

PLAYING IN THE CLASSROOM: THE USE OF iROLE PLAY IN HOSPITALITY EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

The current study looks at the various teaching methods that are available for use in teaching hospitality management. One classroom technique in particular is discussed and analyzed. It is a new way of using role plays in the classroom when teaching hospitality management courses. Through statistical analysis, it is shown that the use of iROLEPLAY has enhanced the perception of role playing and has decreased the perception of the use of one-on-one teaching in the classroom and created a new and novel way to diversify the academic experience by bringing as true to life experiences into the classroom as possible. By changing and enhancing the way we present material to students, it will enable our students to be better leaders in the hospitality industry.

Key Words: Role play, teaching method, student engagement, interactive, inter-actor, iROLEPLAY

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INTRODUCTION

Engaging students in the classroom is often a challenge for professors seeking to acquaint future leaders with the real world situations that they will inevitably face in the industry, regardless of the segment of the industry that they end up working in. Since hospitality management is an applied discipline, the thought that hospitality professors should prepare students for these foreseeable events is typically strived for in quality hospitality programs, but it is often a difficult task.

The following study demonstrates a project that was based on a new collaboration with the Interactive Performance Lab in a Department of Digital Media and the Faculty of a Hospitality Management Department, both part of the same University. This relationship allowed instructors to bring reality into the classroom using an old technique with a new twist. By adding an interactive technology component, role-play was transformed to engage students in “guest interactions” without involving real guests.

The Faculty of Hospitality Management partnered with the Interactive Performance Lab to create a series of interactive situations where students can be placed into roles of leaders/managers and interact with individuals playing the roles of guests and line employees, in situations that have occurred and will occur again in the hospitality industry. Through iROLEPLAY, an interactive role play methodology, students are able to participate in a real time interactive role-playing session where direction and feedback can be provided by the audience and/or the instructor.

For the purpose of this study, the following definitions will be used:

iROLEPLAY – an interactive role-play methodology where the class (audience) is separated (in different rooms) from those actually participating in the role-play activity. In the room where the role-play is happening, there are two cameras streaming the activity directly back to the classroom. The professor is able to engage the audience in real time and discuss what is going on with the role-play without interrupting the participants. There is computer interconnectivity between the two rooms and the audience via the professor and the stage manager can give direction to the student managers occupied in the activity or even the inter-actors that are acting in the scenario.

Stage Manager – Individual managing and directing the event. This person will give direction to the camera operators (these are operated remotely) and will type directions on the computer in order to transmit them to the role-play participants.

Inter-actors – These individuals are trained multi-disciplinary performers who take on the various support roles in the role-play activity. The inter-actors are trained by the professors in the Interactive Performance Lab in the skills of acting, improvisation, story, psychology, and technology. Their skills allow them to take the role-play beyond the normal and branch out in a variety of directions. The skills that the trained interactors bring to iROLEPLAY create a much more robust atmosphere than does utilizing students that lack the training and are often less than anxious to participate.

For this pilot study, three professors, each with more than twenty years of industry experience, developed scenarios of events that commonly happen in the lodging, restaurant, and theme park segments of the hospitality industry. The scenarios were developed and then formulated according to the outline provided by the Interactive

Performance Lab (Interactive Performance Lab, 2003). The outline requires that the writers address the following areas essential to the iROLEPLAY performance. These are:

1. Learning objectives
2. Trainee (student) information
3. Interactor information
4. Trainee (student) instructions
5. Interactor instructions

(Interactive Performance Lab, 2003; see Appendix 1)

The most important part of developing iROLEPLAY is understanding what learning objectives are desired from the exercise. Only by knowing what you want the trainee to learn and what skills or behaviors you want the trainee to practice can you move forward with the development of the iROLEPLAY scenario. Once the learning objectives have been determined, information for the trainee and the interactors must be fashioned to fit the scenario.

