

The Role of Interdisciplinary Studies in Teaching Product Management: Position Paper

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Abstract:

As businesses are becoming obsessed of being successful in their industries, they look for fresh approaches to be able to cater to an ever-changing market. As an institution producing Marketing graduates, these students must be attuned to what is actually happening in the professional realm simulated in the four corners of the classroom.

This position paper will look at the importance of collaboration of our Marketing students with the other disciplines such as Industrial Engineering, the Natural Sciences, Computer Engineering and Human Resources & Management departments since these disciplines are training students to come up with innovation and new products; however, it is the role of the Marketing student to customize this to a target market, consumer behavior as well as understanding product life cycle and trends.

The position paper will look at how companies are obsessed in Cross Functional Communication in the workplace and simulating it in the classroom experience by creating virtual teams, collaboration with past students, product designers and understanding product life cycle so that the learner is prepared in the professional realm since what happens in the corporate world has been simulated in the classroom setting.

Keywords: interdisciplinary studies, product management, product development

In the recent launch of the iPhone X here in the Philippines much craze has been created not just in social media but also in the news. It has been a consistent newsmaker, as early as the launch of the iPhone 5 where across the globe people will line up in Apple Stores just to be the very few people to be the first to own one. After the launch, Apple will upload the launch video in YouTube so that people who missed the event will take part in the next version launch.

Such innovative product that the late Steve Jobs has created became a global sensation beating the once leader Nokia in the telecommunication and mobile gadget industry. Using this phenomenon, the marketing educators always challenge the learner inside the classroom of how such excellent product created a worldwide craze and made a company that started in a garage as one of the most profitable businesses of this century.

Using the phenomenon of the iPhone launch, millennial marketing students can best relate to this example. As majority of these students in the university owns an iPhone, the marketing educator will challenge the student as to how this iPhone landed into their palm. From the inception to its consumption, this will be the pivotal point of discussion and what interdisciplinary studies are doing to give birth to a product. This position paper will provide suggestions and further studies of how interdisciplinary can best improve teaching methods, appreciate the role of others in the firm, advocate cross-functional communication in the workplace and teamwork and ultimately, bring to a higher level the students of the important graduate attributes such as critical and

creative thinking, effective communication, reflective lifelong learner and service driven citizen (Expected Lasallian Graduate Attributes, dlsu.edu.ph)

In the book entitled *The Elegant Solution: Toyota's Formula for Mastering Innovation* written by Matthew May (2006), he argued that one of the important reason why Toyota has been in the forefront of innovation in the automobile industry is that the firm encouraged every single employee to come up with an idea. It does not have to be related to a car or automobile. Even those not involved in the production line must bring in a brilliant idea to improve the way they do things in the company. By the end of the year, they will have a close to 1 million ideas where they can incorporate to organizational development, market penetration, new product features, pricing, new target markets, leadership styles and so on.

Thus, from the Toyota Experience, students taking up Product Management are exposed in the process of idea generation called Brainstorming Techniques. The students will be throwing ideas to the class about a never thought of product that will solve millennial students' problem. Consolidation techniques will follow. They are encouraged to give as many ideas as possible for the next twenty minutes, no matter how wild it may be.

After the brainstorm exercise, the students will now be lead to the importance of ideas in product management. According to Crawford and Di Benedetto (2012), that out of 100 ideas, only 15 of them become commercially successful. Thus, using this study, it is important to note that fewer ideas to a target market leads to fewer commercial success.

The brainstorm exercise will be shared to the class that this methodology is not just the work of marketing professional but of every single division and department in the firm that contributes to the fulfillment of the company's vision and mission.

Students will learn to value the exercise that if they, marketing students and soon to be professionals will be embarking on with their careers in various marketing, sales and advertising fields, idea will always have to address some certain unmet needs. Idea will be coming from a data and the role of the marketing student is to make this data be transformed into a marketing insight that will add value to end users or consumers (Smith and Raspin, 2008).

This position paper now will lead the student to ways and means on how to make that idea into a new product.

One of the things that has been practiced for one trimester was the collaboration of the Industrial Engineering students taking up Product Design and the Marketing majors taking up Product Management.

From the previous term projects of the Industrial Engineering students the marketing educator brought their product design paper, presentation slides deck for their defense and some prototype to the marketing students. From what was taught in class the marketing students were leading to developing the product design to make it commercially successful. The student identified the target market, the pricing, the channels of distribution, position and product strategies all put together in the Product Portfolio. Throughout the course the students were expected to create virtual teams with the product designers (the Industrial Engineering majors), identify the

materials and its cost to ensure proper pricing, coming up with advertising materials and collaterals and in the end the marketing students will present the product to their “potential investors” just like Shark Tank pitches.

This is a position paper, since the successful course of Product Management, the students were immersed on how products are brought to the market. How different divisions work closely together to ensure the commercial success of the product. The previous term was only a collaboration of the marketing students to the industrial engineers. This paved the way to collaborate with other fields such as the Natural Sciences where the College of Science students are also creating products that aid the field of medicine; Computer Science students creating applications and software but had no idea how to make it commercially successful.

This position paper will further promote how important Marketing as a discipline to be taught in the other colleges and making sure that lecturers and professors are really practitioners of marketing or coming from the marketing department. It is also proposing that all marketing subjects across all colleges be served only by professors in the marketing department not just by any available professor who has interest with the subject matter and develop the course by the book.

With this position, the student can see credibility with the professor inside the classroom, make the other disciplines appreciate and value marketing, not just as a social science or a department in the firm but as to how the discipline aids in the achieving the profitability, growth and competitiveness of the firm that generates jobs and aides in the meeting of consumer needs in an ever-dynamic demographic.

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Lessons in Perspective-Taking: Embedding Meaningful CSR in Marketing Students

Relevant topic areas:

- Integrating ethics in the marketing curriculum.
- Innovative teaching methods and curriculum development
- Integrating student interpersonal competency development