Professional Writing Escape Room

Adam M. Lloyd, Ph.D.

University of Maryland

lloyda@umd.edu

ABC 84th Annual International Conference -- October 2019

Overview

Your company is about to send a proposal to its biggest potential client, MegaCorp. Getting this business would set your organization on a path toward sector domination but losing the contract might send it into bankruptcy! Because the stakes are so high, your boss has selected your team to conduct a final review of the materials to make sure that everything is rhetorically sound and error-free. The only problem is, the proposal needs to be sent out in 15 minutes! Put your thinking caps on and put your noses to the grindstone. The clock is ticking!

Like many, I do not assign a final exam in my professional writing courses, instead, opting for a large project that takes up half of the semester. This Escape Room assignment can stand in, as a fun alternative, for an end-of-semester exam in order to make sure that, beyond these larger projects, students have fully grasped the writing strategies, rhetorical strategies, and grammar lessons that we have been teaching throughout the semester.

STATION 3

STATION 1

STATION 2

STATION 4

Sample Puzzle #1

Identify the primary stasis being argued in this article excerpt:

1. Action

2. Jurisdiction

3. Definition.

Both the SEC and the Commodity Futures Trading Commission (CFTC) currently have some statutory authority to oversee crypto-markets and they have recently started enforcing regulations on the sector more rigorously. But Massad argues that the current level of regulatory oversight by these agencies is insufficient.

The SEC and the CFTC have limited budgets, Massad notes. They simply cannot extend their reach without more resources. Massad also argues that financial instruments in the crypto-sector can be difficult to define for regulatory purposes.

The SEC is authorized to regulate crypto-assets that can be deemed "securities"—instruments like stocks and bonds. Some offerings in the crypto-sector do in fact fall under the securities umbrella, Massad explains. But the SEC has determined that Bitcoin is not a security, which Massad says creates uncertainty over whether the SEC can regulate institutions that trade both Bitcoin and securities.

Massad notes that the CFTC, on the other hand, considers Bitcoin to be a commodity—that is, a good that can be purchased and sold, such as oil or gold. The agency currently has authority to regulate any "derivative" product involving commodities, such as contracting to buy Bitcoin on a future date at a price agreed upon today. But Massad explains that the CFTC still has limited authority over trading commodities for cash, and a considerable amount of activity in the crypto-sector actually revolves around buying and selling Bitcoin for cash.

To improve regulatory efforts going forward, Massad advocates for a comprehensive, federal framework instead of piecemeal action by multiple agencies or states. The crypto-market is international, and Massad argues that the United States should set an example for how to regulate the market properly.

Sample Quiz #1

Envelope #1 (incorrect answer to Puzzle #1)

Q: The correct punctuation after the opening salutation in a business letter is a #1. semicolon, #2. comma, #3. colon?

(If the students select envelope #1 or #2 (the incorrect answers) the index card inside the envelope will read, "Try again." If the student select envelope #3 (the correct answer) the index card inside the envelope will read, "Correct. However, you answered Puzzle #1 incorrectly. Return to Puzzle #1 and try again.")

Envelope #2 (correct answer to Puzzle #1)

Q: Identify the correctly paired English & Greek rhetorical appeals: #1. Ethos/Logic, Pathos/Emotion, Logos/Credibility; #2. Logos/Logic, Ethos/Credibility, Pathos/Emotion; #3. Pathos/Logic, Ethos/Emotion, Logos/Credibility.

(If the students select envelope #1 or #3 (the incorrect answers) the index card inside the envelope will read, "Try again." If the student select envelope #2 (the correct answer) the index card inside the envelope will read, "Correct. Continue to Puzzle #2!")

Envelope #3 (incorrect answer to Puzzle #1)

Q: The most important section of a résumé is the #1. education section, the #2 work experience section, the #3 top third of the first page?

(If the students select envelope #1 or #2 (the incorrect answers) the index card inside the envelope will read, "Try again." If the student select envelope #3 (the correct answer) the index card inside the envelope will read, "Correct. However, you answered Puzzle #1 incorrectly. Return to Puzzle #1 and try again.")