User Manual

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Welcome!

Welcome to SimVenture Evolution. This exciting software provides a realistic business experience while at the same time enabling you to understand key theories, and enjoy the fun of competition and risk. Throughout this manual, and within the simulation, please note that you will be referred to as the User, and your tutor or instructor as the Coordinator.

Key purposes of the simulation

SimVenture Evolution enables you to experience the key decisions involved in starting and running a business. You will be managing a bicycle manufacturing company which operates in a complex market place, with a range of potential customers and competitors. Depending on how you use the software, you can engage in short case studies to explore specific aspects of running a business, or run the whole business for a number of years, split into quarters. Depending on how this is set up by your Coordinator, you may be operating as an individual, or as part of a team.

As well as understanding key business concepts, you will learn about decision making and the evaluation of risk, when determining your strategy. If you are working in teams, you will understand how these are managed, the importance of leadership, and the range of approaches of different team members to debate and problem solving.

Key purposes of this document

To explain how to approach learning about the simulation from logging in, to running your first simulated business.

To provide a reference point for:

- essential information to support new users
- understanding and accessing the full functionality of the simulation
- dealing with warning and error messages encountered in using the simulation.
Access the Simulation

Registering your ID

Your Coordinator will send you an email with details on how to sign up. Enter the information as requested and submit. Your Coordinator will then assign a licence to you, after which, you will have full access to Evolution.

Signing on

Use the link below to access Evolution. Please note that Internet Explorer should NOT be used.

https://server.simventure.co.uk/SimVenture/

This will take you to the sign-on screen.

Input the User Name and Password that you used when signing up and hit Login. You will then be able to access the simulation. If you forget your User Name or Password, please refer to your Coordinator. Note that you will not be able to open activities within the system until your Coordinator has assigned you a license. However, even without a license you will still be able to view Walkthrough Videos detailed below to familiarise yourself with the simulation.

Learn the Basics

1. View the Walkthrough Videos

These display automatically when you first sign on to Evolution.

Unchecking the ‘Show on startup’ box within the window will hide this window for subsequent logins but they can also be viewed by clicking ‘Getting Started’ in the Dashboard’s main menu, or by clicking Menu and selecting ‘Getting Started’ within an open activity.

3. Workflow  https://vimeo.com/264211707

The content covered in these videos is also provided in the User Essentials section (pages 4-10).
2. Complete the Core Skills Programme

The Core Skills Programme is designed as an experiential way to build up your knowledge and understanding of how the software operates.

*Working through short activities in which you can use rewind facilities is a tried and tested way to learn the basics.*

Once you have signed on to the simulation, select **Open Activity** from the **Main menu**. You should be able to see 5 Core Skills activities. If these are not available, ask your Coordinator, who will be able to arrange this.

Find **Core Skills 1** on the left hand side of the screen (you may need to scroll down the page) and click **Open** to start the activity. After a few seconds the activity will load and will open on the **Briefing / Video** screen. The ‘Video Run Through’ explains the details of the activity and the ‘Process’ column summarises the actions you need to take in order to complete the activity.

As suggested in the video, you can rewind the activity using the **Full Game Rewind** found in the **Menu** dropdown to try different options and note their effects.

After you have completed **Core Skills 1**, complete **Core Skills 2-5** in the same way, watching the appropriate video and using the rewind function to explore alternative strategies.

3. Moving on...

Once you have viewed the Walkthrough Videos and completed the Core Skills Activities you will be ready to engage with further activities to extend your knowledge and skills in a wide range of business, finance and employability related subjects.

Ask your coordinator for further details.
User Essentials

*Bullet points within this section indicate the core knowledge contained in the videos and the Core Skills activities.*

**Basics - A simple description of the simulation.**

- Manage a bicycle manufacturing company in a simulated market populated by virtual customers and competitors. The company includes 4 ‘Departments’ each with its own ‘resources’ function.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>Operations</th>
<th>Research &amp; Development</th>
<th>Sales &amp; Marketing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
- Decisions are made in 19 ‘Business Areas’ on a quarterly basis.
- The simulation models the market’s response to the decisions you make each quarter.
- Market Research reports provide data to describe the makeup of the virtual market.
- Strategy and decisions directly influence the progress of the virtual business.
- As quarters progress, strategies need amending to suit the changing circumstances.
- Activities model startup (from Q1) or established companies (to 10yrs) in a variety of trading contexts.
- Scenarios are used to create a variety of Activities to focus learning and vary the level of challenge.
- A ‘Rewind’ function is available in specific activities for ease of learning.

**Navigation - The simulation interface contains a number of elements presented in 4 areas;**

- Know the names and function of each of the following 4 areas and the elements they contain.

**Menu Bar**

- Run Quarter Button – uploads your decisions & updates data based on the simulation’s responses.
- Menu Button - provides access to a range of largely administrative functions.
- Information Button - highlights key words and phrases which can be clicked to view definitions.
- Help Button - shows help relating to the current screen.
- Nav Map - contains buttons to access all the business areas and tools.

