

Radio Interview with Radio 938 LIVE

Manage! Manage! Manage!

February 15, 2006 & February 18, 2006

Have you and your friends ever played a board game only to end up quarreling over the rules or perhaps over the scheming and double teaming during play.

Board games reveal a lot about humans don't they?

I'm **Justin Teo** and this week in **Undertones**, I drop by Singapore Polytechnic to find out how a new management board game developed by its students can assess a person's skill sets.

A team of students from Singapore Polytechnic's School of Media and Info-Communications Technology have developed a board game called "Manage! Manage! Manage!"

The board game tests the project management skills of players.

I spoke with Mr. Richard Mak, Director of Alpha-Plus Training Consultants, the company collaborating with the Singapore Polytechnic team for "Manage! Manage! Manage!" explains how they learnt about these dynamics from their earlier board game, "Zeros-To-Heros".

I also spoke with Sean Chan, a member of the Singapore Polytechnic final-year project team, on how the board game first came about.

RM: *Physical board games have the benefit of social bonding. In playing board games, you lose yourself in the game and your true self surfaces through this means.*

In fact, very interestingly, we had a school that engaged us; it was a discipline master that engaged us to teach the "Zeros to Heros" board game and this was for the school prefects.

Halfway through the game, the discipline master pulled me aside and said, "You know Richard, actually the whole batch here was suppose to be prefects next year. But after seeing them play this game, I've decided that some of them will not be prefects next year."

Why? Because as they played the game, they began to show their more domineering side, they are a bit bossy while some were a bit timid and could not be role models. So a board game can be a reflection of true life and students want to do it in a fun way.

SC: *Initially our lecturer proposed to us the idea of coming up with a board game, which is related to one of our modules, which is multi-media project management. We thought that doing normal board games is quite boring so we decided to take up this challenge. But a lot of uncertainties were present as we were venturing into unknown ground. No one had done this before but we were quite happy with the results produced.*

Having "business management" as the theme of a board game may seem like bringing your work home or clocking over time on your weekend, but as TV shows like "The Apprentice" have shown, the dynamics produced are addictive.

SC: *In the business world now and in schools, whatever we do will be associated with projects. So we thought that management projects will allow players to see if they can complete projects on time and effectively with issues like manpower, budget, datelines and finances in place.*

It kind of reflects working life as there are always mishaps taking place, clients adjusting datelines, equipment breaking down and politics, all these problems.

So how does one get down to playing “Manage! Manage! Manage!”?

SC: *Each player has a mission project, it's called the life time project, our dream. So we have to start off with a small company with one employee. As a project manager, you have to work on small projects and channel funds that will eventually fulfill your dream. So as you play your game, you can interact with the other players and collaborate with them.*

Creating a board game is not unlike writing a computer programme, you have tons of bugs to resolve and uncovering them could get messy.

But this team of Singapore Polytechnic students went the extra mile and even tested the board game at Settler's Café, a hang-out for fans of board games.

SC: *For our project, we divided it into two phases, creating the board game and the testing phase. So we spent half a semester actually testing the board game, getting people to test the game, receiving feedback and making improvements. Some of the testers gave positive feedback while some gave negative feedback. Since this was multi-media board game, those who were inclined to multi-media and the IT side understood or appreciated it better. This was compared to doctors or lawyers who found it slightly boring. Through the feedback, we tried to test and implement new... fun ideas into it.*

When I first heard about this board game being developed by the Media and Info-Communication Technology students, the first question that popped up was why create a board game, shouldn't IT-savvy students be developing computer games?

Well, as Sean explains, a board game does bring out that something extra in all of us.

SC: *Basically, I feel that if we were to play a physical board game, it would be more fun because we're facing each other and we can see the passion to win and we manage this passion. We can also teach the players and guide them so that they would make fewer errors in the future.*

Indeed, the dynamics of a board game reveal a lot about its players.

Mr. Richard Mak, Director of Alpha-Plus Training Consultants, the company collaborating with the Singapore Polytechnic team for “Manage! Manage! Manage!” explains how they've learnt about these dynamics from their earlier board game, “Zeros-To-Heros.”

RM: *Physical board games have the benefit of social bonding. In playing board games, you lose yourself in the game and your true self surfaces through this means. In fact, very interestingly, we had a school that engaged us; it was a discipline master that engaged us to teach the “Zeros-To-Heros” board game and this was for the school prefects. Halfway through the game, the discipline master pulled me aside and said, “You know Richard, actually the whole batch here was suppose to be prefects next year. But after seeing them play this game, I've decided that some of them will not be prefects next year.” Why? Because as they play the game, they began to show their more domineering side, they are a bit bossy while some were a bit timid and could not be role models. So a board game can be a reflection of true life and students want to do it in a fun way.*

So if watch out for “Manage! Manage! Manage!” and test your friends and family on their management skills.

This has been Undertones and I'm Justin Teo for Radio Singapore International.