The guidelines for trainee and interactor information include providing information on the character that each is playing, location of the performance, the development of a back-story/situation (basically what has led up to the scene from the perspective of the trainee/inter-actor), and the relationship between all of the participants. It is especially important to provide the inter-actors with information regarding trigger points, responses to anticipated actions that the trainee might have, and a full education on the buzz words used in the discipline being portrayed. It is imperative that the individual who creates the scenario give the inter-actors as much information as possible so they can play their roles as close to reality as is feasible.

Once the iROLEPLAY Scenario Form is completed by the initiating professors, the scenarios are analyzed to determine how many inter-actors are needed and what the

equipment needs are. The stage manager will then cast the inter-actors in the roles that they will play and rehearse them in the fundamentals of the performance. After several rehearsals with the Interactive Performance Lab team, the professors rehearsed the inter-actors or guests and employees in the scenarios regarding how guests and employees might typically react in the hospitality environment stressing one-on-one as well as group interactions. This practice was important in order to ensure that the scenario that was simulated was as “real” as possible without going out into the industry and using real guests or employees for the scenarios.

Prior to ‘going live’ with the iROLEPLAY performance, a dress rehearsal was done in front of a much smaller class. This rehearsal performance allowed the instructors and the inter-actors to adjust the performance before it went live in front of the large group of students that were to be surveyed regarding their perceptions of teaching methods. It was noted that in several of the scenes adjustments needed to be made and scripts altered to make the performance more cohesive and realistic. Once these changes were made, the instructors were confident that iROLEPLAY could be performed and would be true to industry situations.

The performance was fine tuned through rehearsals and the group of inter-actors was ready to go live in front of a classroom of students and industry professionals. The three scenarios were explained to the class and volunteers from the class were asked to be the “managers” for the performances. They were taken to a separate room where they were put in the situation with the inter-actors (see Appendix 2 for room set up). The performance was then shown via a live video and audio feed to the main classroom where the instructor critiqued the performance of the student manager and provided the students

with feedback on what was going on during the real time role play. The instructor was also able to send messages to the inter-actors and “student managers” to have them alter the scenario as it was happening in order to prevent too much stress and frustration on the part of the student manager volunteer.

The purpose of the interactive role play was to allow scenarios to play out with some feedback and to allow the students in the class to give their perceptions regarding the scenarios as they were taking place and also after the scene was completed. It also enabled the students in the class to offer suggestions on how to move forward with the scenarios and this too could be relayed to the room where the action was taking place. This kind of live feedback would not be done during a traditional role play as it would be too distracting to the people performing the role play. With the use of technology in iROLEPLAY, comments were able to be given to the student manager without disrupting the scene as it was taking place via the live video feed.

This pilot study reviews the student perceptions regarding the use of this new technique in classes in the Hospitality Management Department. A pre- and post- survey was used in order to assess students’ perceptions of the effectiveness of various teaching methods. The pre and post-survey based on the perceptions of students regarding teaching methods showed that the perception of using role plays as a teaching method significantly improved after the use of the iROLEPLAY procedure. The survey also revealed that the exercise created a significant difference in the perception of students regarding the use of the one-on-one teaching method as a teaching tool in the classrooms of today. This study is important as more professors are trying to analyze the effectiveness of their current teaching methods with the current college student. The

importance of the pilot study is that a change in perception was created between the pre and post tests indicating that further study is essential to develop fully the theory of utilizing iROLEPLAY in the classrooms.

BACKGROUND RESEARCH

There are a variety of teaching pedagogies that are used in hospitality programs in order to achieve the objectives of particular courses (Furunes, 2005; Zapalska, Brozik, & Niewiadomska-Bugaj, 2006). These teaching methods can vary from classroom lecture to videotape to one-to-one training (Furunes, 2005) and in many hospitality programs include interactive laboratory experiences. The nature of teaching hospitality management increases the challenge of ensuring that the proper teaching method is used because of the nature and level of managerial tasks that are involved in hospitality organizations (Wong, Pine & Tsang, 2000). The variety of methods is based on the premise of ensuring that students get the most theoretical information that they can with the most practical application possible. Because hospitality management is an applied field, ensuring that students get varied and productive teaching methods to ensure that the material that they are learning is going to be able to be practiced in the field, is essential for the continued success of hospitality management programs.

