
Concept Paper

**A computer-based leadership skills-development simulation
on using Professor Csíkszentmihályi's FLOW at work**

An Executive Summary on the production of „FLOW in Good Business™”

April 2009



Purpose of this document: Evaluate best methods for translating Good Business into an interactive e-learning application marketable to the international (primarily American) B2B market.

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Mihaly Csíkszentmihalyi, *Good Business – Leadership, FLOW and the Meaning*
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1. Project Description

1.1. Title and Purpose of the Application

Title of Application: *Flow in Good Business*

Purpose of Application: Convey the leadership lessons in Good Business. Show link between selected leadership competencies and flow conditions. **The objective is not to teach leadership with the help of flow but the other way around: to show that flow is the most crucial condition of good leadership and sustainable business efficiency.**

1.2. Characteristics of Application

- Average Learning Time: 4-6 hrs but with maximum 20min sessions,
- Single user application,
- MUSIC! – selected on the basis of user preferences (private mp3 upload, scrobbled music, streamed audio, etc.),
- Video library (CSM, Winery Institute, etc.),
- Feedback system,
- Narration / Voiceover,
- Back story: California Winery with „something” Hungarian,
- Interactive User Interface,
- **Enjoyable Gameplay** – Trying to provide flow experience for the player.

1.3. Synopsis

What is “flow”? Flow is being in the zone, getting the groove, being on fire, or just being in a totally optimal state of performance. It is that magical moment when everything seems to come together - you become fully immersed in the activity, fears and insecurities melt away, action becomes spontaneous, and you feel fully alive in the present moment

Why is flow important? Flow is the difference between a good team and a great team. It is the difference between good performance and great performance. It is the difference between a good day at work, and a fantastic day at work. When we are in this flow state we perform at our peak. Not only do our productivity levels soar, but we experience a deep sense of satisfaction. Work becomes a source of enjoyment.

The e-learning application teaches managers how to evolve into leaders who effectively create an environment in which flow can flourish: one that promotes employee engagement and positive attitudes in the workplace. Done well, it helps reduce turnover, employee complaints and makes your company a place that people look forward to being a part of. The *Flow simulation* teaches that before profit and bottom line come the needs and happiness of your employees. **If you connect with all the passions your people have—for themselves, their families, their community and wider world—they will follow you to the ends of the earth, produce, promote and consume your products and services with pride.**

This **inspiration** for this game-based e-learning course is the well-known flow theory of renowned Hungarian American psychologist Prof. **Mihály Csíkszentmihályi** as described in his two works on the subject **Flow: the Psychology of Optimal Experience** and **Good Business: Leadership, Flow and the Making of Meaning**.

Set in a Californian winery, the learner/player is guided on a path towards optimal leadership development, corporate culture development, and self-actualization through interactive dialogues with virtual avatars. Included in the course content are **testimonials** from successful business leaders who experience flow, **mini-lectures** on related leadership development topics from prominent professors and motivational speakers, and entertaining films pertaining to California winery business.

1.4. Target audience

Upper and middle management decision-makers who aspire to be visionary leaders and have a desire for self-improvement. Managers need to understand the concept of flow personally so that they can be as effective and productive as possible. However, there is an added benefit in that when management understands flow they can also effectively help those working under them to find flow or cut out things that prevent them from experiencing flow.

1.5. Main User Learning Objectives:

- Flow principles and the concept of flow,
- Visionary Leader Characteristics,
- Create a blueprint for business through application of vision/vision statement - that is good both materially and spiritually,
- Flow-enhancing usage of generally accepted management styles and techniques,

- Making users achieve honest introspection – i.e. asking good questions about themselves like: “How am I contributing to human well-being?” “What do I consider my mission to be?” “Does my job entail responsibility for the welfare of the wider community, or am I a profit-making machine who is to satisfy escalating expectations for immediate gain?” “Is there hope for society as a whole in my personal example and legacy as a leader?”

2. Structure of the Application

Below are main themes for possible interactive 20 minute “sessions” which could be composed of scenarios/dialogues/exercises the purpose of which effectively illustrate how FLOW can be implemented in the workplace.

2.1. Intro

Obligatory company info, legal disclaimer; general eye-catching clip in “movie-trailer” style. Intros may be skipped at any time.

Maximum 2 min.

