

## Student Performance in Introductory Marketing: Do Business Communications Courses Help?

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### ABSTRACT

A cursory glance at advertisements today reveals poor written communication skills. Nationwide faculty lament that students' writing skills are weak. This is a major concern for marketing faculty since communication skills are considered critical to marketing success. At our college written communication accounts for at least 50% of a student's grade in the introductory marketing class.

After considerable discussion, our college moved a required business communications course from the junior level to the sophomore level. The faculty and administration made this move based on the belief that earlier training in business communication skills would better prepare students for the rigors of our business core classes. This study investigates the relationship between grades in business communications and introductory marketing.

The analysis sample consists of 3,334 students who earned a grade in introductory marketing between the spring 1996 and fall 1998 semesters. The sample was fairly equal in terms of gender (males = 52%; females = 48%). The average GPA was 2.7 after 99 units. The average age was just under 26. About 63% of the sample had completed the business communications course.

Standardized scores were not available for many students; therefore, we include University grade point average (GPA) as our best measure of academic ability. GPA has been shown to have a strong positive relation to performance in the introductory marketing course (Borde 1998).

Our University attracts a significant ESL enrollment, which we capture through status as a non-resident alien and participation in the University's Education Opportunity Program (EOP). Many EOP students are first generation college students and frequently come from homes in which English is seldom spoken.

Age and total units earned are included as measures of chronological and academic maturity. Gender was included because some studies have found it to be a significant predictor of academic

success (see, for example, Anderson, Benjamin, and Fuss, 1994).

An initial Probit analysis revealed a significant relationship between the grade in business communications and introductory marketing *after* accounting for possible language difficulties with non-resident alien and EOP status. Further analysis will examine the structure of this relationship.

Although we expected that students who were more academically mature would perform better, this was not the case. Furthermore, we thought that chronological maturity would improve performance. Age was highly significant but, surprisingly, was negatively related to good performance in introductory marketing.

As expected, students who have earned higher grades, earn higher grades in marketing. This finding is consistent with previous pedagogical research in business and economics (e.g., Von Allmen, 1996) and confirms that previous success is a good indicator of future success in college courses.

The data seems to indicate that we made a wise decision when we moved the communications course from the junior to the sophomore level.

### REFERENCES

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