STANDARDIZED PATIENTS AS BUSINESS EXECUTIVES

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BACKGROUND

- Standardized Patients (SPs) frequently participate in events outside of medical school courses, as healthcare educators recognize the benefits of SP methodology. However, this experiential learning model can also be applied in a business education setting, where SPs portray business executives to help create an authentic learning environment for graduate business students working towards the Master in Business Administration (MBA) degree. In this context SPs are known as **Standardized Managers (SMs).**

- MBA students interested in careers in the management consulting field often complete traditional course projects prior to consulting-oriented field-based courses. New technologies offer the possibility of teaching and learning communication and collaboration with and for pseudo-management-consulting clients.

PURPOSE

MBA faculty use innovative technology and case-based teaching to support MBA students during a consulting engagement with a hypothetical company—The Trilleum Corporation, a fictitious medical device manufacturer. The innovative technology that allows the realistic representation of the teaching case is a virtual (or 3D computerized) world called *Telespace*. Within *Telespace*, SMs are represented as **avatars**—computerized images that represent characters.

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METHOD

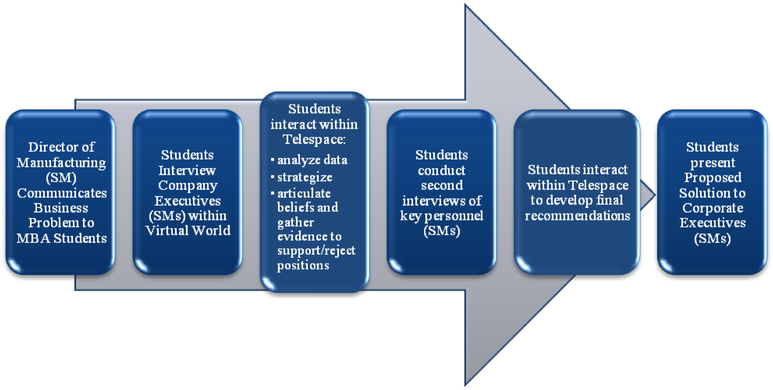
TRAINING: Three experienced SMs trained with the project director and case author, which included:

- navigating and communicating within *Telespace*
- intensive training in management concepts
- independent study of organizational charts, spread-sheets, and data to be used by the MBA students

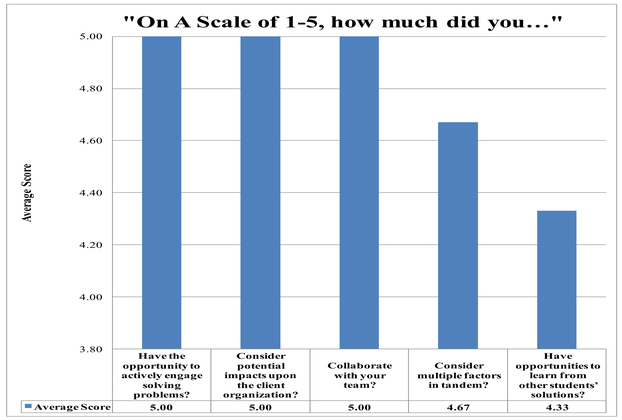
ENCOUNTERS: Students and SMs used networked computers to "enter" *Telespace*, and wore audio headsets to communicate with their voices. The students viewed the SMs' avatars on monitors and conducted interviews with Trilleum SMs. After the interviews, students:

- interacted with each other
- analyzed data
- identified problems
- planned their next steps

Experiential Learning Applied to a Problem-Solving Process in a Virtual Business Environment



RESULTS



As shown in the graph above, the students' feedback shows that they derived significant value from working together in the virtual world.

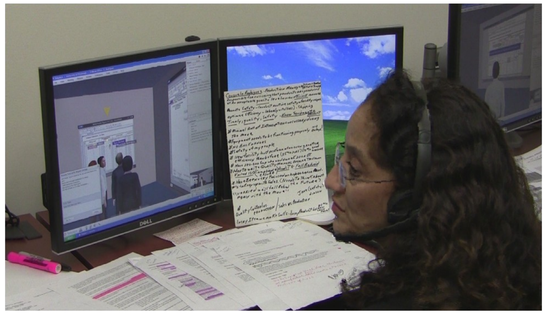
By the end of the Virtual Case Pilot, the team of MBA students created key deliverables including a timeline and budget of the proposed solution.

A few excerpts taken from student evaluations are shown below:

- "*I liked that we were able to meet with different people in different 'rooms' to gather information.*"
- "*The real-life situation was comforting.*"
- "*The virtual world was very different from any-thing that I have used. It was a good experience.*"

CONCLUSIONS

After completing their analyses, MBA students presented recommendations to the SMs within *Telespace*. Student feedback intimated that avatar-enabled SMs may be one component in virtual learning and, under the right circumstances, can add value to the learning process when compared with a traditional classroom environment.



A Standardized Manager (SM) is interviewed within *Telespace* by an MBA student.

A virtual presentation is given by an SM within *Telespace*.