2.2. Basics of FLOW and Testimonials

Basics of FLOW – One 20-minute session defining and illustrating Flow theory with an option to reach the media library – in a layered manner. Introduced through engaging cartoon film, and Prof. Csíkszentmihályi himself. This introduction to the flow concept should somehow be created in a layered manner, i.e. it should be able to pique the attention of any user, including those who are already aware of the basis of flow. So, this introduction should be entertaining on one hand, but designed in a “you can skip it” manner on the other. The best way of sustaining the tension of the topic is to use randomized elements of a pool of media elements – thus avoiding boredom when read the second and third time.

Testimonials – The flow-related testimonials should also come under this session, with additional access to them in the media library. Prof. CSM’s help is needed to gather potential cooperation from high profile flow-facilitators (business and non-business as well).

2.3. Individual Evaluation

At this stage, this evaluation should only be a pre-screening of visionary talents; the overall picture of user character is coming out from their answers and solutions during leadership development exercises/ scenarios – that is the power (and unique selling point) of ALEAS: continuous Adaptivity.

This entails that the player behavior is progressively monitored not only to give feedback, but also to show the player fields of improvement. You do not do simulations only to practice your already possessed know-how, but also to find out your weaknesses. That's the way of improvement (just like CSM himself says: know your faults beforehand and then correct them).

The player /user is given big hints that to become an “effective leader” he has to focus on certain people-oriented areas and the process should encourage flow. But be creative doing this, it shouldn't be obvious or it spoils the challenge.

Not every young manager taking the Flow simulation course will possess the right personality traits, mature character, will or capability to nurture and enable flow in the team. One main objective of the game is to help the player recognize areas for self-improvement. According to CSM to have any hope to achieve flow, a manager must first know himself.

CSM states in the last chapter of Good Business that it is important for a leader to have certain personality and character traits to enable him to act as a flow facilitator in a business environment. In addition, anyone who aspires to truly lead has to do more than soul searching. He has to make the choice to learn from his mistakes, seek feedback, admit his faults, change his negative behavior, and basically seek constant self- improvement. This may sound like simple, common sense but it is not obvious to everyone and is an important point to stress.

The player is asked to select the visionary leader characteristics and potential traits, but from a list which will/may include many misleading items:

- Vision and the ability to effectively communicate it,
- “Soul”-i.e. a conscientious concern for the greater good beyond self,
- Surplus of energy to invest in the endeavor,
- Ability to inspire others,
- Desire to constantly improve oneself, one's environment,
- Striving for excellence,

- Wish to help others,
- Desire to make a better world, leave a lasting positive legacy,
- Respect for others,
- Curiosity, have wide interests,
- Integrity,
- Showing trust in employees and inspiring trust from them,
- Optimism,
- Caring for personal/family needs,
- Balance of work and life,
- Self-direction and self-motivation,
- Self-awareness,
- Improving interaction with others,
- Values and principle driven (not necessarily related to religious convictions),
- Some misleading ones: obsessive dedication to work, perfectionism...

GAME BEGINS

2.4. Winery Orientation and Game Objectives

Here player learns the back story of the winery and why he is involved in the winery (his mission; new managing director, with an owner above him/her). The goals or objectives (what are they going to be?) are explained here perhaps in dialogues with the avatar owners.

The purpose of the goals incorporated into the game is: flow-facilitation for the user, himself (a good game, similar to any flow-enhancing activity, provides clear goals and immediate feedback during gameplay.) That is why there should be continuously traceable goals:

1. **Prize** – winning the wine prize – increased creativity and striving for excellence.
2. **People** – loyalty, motivation, reduced turnover, satisfied workforce and sense of community. Commitment to broader social goals and meaning.
3. **Profit** – all the business-related goals, but in a sustainable and long-term perspective.

4. **Personal Progress** – the user demonstrates having the key character traits, assets and knowledge to be a good flow facilitator. (see below chapter “Individual Development”.)

2.5. Flow Development in terms of Leadership (the core of the simulation)

The game objective is not to teach leadership with the help of flow but the other way around: to show that flow is the most crucial condition of good leadership.

