability* — Of the concept documents, this is the most modifiable. With new instructional elements to the CIBER sites and new online/face-to-face programs, new cards and new card elements can easily be crafted to further drive engagement in the overall site.
- *Collaboration & Competition* — The game's core activities are centered on collaborative activities, including developing teams of Employee Cards to use on a particular Challenge, as well as attempting to understand the different Clans' rule sets through online discussion. There is also a light, individual competitive element to the game, with individual levels, badges, and card "collections" at play, which can motivate players to continue in the game.

Challenges

Finally, there are a few challenges and difficulties to this design that need to be noted.

- First, *Global Exchange* is somewhat distant from the contexts of actual business interactions. The game is overtly not a simulation of international business contexts, though its pairing of game mechanics (differing rule sets and challenges) presents a much deeper simulation of cultural difference than the single-player alternative. *Global Exchange* will require consulting from Kelley School international business experts, but the game should not be viewed as modeling *business activities* as much as modeling problem-solving related to developing *cross-cultural competencies*.

- *Global Exchange* will be highly integrated within the CIBER site and related online offerings. This will enhance its potential impact and synthesis with other programs, and can serve to “gamify” elements of IU’s CIBER at large. However, the game will not be easily played by someone outside of this context — unlike a single-player alternative, in which a game is a more easily marketable and distributable “product” to enhance the visibility of CIBER’s gaming initiatives, *Global Exchange* will be primarily meaningful to the players of the game and regular users of IU CIBER’s site and programs. The depth of integration with IU’s CIBER presents a tradeoff with marketability and potential promotion of the game to communities outside of IU.