Abstract - the use of dynamics in the form of games and simulators is highly recommended in cases where the objective is to place the leader or manager of the company in case of revision of strategies and corporate policies. This kind of business simulation provides a more concrete and less abstract assimilation of the new concepts to be implemented. The Pain War serious game is a “practical” workshop aimed at exercising strategic planning in a competitive pharmaceutical market, using information and guidance received by the facilitators and by using an e-learning platform, creating a virtual environment which simulated the market, budgets, strategies, targets and marketing tools. In this paper, the concept is introduced and the dynamic faced by users during the game is described as well as the impressions of participants.

Index Terms—serious game, blended learning, simulated environment

I. INTRODUCTION

The event which took place in Rio de Janeiro, on the 27th and the 28th May 2009, aimed at gathering pharmaceutical company’s colleagues from different countries, from the medical, marketing and market analytics, in a team building exercise.

The objective of the Pain War Game was to exercise strategic reasoning of a team in a competitive pharmaceutical market, by using all the information/guidance participants received during the meeting. They had to deploy strategies and tactical actions, limited by the resources allotted to them.

Through the exchanging of information, team work and decision making in a virtual game, participants engaged in the development of strategies to increase market share of one of the company’s product: Brand 01*.

* Name cannot be written.

The game was divided into 3 phases (Figure 1):

1. Planning, when objectives and strategies are defined;
2. Decisions, when actions and key messages are defined and
3. Reports, when the decisions are processed and the performance reports are generated.

II. CONCEPT

In order to better understand the data on the company they had to manage, all participants received a “Situation Report”.

Teams were responsible for the decisions of a fictitious company with objectives dictated by management, during two management cycles that simulated two years of the company’s life (Figure 2).
purchase of the patients. The institutional market was not included.

For Brand 01, three groups of specialties were considered: GPs (General Physicians), O/Ts (Orthopedists and Traumatologists), Neurologists and Rheumatologists. For analytical purposes, only three main indications were considered: NeP (Neurological Pain), FM (Fibromyalgia) and Mixed Pain.

Teams received the objective of reaching a 5% market share in terms of prescriptions (Rx) for Brand 01 with an allocated budget of $8 MM for investments for each cycle. It was the team’s responsibility to allocate these resources into a set of segments, and to strategies, actions and key messages.

Each one of the aforementioned segments had a profile characterized by a combination of four data points:

1. Level of prescriptions: it considered the annual average amount of prescriptions by physicians that were part of the segment. It could be high or medium;
2. Market share: it indicated the percentage of prescriptions that the market as a whole had in that segment;
3. Number of physicians: it indicated the amount of physicians in that segment;
4. Coverage: it indicated the percentage of physicians who were visited by the company in that segment.

The Board of Directors of the fictional company encouraged a fixed number of expected strategies, such as:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BRAND 01</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Increase diagnosis in NeP and FM;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Increase patient awareness about NeP/FM/Mixed Pain;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Counteract generics' erosion; (among others)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Participants could undertake many actions (Figure 4) which were considered to have positive impacts in the market segments, each with individual costs. For example:

1. Field Force: it represented the number of representatives to be sent to visit physicians;
2. Detail Aids: they represented the set of clinical studies, visual aids and reminder items targeting physicians;
3. Round Tables: they represented the sponsorship of meetings with doctors to debate on and promote the brand;

Participants could also select out of five key messages (Figure 5) in order to promote the product they were willing to market. These messages were:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BRAND 01</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Rapid relief of NeP/FM since week 1;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Sustained relief of central &amp; peripheral NeP/FM;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Effective relief of sleep disturbance, anxiety and well being in NeP; (among others);</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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It is important to highlight that the players didn’t compete for the same market or resources. But as they all had the same initial resources and the market reacted the same way, the final debriefing was a benchmarking of the best practices.

At the end of each game, teams received result reports of the decisions they made and a team ranking was established. The computer processed the choices made by teams and the winner was that team that got the closest to reaching the set objective: Rx MS % \( \rightarrow \) market share in terms of prescription.

Two types of reports were shared with participants, (i) one showed a general classification between teams, considering the results of market share, based on the number of prescriptions (ranking report) and (ii) the other showed the consolidated data of the total market compared with the product analyzed (total market evolution report).

The game was developed over three months, 330 man-days and cost approximately US$ 50,000.

III. PARTICIPANTS IMPRESSIONS

About 50 people attended the game and were grouped into teams, which blended medical, marketing and market analysis colleagues from two types of brand, in order to develop their strategies. All participants had high management level - all belong to the second hierarchical level of the company.

Through the Pain War Game these participants had the following impressions while practicing the game:

- Required focus on investment: benefit of focusing investment in high prescribing segments
- Encouraged work within a cross functional setting
- Practiced decisions with limited information
- Changed behavior: they worked as “pain team” rather than “brand teams”

Teams were brought together as a stepping stone towards ensuring alignment on the regional brand plans for 2010, which includes understanding of regional tactics to be implemented locally in 2010 with regional support; better understanding of competitor landscape and landmark trials; and the preparation of countries for local brand plan development.

Participants unanimously concluded that the exercise enriched their vision of the global market and the realization of the many variables to be considered while developing plans to drive growth of the product.

While obliged to work under pressure, with a series of constraints: limited information, limited time, fixed budget, local resources, participants were called upon exercising focus and planning skills, which contributed to their decision making and team work. The value of working in an interdisciplinary team with participants from various countries was highly recognized and praised and the opportunity of networking was seen as invaluable by all those present at the meeting in Rio de Janeiro.

IV. CONCLUSION

The transfer of knowledge in a game like this is immediate and the potential barriers are tested to their reality. Thus, when making decisions in a simulated environment, there is increased understanding of effective policies to be implemented and the exploitation of alternative actions, without exposing the company to real risks. This is a stimulating and learning environment, despite some simplifications in favor of education purposes, it reproduces several aspects of the reality of the participant, where you can check and discuss the impacts of decisions taken over a period of management.

REFERENCES


AUTHORS

A. Prates is with E-Guru, Belo Horizonte unit, MG, Brazil (e-mail: anelise.spyer@e-guru.com.br).

F. Azevedo is with E-Guru, São Paulo unit, SP, Brazil (e-mail: felipe.azevedo@e-guru.com.br).

M.A. Spyer is with E-Guru, São Paulo unit, SP, Brazil (e-mail: spyer.prates@e-guru.com.br).

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