**Main Screen**

Business Area Tabs (Overview/Information/Guidance/Key Consideration/Impacts) - organise support for each business area in a consistent layout.

**Status Bar**

Provides a summary of time, costs, efficiency and cash for easy reference during decision making.

**Nav Bar**

Contains buttons to access all the business areas and Tools (Briefing/History/Mail/Journal/Advisor).

**Workflow - A regular workflow to manage your virtual business soon emerges.**


- Access key data for analysis via the Briefing, History, Market Research & Status Bar.
- Use the ‘Change Strategy’ buttons to set up your decisions for the coming quarter.
- Make available enough resources to complete the planned tasks.
- Run the Quarter and evaluate the impact of your decisions on the business.
Help, Information, Guidance & Advice - contained within the simulation interface:

**Help** is designed to explain the functionality of the interface.

The Help Button opens a window explaining the contents of the current page and any specific functionality that it contains.

**Information** describes the simulated business world in which SVE set.

The highlight button can be toggled to reveal words and phrases on the page that can be clicked to view explanations and definitions.

**Guidance** outlines broad business principles and objectives as they relate to the simulation.

Buttons within the Change Strategy Screens explain how individual elements within the simulation combine.

**Advice** supports you in responding to issues within the specific context of your company within an activity.

Guidance can be found in the tabs within each business area. These should help you through the process of making decisions and understanding the interrelated nature of each business area.

The How do I...? section explains key business concepts in the context of the simulation.

Specific Advice, relating to issues within the current activity can be found in the Briefing tabs.

Core Principles

*Bear these in mind as you manage your simulated business. These principles apply to all scenarios and activities that you may encounter in Evolution.*

- Decisions are inter-related – each ‘Business Area’ is affected by decisions made in other areas.
- There are no right or wrong answers – there is generally a compromise in every decision.
- Well informed decisions are more likely to be successful.
- Careful analysis and monitoring supports well informed decision making.
- Decisions are always made in the context of:
  - The goals of the business (these may be your own or externally determined).
  - Internal factors (e.g. access to finance, company age, production capacity).
  - External factors (e.g. market trends, competitor activity, economic climate).
- The simulation is designed to respond in a similar way to the real world. If you don’t see the outcomes you expect, consider what a real company would do in the same circumstances.
Simulation Workflow - Analysis

Having opened an activity, the first thing you need to do is to analyse the starting point (scenario) in which the activity is set. This will help you decide on a strategy to achieve your objectives.

Briefing

The Briefing should be your first reference point as it contains narrative information and summary data about the specific scenario upon which the activity is based.

Further information may also be provided to support you in engaging with the activity, such as targets or concepts to explore.

Current Status

Each Resources and Business Area overview screen displays the current status for each section.

This will give you a more specific picture of the simulated company’s situation, further informing your strategic and tactical decision making.

History

To further enhance your understanding of the company’s situation you can view the History section for more detailed data analysis. The history section is the key source of financial and operating information for the business and is updated each time that the Quarter is run.

Details of the key information accessed by each tab is as follows:

Overview – this is your first source of information and provides a comprehensive view of the state of the business, often called an Executive Dashboard. The left-hand side provides crucial operating data, such as orders received and sales made. The right-hand side provides a summary of key financial data. The central messages advise you of key events that have occurred during the quarter, and the Bank Balance chart provides a clear indication of the movement of the bank account during the quarter.

Quarterly Reports – this section provides a number of reports for the quarter, covering the standard financial reports and also details of Activities, and a Sales Analysis. The Quarter to be reported may be changed by using the ‘Select Period’ spinner at the top right of the screen.
Multi-Quarter Reports – provides a detailed view of Profit and Cash Flow trends across quarters. The number and dates of the periods reported may be adjusted using the spinners at the top right of the screen.

Charts – this enables useful charts to be created to facilitate discussion and decision-making, and also to provide material for final reports, if required. Standard charts may be selected, and the parameters may be changed using the drop-down choices to meet your reporting requirements.

Table – the data available may be viewed in tabular format, but by selecting Overview again, the option to Export the data can also be used (see below).

Forecasting – you can use this facility to enter your forecast data for Profit and Cashflow, which you can then compare with the actual performance of your business. You can use the other tabs within History to examine why the actual outcomes may be different to your forecast.

Messages – this is a useful facility for you to review messages received during the running of each Quarter. The Quarter to be reported may be changed by using the spinner at the top right of the screen.

Export - This enables the whole History data file to be downloaded in a CSV format, which can then be manipulated in Excel to produce any required custom reports – for example Key Performance Indicators.

Select Period spinner – use the arrows to move backwards and forwards to select the period for which you wish the History data to be reported.

Market Research Reports

As well as understanding the virtual company you are about to run, you should also take some time to analyse the simulated market within which your company is operating.

You may find some useful information in existing reports within the Market Research section although you need to be aware that the reports contained in each activity may vary.