The increasing enrollments in hospitality programs along with budget cuts in state universities (Stoller, 2008) makes the class sizes larger and thus the challenge is heighten to engage the students in the classroom and not to simply lecture, lecture, lecture. This has lead to the dilemma of how to get messages conveyed to students in an effective, creative manner. It is also difficult to ensure that all learners comprehend the material due

to the various learning style preferences that people have (Wong, Pine & Tsang, 2000). In hospitality programs especially, where the goal is to increase the ability to manage a service experience through educational theory and practice, the ability to ensure comprehension and performance of the material is essential. The proposed study will evaluate the effectiveness of a relatively new use of an established training method in the classroom, the use of the traditional role play that has been made more interactive through the use of digital media and technology.

Interactive role play is a relatively new teaching method that has not yet been assessed in the hospitality field. Interactive role play puts a student in the role of a manager while trained inter-actors play the other parts in the role play scenarios. This scenario is played out in a small room that is streamed live via monitors to other students in the class. The benefit of this format is that the instructor can feed directions in to the student “hospitality manager” via a computer screen in order to help them to successfully play out the objectives and skills of the role play and to ensure that the role play does not get too far off track.

One of the great benefits of iROLEPLAY is that for those participating in the role-play, there is no audience “in your face” to distract or hinder the performance. This creates an immersion factor that allows the participants to truly feel like they are in a real interaction. This is also aided by the fact that the audio visual equipment is controlled remotely so there are no camera or audio technicians in the room to disrupt the performance.

Teaching Methods in Hospitality

Hospitality education can be perceived as a mixture of academic, professional and craft knowledge, as well as attitude and skills education aimed at satisfying the needs of the hospitality industry (Horng & Lu, 2006). The variety of teaching methods that are used in the classroom can range from: lecture/classroom style, use of video and other media, case studies, discussion, written assignments, role plays, interactive media and laboratory work. These various teaching methods have advantages and disadvantages which bring with them a variety of learning environments at any given time; some better and some worse. The ability to cultivate students' competencies required for tomorrow's industry is essential for colleges and universities to remain competitive and provide the learning environment essential to providing the industry with the leadership that can meet the challenges of the future (Horng & Lu, 2006).

Despite the fact that there are many different teaching methods that can be used, as far back as the early 1990s, Umbreit (1992) found that communication skills are among the most important skills needed for hospitality students to be successful. Over time, the guidelines for hospitality management have shifted their emphasis on institutional organizations to humanity, flexibility, creativity, empowerment sharing information with employees, and communication between the labor and the management. Today more than ever, there is considerable pressure on tertiary educational institutions to balance the theoretical base that necessitates a university degree program and the practical skills required by the industry that will ultimately employ the students (Ruhanen, 2005).

Educators must therefore serve as the healthy medium between deciphering theory and analyzing practical skills. As a result, an added challenge for tourism and hospitality educators is to continue to discuss, debate and experiment with new experiential approaches to excite, motivate and engage students in their learning, which will not only benefit the students but the sector that will employ the students on completion of their studies (Ruhanen, 2005). However, as with any new endeavor, implementing new teaching techniques is not easy (Wolfe, 2006).

Today, according to Horng & Lu (2006), instructional methods from the past, such as the traditional lecture are being combined with other methods to form multiple instructional methods; one such method involves role playing. Such experiential learning can help facilitate the delivery of material and increase the cognitive ability of individuals. Beck & Adler (1997) believe that by focusing on higher-order thinking skills through experiential activities, educators can work to change their curricula from one of the transfer of technical information to the development of thinking skills that promote continuous learning and personal development (Beck & Adler, 1997). Ruhanen (2005) offers a similar sentiment by stating that there is a need to utilize teaching and learning methods that encourage and facilitate deeper learning in tourism and hospitality management education, which can also provide students with the necessary skills to take with them to their workplace.

