

ethikos Volume 35, Number 1. January 01, 2021 On ethics: Todd Inouye

Todd Inouye, Assistant Professor of Management, University of Hawai'i at Hilo, HI

An interview by **Adam Turteltaub**, CHC, CCEP, Chief Engagement & Strategy Officer, SCCE & HCCA.

AT: Before we get into the very intriguing exercise you developed, can you first give us an overview of what you are teaching at the University of Hawai'i at Hilo?

TI: Each semester I typically teach one section of Introduction to Business and two sections of Strategic Management, which is the undergraduate business capstone course. I have also taught the International Business course in past semesters. I enjoy the fact that I have the opportunity to work with students as freshmen and then be able to see how they have progressed when they take the capstone at the end of their undergraduate business careers.

AT: As part of your course preparation, you developed an exercise about negotiations in the coffee supply chain. Can you take us through it?

TI: The exercise is a pricing negotiation that accommodates 10–40 participants in a two- to three-hour period. Participants are assigned a role in the coffee supply chain (i.e., farmer, processor, importer, roaster, and café/retailer). They learn about the coffee supply chain in general and are given confidential role-specific sheets that give them the basic parameters for what needs to be negotiated. They then negotiate pricing between their suppliers and customers (depending on their role), and the activity concludes once the café(s) determine their retail price for a 16oz coffee. The parties draft simple contracts as pricing agreements are determined.

Once the instructor has contracts for all negotiated deals, they conduct a debrief, at which point the participants learn about how their own decisions can contribute to impacts elsewhere in the supply chain. They learn about how businesses have ethical responsibilities that extend to both their suppliers and customers across the supply chain.

AT: What led you to develop this exercise?

TI: Since my days as an executive master of business administration student, I have always been interested in developing novel exercises that add value to training business professionals and students alike. Negotiation exercises are an excellent way to expose participants to the uncertainties of business in a safe training environment. In my opinion, experiential learning exercises like negotiations are far more effective than any traditional method of teaching, and participants prefer them.

A former colleague, Dr. Jim Kling, professor of supply chain management at Niagara University, approached me with a problem. He thought that the supply chain exercises available to faculty were limited and wanted something better that could be completed in a short time frame while providing students with a memorable experience. We brainstormed and arrived at the coffee supply chain. It is a mature, well-known industry that participants can easily relate to, and importantly, it has enough publicly available industry details that allowed us to build a realistic experiential activity. On top of this, we both had connections within the coffee industry that allowed us the ability to validate many of the assumptions we had built into the negotiation. With the assistance

of a grant from Niagara University's Committee on College Teaching and Learning, we were able to develop the exercise and eventually get it published in the *Decision Sciences Journal of Innovative Education*^[1] after securing teaching innovation award nominations at the annual conferences of the Academy of International Business and Decision Sciences Institute.

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