Advisor

The Advisor section enables you to find the answers to a wide range of strategic business issues that you could encounter when using the simulation.

Colour-coded links are provided to direct you to the appropriate part of the simulation where you can investigate further or make adjustments.
Simulation Workflow - Action

Once you have analysed the situation, you can make decisions to affect the progress of your virtual company. Decisions are made within each of the sections displayed in the map screen.

This screen is accessed by clicking the Map button.

Each Resources and Business Area section follows a common format which is described below using the Organisation department as an example.

Section Layout

Clicking the departmental symbol on the map or on the left-hand menu bar will display an overall description of the department and its business areas.

On selecting any of the business areas, you will access an Overview screen displaying the current status with the area.

Tabs display further details covering the key issues involved in making strategic decisions within this business area.

Each Overview page also includes a Change Strategy button. When clicked, this button displays a window enabling you to execute decisions within the business area.
The Change Strategy buttons display windows which allow you to control the functions of each business area within the simulation (the examples below are taken from the Organisation Department).

The Change Strategy windows also include lightbulb icons which can be clicked to view further information about the current decision-making area.

Once the required amendments have been made, the ‘Confirm Changes’ button will secure the decisions, pending execution when you run the quarter.

Multiple decisions can be made across all the departments and as more decisions are made you will see the Status Bar update to reflect the time and money required to execute all your decisions.

You may (as in the example above), that you require more time to execute your decisions than is currently available. In this situation you can return to the change strategy screens to modify your decisions and either reduce the number of hours required or increase the number available.

Running the Quarter

Once you have confirmed all the decisions that you wish to implement for the quarter then click the ‘Run Quarter’ button on the menu bar. A Final Check screen will then be displayed, showing the usage of resources planned for the coming quarter. Clicking ‘Confirm Run Quarter’ will then execute all the decisions pending for the quarter.

If the Company Totals bar at the bottom left of the screen is red, you will see this warning and will not be able to proceed with running the quarter.

You will then need to investigate in which department(s) that hours required exceed hours available and make the appropriate changes in strategy in each section.
Simulation Workflow - Evaluation

Having run a quarter, your situation will have changed (hopefully in a positive way!) and you will need to evaluate the impact of the decisions you have made.

Examining and Interpreting your results

There is a significant amount of information available to help you understand the results of the quarter and many ways in which this can be tackled, but a good starting point is the History Overview page. As noted in the History description above, this provides a good summary of the outcomes of the decisions you have taken.

You can then investigate further using the various tabs, to examine the detailed Profit and Cash results, the trends in the data, and the differences from Forecast, if you have created one.

Once you have a clear understanding of the outcomes you may need to review your Strategy before making your decisions for the next quarter.
Terminology

Throughout this manual, and within the simulation, please note that we use specific terminology to make the descriptions and explanations as clear as possible. Key terms used are as follows:

**Coordinator** - the tutor or instructor who is leading and/or managing the learning activity.

**User** - the student or learner who is using the simulation, either as an individual or as part of a team.

**Team** - a group of Users who are working together to run a company within an activity.

**Scenario** - a starting point within the simulation which may vary in terms of the age, resources and financial situation of the company and/or the size and nature of the market within which it operates. Scenarios are selected by Coordinators to form the basis of activities.

**Activity** - the way in which a user engages with the simulation. Activities are set up by the Coordinator, based on a specific scenario. These are then assigned to Users/Teams who access them from the main menu within their Dashboards.

**Briefing** – a section within each activity providing an overview of the scenario on which an activity is based, as well as information about the details of the activity.
Frequently Asked Questions

Most of the questions that you have should be answered in the text above, or by using the Help, Information, Guidance & Advice available in the simulation interface, but our Users have raised a number of specific queries, which we are pleased to answer below.

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Q – I have registered with Evolution but cannot see any activities when I sign on

A – You should contact your Coordinator – you may not have a licence assigned yet

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Q – How do I switch on/off the music which plays when the quarter runs?

A - Menu/Settings/Game Options – check/uncheck the Sound On box

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Q – What is the difference in Evolution between and Employee and a Contractor?

A – An Employee is a permanent member of staff who will need to be trained and developed, whereas a Contractor is assumed to be fully trained. Recruitment and induction of an Employee is not instant, therefore Recruitment Delay costs will be incurred for at least the first quarter when taking on Employees. Contractors can be employed immediately.
Error Messages

**Trigger** - The ‘Confirm Run Quarter’ button is clicked when total available hours are fewer than total required hours.

**Issue** - There are insufficient working hours in the overall company to implement all the actions that you have confirmed. Departments can borrow employees/contractors from each other (at reduced efficiency) but there must be an appropriate level of resources in the company as a whole.

**Solution** - Examine each of the departments and identify those which have an excess of planned hours over available hours. Review your strategy to increase available resources (for example by engaging Contract staff) and/or reducing planned activities. Once the resources are in balance, then the Quarter can be run.