Many within the industry argue that there needs to be a shift from that of a production orientation to a service orientation if an organization will survive in today's environment (Ford & Heaton, 2000; Dickson, Ford, & Laval, 2005). In the process of this orientation, recognizing and appreciating the importance of managing the service

encounter is the key to successfully competing in today's business environment (Dev & Olsen, 1989; Ford & Heaton, 2000). Educators must therefore focus on creating systems that better help guide the future leaders within this industry. The ultimate customers in hospitality education are not the students of hospitality-related courses, but the society in general and the hospitality industry that will benefit in the future from the knowledge gained by the students of today.

Role Playing

There has been some research on the use of role playing in hospitality education and it has been found to be a valuable method of bridging the gap between theory and application in the field (Beck & Adler, 1997; Ruhanen, 2005). The role play allows an instructor to introduce the concept and then gives the student the opportunity to actually apply that concept in order to see the skill in action in a safe environment for learning. Role playing allows students the chance to practice skills that they have learned in theory before going into the actual job and testing this theory on real guests with real situations.

In studies conducted by Furunes (2005) and Horng & Lu (2006), it was found that for the development of interpersonal skills, role play was more conducive for learning than one-on-one training. This is the skill that was ranked by the students as the competency that they lacked the most when entering the workforce. Given the high rate of interpersonal communication skills that are needed within the hospitality industry, emphasis should be placed on developing this and giving students immediate feedback when utilizing role play in their teaching instruction in the classrooms.

In a study done by Beck and Adler (1997), traditional role play was used in teaching lodging sales courses. The students were given surveys in order to assess their perception of the role play teaching method. The survey questions used a Likert type rating scale of 1=strongly disagree to 7=strongly agree. Students perceived role playing was a valuable instructional method. Regarding whether the role play was of definite instructional value, students had a mean of 6.14. The students were able to use their lodging sales course material to prepare for the role play ($m=6.42$). They perceived that the role play would prepare them with a realistic view of the business world ($m=5.47$) and that the role play made them better prepared for the business world ($m=5.66$). Overall, the role play was rated much higher ($m=5.71$) than presenting the material directly from the instructor of the class, such as in a lecture ($m=3.06$).

The key objectives that are successfully accomplished through the use of role play are: knowledge acquisition; changing attitudes; problem solving; interpersonal skill development; participant acceptance; and, knowledge retention (Furunes, 2005). These are all objectives that are critical for knowledge acquisition for hospitality management programs as well. Similar studies have found additional benefits associated with the implementation of role-play instructional methods. Ruhanen (2005) finds that there is an added benefit for the sector that will employ these students upon graduation as they have worked on “real life” situations in a simulated environment, and have tested their knowledge and skills rather than just reading and talking about the skills that will be necessary. Several studies (Beck & Adler, 1997; Ruhanen, 2005) state that role-play allows participants to immerse themselves in a learning environment by acting out the

role of a character or part in a simulated scenario, and behave as they would be expected to under such circumstances once in a management position in the hospitality industry.

All students in higher education need to acquire extensive technical skills along with the associated skills needed to apply their knowledge within a profession or academic discipline, as well as the skills that are required for the world of work and to be attractive to employers (Ball, 1995; Beckett, 1996; Ruhanen, 2005). Educators are starting to realize the potential of differentiated teaching models. Role play is a valuable model of experiential learning for tourism and hospitality management education and offers learning techniques that benefit tourism and hospitality students in terms of enhanced learning, interest and enthusiasm for the subject, which in turn can contribute towards their ability to draw on this information after graduation (Ruhanen, 2005).

PURPOSE

It has been noted by many of the students and instructors that training in the hospitality industry may not be as structured and strong as it could be (Eisen, 2002/2003). Anecdotally, we hear many students complain about being “plugged” into training videos that are less than stimulating, old, and not realistic to what they will actually be expected to do on the job. Often the training is generic and comes from corporate entities and do not tailor the videos or training to the specific issues of the location. By carefully planning and preparing a strong training program, organizations can help to increase motivation and decrease turnover in the organization (Eisen, 2002/2003).