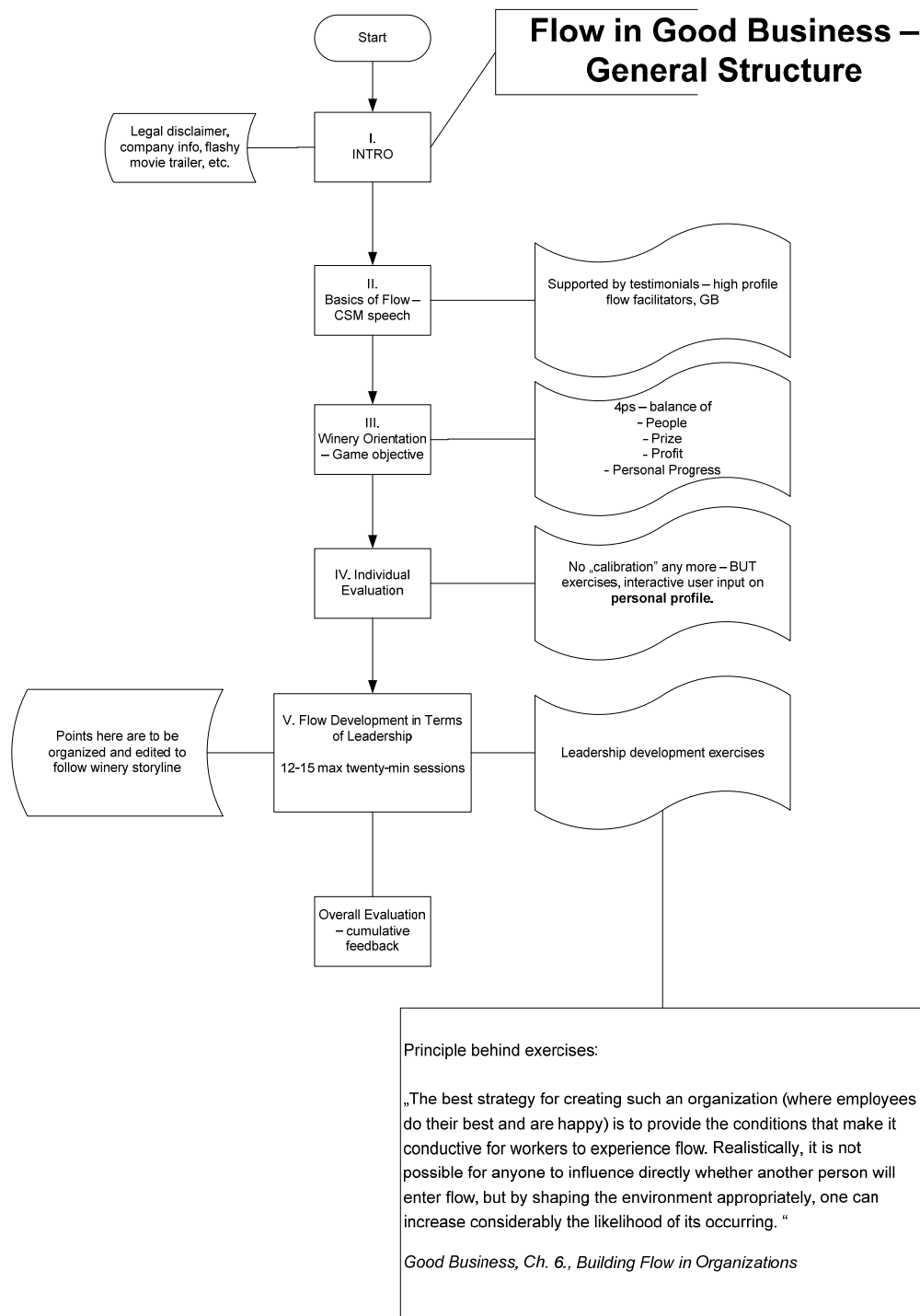
1. Passive Communication – Active listening
2. Teambuilding
3. Active Communication (2)-Vision statement
4. Performance Management
5. Developing Others
6. Empowerment, coaching
7. Achievement, Commitment & Integrity
8. Achievement, Commitment & Integrity
9. Empathy
10. Time management
11. Appropriate Feedback
12. Motivation & Positive Attitude

Our job is to provide a good learning experience: and in the end, call user attention to this very fact: “do you know that it’s already half past five? No? That’s because you have been in flow! It’s our pleasure that it has been so! Thank you!”

2.5. Overall Evaluation

A grand summary of individual performance and general feedback on the means of visionary characteristics, etc...

The data from the “Individual Evaluation Section” (pre-screening) is continuously processed and put together here with the adaptive nature of the software: “you have made these and these crucial decisions during the game” (to which we had already given immediate feedback, too) but let’s underline it again: This is the Personal Progress section, when some of your previous tasks will show their true nature (made under the “FLOW Development in terms of Leadership” section.): unlock all info in the media library.



Contacts

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