All three of the instructors involved in the iROLEPLAY project have moved from corporate human resources (HR) positions to academe. The three are looking at ways

that academics can assist the hospitality trainers in advancing the current training techniques and make training more relevant and interesting to the new hospitality worker.

By working with the Interactive Performance Lab and current technological advances, the instructors believe that they have been able to breathe new life into an old tried and true training staple of role-play that will make it a significant alternative to the current training and teaching methodology. The purpose of the current study is to analyze the different perceptions of students regarding teaching methods before and after the pilot test of the use of interactive role play using digital media and technological advances.

ROLE PLAY DEVELOPMENT

In the instance of this pilot test, the role plays were developed by three instructors with over 20 years of industry experience each. The instructors, using their industry experience created the Mayfair Hotel Affair based on a hotel front desk encounter, the White Rose Incident about the “guest from hell” in a fine dining restaurant, and Hot & Bothered an episode concerning an employee and guest altercation in a Theme Park. After the scenarios were completed, an instruction guide that the inter-actors then used to develop the characters that they must play was developed (see Appendix 1). The following describes the information that must be completed before the first rehearsal can take place.

The instructors first determined the learning objectives. What skills do we want the trainee to learn or demonstrate during the iROLEPLAY? The behaviors that are being sought must also be discussed and determined. Are we looking for the trainee to display empathy, listening skills, technical knowledge, etc? These must be thought about

so they may be written into the script. Also, the instructor must discuss with the inter-actor the various twists and turns the scenario may take. The inter-actors are trained to not just follow a script, but to improvise as the scene moves along. They must anticipate what a typical guest may do and follow their instincts beyond the scripts. Thus the scripts are guidelines written to allow for improvisation.

Once the learning objectives are determined, the trainee information needs to be created. This requires an identity, i.e. new restaurant manager with less than six weeks experience. Then the location and time of the scene is determined. From there the developer moves on to the 'back-story.' In other words, what are some of the key events that have lead to this situation? Another key element for the iROLEPLAY scenario is the definition of the relationship that the trainee has with the situation and the problem that the instructor wants the trainee to overcome. How does the trainee feel about the other characters and what difficulties have they been having?

Now it is time to create the inter-actor's information. This portion of the scenario creation is even more important than the trainee information as it allows the inter-actor to understand the various directions they can take the scene and how the instructor would like them to react to actions that have been anticipated by the instructors. The inter-actors need to have guidance in where the trainer wants the scene to go. This is where the typical role play and iROLEPLAY differ. In the normal situation, the instructor would ask for a volunteer to be the trainee and then for other volunteers to be the supporting cast. The strength of the training is totally dependent on how good the volunteers may be and how they invest themselves into the roles they get. With iROLEPLAY, that is not left to chance. It is the strength of this method of teaching.

There is more information set up prior to the student taking on the role of the manager.

Another benefit is the use of digital technology to allow for non-disruptive intervention into the scene as it is taking place.

To prepare the inter-actors, their characters must also be developed so that they know how to perform accurately. Like the trainee, they must have a “back-story” and well defined relationships, so they are able to precisely play their roles. Perhaps the most important part of the inter-actor training is to have them know how to react to certain trigger words. For example, if the trainee is a front desk manager and they tell the guest that they will be “walked”; you as the trainer might have the inter-actor become belligerent and overly emotional. This allows the trainer to control the training and create a number of different branches to each scenario. Being schooled in the trade vernacular allows the inter-actor to really improvise as the scene evolves and thus enhance the learning objectives.

By developing a dynamic and realistic scenario, the trainer is able to create a role play that is not only a great learning value for the trainees; it can also be entertaining and thus of even more value because the trainees and students will pay more attention to it. By putting some effort in at the beginning, the educators and trainers can create scenarios that reflect real world situations that will enhance the training efforts. These real life situations will allow hospitality students a good window into the circumstances that they will likely be faced with in the future. Furthermore, many variations on a topic can be explored here by just slightly changing the role of the arriving guest at the front desk scenario from being a European lawyer to that of a Japanese businessman, from an older, grandmotherly type to a young and assertive female executive.

METHODOLOGY

The sample used in the pilot study was a convenience sample of mostly juniors and seniors at the majoring in Hospitality Management. The sample group was a total of 157 students. Of the 157 students that were given surveys, 114 surveys were complete and usable for a response rate of 72.61%. A quasi-experimental design was used in order to determine the effectiveness of the interactive role play teaching method and the perceptions of students to this and various other teaching styles. The effectiveness of the teaching method was evaluated through the use of a pre- and post-survey. There was a pre-survey of the students upon entering the classroom, along with a post-survey that asked for perceptions of the teaching methods and assessed the knowledge that was gained through the experience of observing the interactive role play. When the pre survey was completed the subjects had no foreknowledge of what was about to happen or that they were going to be involved in the test of a different training style.

RESULTS

The respondents were comprised of 65.8% female and 34.2% male students. This is a fairly representative gender breakdown relative to the entire college. The median age group was 21-22 year olds (54.0%), with 19-20 year olds representing 22.1%, 23-24 year olds were 15.9% of the respondents, 7.1% of the respondents were 25 years old or older. The majority of the students were seniors (53.6%), and 35.7% were juniors. For more demographic information, see Table 1.

[Insert Table 1 here]

The post-survey asked students about their perceptions of the iROLEPLAY activity and the responses to those questions are listed in Table 2. The survey questions used a 1-5 Likert type scale where 1=strongly disagree and 5=strongly agree. The results of the questions show that following the iROLEPLAY scenarios, students perceived that overall they believed that this teaching method would enhance their learning. All of the survey questions received positive responses, receiving ratings between agree and strongly agree with the exception of the question regarding whether the student would be a willing participant in the use of iROLEPLAY which was rated a 3.31.

[Insert Table 2 here]

In order to compare the pre- and post- perceptions of various teaching methods, the students were asked to rate the level of importance of a variety of teaching methods before they participated in the iROLEPLAY and then again after they participated in the iROLEPLAY experience. Those teaching methods were lecture, discussion, role-play, case study, group project, one-on-one teaching, and watching video/CD or movies. Paired sample t-tests were then used to evaluate whether any significant differences existed between pre- and post- perceptions of teaching methods. The results showed that there were significant differences between the pre and post- perceptions of role play and one-on-one training. In the case of the role play, the overall perception of the teaching method improved after the student participated in the iROLEPLAY class, and in the case of the one-on-one teaching method, the overall perception of the teaching method decreased. See Table 3 for more information.

[Insert Table 3 here]

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

In the audience for the iROLEPLAY performance were approximately 30 industry professionals. These individuals ranged from Directors of Training for a large hotel company to individual property HR professionals. The comments from this group of hospitality industry professionals were extremely positive. They saw iROLEPLAY as a strong possibility to broaden the training already occurring in the industry. It was believed by the hospitality industry that this methodology will have ramifications in both the classroom environment of a hospitality program, but also in the hospitality industry itself.

In the debriefing session after the iROLEPLAY, several of the companies indicated an interest in implementing an iROLEPLAY for their teams. Currently the Interactive Performance Lab and the Faculty of Hospitality Management are working with two of the companies to develop scenarios that are particular to their environments. All of the comments from the debrief of the scenarios were extremely positive and indicated that there is a need for iROLEPLAY in the hospitality industry. The human resources professionals that were in attendance stated that this is what the hospitality industry needs in terms of training its employees.

Due to the mixed audience, the industry group was not given a pre and post survey. The only information received from this group was anecdotal and consequently there is no statistical relevance to it; only impressions. Although not surveyed, including the industry group proved to be great marketing for the iROLEPLAY concept.

CONCLUSIONS

From this pilot study, many inferences can be drawn. The authors see the need for a replication of the iROLEPLAY pilot study in order to have a larger set of data to evaluate. This first application of what promises to be a new teaching tool was held in front of two diverse populations -- college students and industry professionals – and was well accepted by both. A future replication however, should be done for an audience of students only in order to avoid having “to play to two audiences”, in the way instructions were given and audience participation was solicited.

The potential of utilizing iROLEPLAY in hospitality industry settings appears to be quite strong. A large convention hotel has already expressed an interest in setting up an iROLEPLAY event and one of the authors has had the opportunity to visit with the hotel’s management team to plan for such an event.

Some other research steps to be undertaken will need to concentrate on a further detailing of the individual scenarios and establishing a “fallback position” for each scenario. Unbeknownst to the 200+ people in the audience watching the role-play of checking in a guest at the front desk, the trainee front office employee –a volunteer who had been selected from among the participating audience – blatantly strayed from the scripted role he had been briefed and agreed to follow, and the trained, but hospitality industry novice inter-actor was not able to correct that digression. The iROLEPLAY stage manager also did not react quickly enough to re-direct the inter-actor in time and so it was incumbent upon the author of this particular scenario, acting as guide and narrator of this live video projection, to make the required “course corrections” while monitoring audience reaction and commenting on the events being shown from time to time.

Another consideration the authors were cognizant of was that the rolling out of this new approach to using interactive media role play as a teaching tool was carried out in front of 150 plus students who assemble in an auditorium on a weekly basis to hear a guest lecture presentation. To what degree the favorable reaction of the students to this novel learning approach might be due to just having a welcome change from the more routine weekly lecture where no participation and interaction could take place is not clear. Further studies need to be done in classrooms where the students are actually studying the topic being role-played.

And finally, given that this technique of interactive role-playing can be made into a course offering, what are the limits of audience size that can be engaged in such an undertaking? How many different role-play scenarios would be educationally viable at a given setting at any one time? Since a relatively large number of participating learners can be engaged in this pedagogical undertaking, it will appeal to administrators and business people alike on the basis of being cost effective and economical. It remains to be seen therefore how much further research will be required to establish the parameters of installing this new approach as a successful intervention in customer service learning.

The authors believe that the only shortcoming to iROLEPLAY might be in the answer to the final question in the survey. There does not seem to be an overt willingness on the part of the students to participate in the learning scenario. The students are a little unsure that they want to be the trainee in the scenario. As instructors, we need to work with our students to be more open to taking this risk and participating fully in iROLEPLAY scenarios. By the time a student reaches their senior year, individuals should be eager for this type of opportunity.

From the viewpoint of the three instructors who developed the iROLEPLAY scenarios and coached the inter-actors in their performance, the pilot test of this teaching methodology was a success and should be further investigated to possibly be included as a classroom teaching technique. The change in pre-test and post-test student perception was significant. This result shows that there is power in iROLEPLAY and it should be followed up on.

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Table 1
Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Gender	%	Age Group	%	Year in School	%
Female	65.8	18 or under	.9	Freshman	4.5
Male	34.2	19-20	22.1	Sophomore	6.3
		21-22	54.0	Junior	35.7
		23-24	15.9	Senior	53.6
		25 or older	7.1	Graduate Student	0.0
Total	100.0%	Total	100.0%	Total	100.0%
	n=114		n=113		n=112

Table 2
Student Perceptions of iROLEPLAY®

	Mean	Standard Deviation
I think using iROLEPLAY would enhance my classroom learning	4.31	.626
Using iROLEPLAY made me more attentive	4.36	.653
The use of iROLEPLAY showed me how I could use the material that my professors talked about in class	4.33	.558
I believe that iROLEPLAY demonstrated real life situations I may have to face as a hospitality manager	4.42	.649
iROLEPLAY demonstrated the connection between theory and practicality	4.33	.603
After watching iROLEPLAY, I would be more willing to be a participant	3.31	1.147

Table 3
Comparison Between Perceptions of Teaching Methods Before and After iROLEPLAY

Teaching Method	Pre-Level of Importance		Post-Level of Importance		T-Test		
	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation	T Value	Sig.	df
1. Lecture	4.11	1.99	4.10	1.924	.138	.890	114
2. Discussion	5.27	1.861	5.12	1.733	1.207	.230	114
3. Role Play	4.10	1.953	4.90	1.737	-3.926	.000	114
4. Case Study	3.94	1.754	4.06	1.798	-1.021	.309	114
5. Group Project	3.62	1.904	3.29	1.986	2.271	.025	114
6. One on One Training	4.83	1.818	4.21	1.917	4.071	.000	114
7. Watching Video	4.11	1.869	4.07	1.837	.249	.804	113

APPENDIX 1

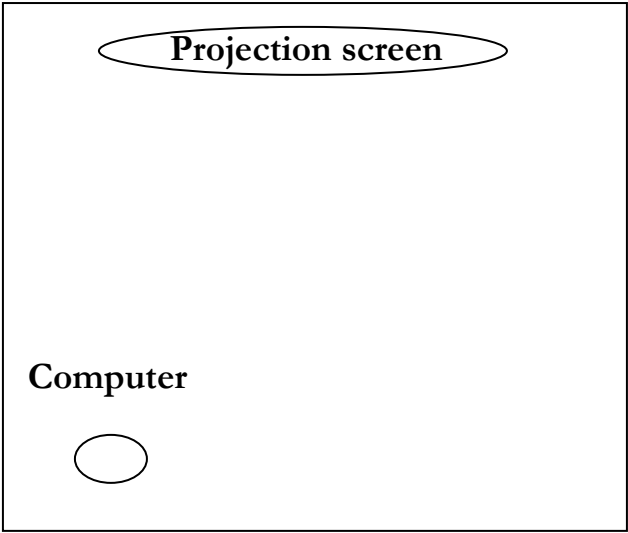
iROLEPLAY Scenario Development Guide

Learning Objectives

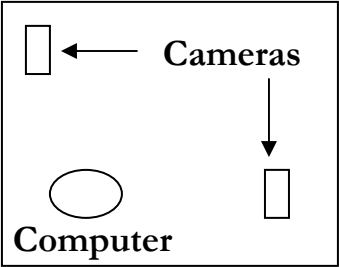
- **What do you want the trainee(s) to learn?**
- **What skills or behaviors do you want the trainee(s) to practice?**
 - i.e.**
 - **Empathy**
 - **Listening**
 - **Use of plain language not jargon**
 - **Service recovery**
 - **Employee support**
 - **Coaching**
 - **Arbiter**
- **Trainee Information**
 - **Character ~ role that the trainee plays**
 - **Location/Time ~ where & when the scene takes place**
 - **Backstory/Situation ~ what has led up to the scene from the perspective of the trainee**
 - **Relationship/Problem ~ how the trainee feels about the other character/s and what the difficulty is**
- **Inter-actor information**
 - **Character ~ description of the role/s that the inter-actor/s play**
 - **Backstory/Situation ~ what has led up to the scene from the perspective of the inter-actor/s**
 - **Relationship/Problem ~ how the inter-actor/s feel about the other character/s and what the difficulty is**
 - **Trigger/Response ~ what the inter-actor/s should do based on the trainee's response**
 - **Buzz words ~ terms, acronyms, phrases that may be useful for the inter-actor/s to know**
- **Trainee Instructions**
 - **What do you want the trainee to do**
 - **Are there any reactions you want the trainee to have**
- **Inter-actor Instructions**
 - **What do you want the inter-actor/s to do**
 - **How should the inter-actors react**
 - **Are there any alternate directions to take the scene**

APPENDIX 2

iROLEPLAY Room Layout



Classroom



iROLEPLAY room