

ADHOCRACY IN THE BUSINESS SCHOOL - TECHNOLOGY FACILITATED CROSS-FUNCTIONAL EDUCATION

Birgit Court
New Mexico State University
e-mail address bcourt@nmsu.edu
and

Robert A. Lupton
New Mexico State University
e-mail address blupton@nmsu.edu
Department of Marketing and General Business
College of Business Administration and Economics
Las Cruces, NM 88003 (505) 646-3341

ABSTRACT

The marketing graduate of today must possess cross-functional knowledge, information technology skills, and teamwork/collaboration skills. Students will need different training and preparation to compete in dynamic marketplace, and marketing education will have to provide these competencies. This paper argues that information technology and cross-functional education are complementary; and that information technology can serve as a facilitator of cross-functional education. The paper demonstrates this relationship by reviewing the new business environment which is referred to as "adhocracy," and by investigating the emerging demands on education. Three phases are introduced which are necessary to integrate information technology into the curriculum: The adoption phase, introduction phase, and diffusion phase.

Over the past decade, the content of business school education has become increasingly the target of criticism from the business community. These perceived shortcomings fit into two categories; (1) business curricula fail to keep up with leading edge management practices, and (2) the lack of integration across functional areas. Consequently, business schools are beginning to incorporate a cross-functional perspective to traditional subjects such as marketing, finance, and accounting. Additionally, the management of technology and information are recognized as critical skills students need to possess.

Technology is one of the driving forces behind changes in organizations. The evolution of the "new" organization has created a divergence between industry and higher education. This organization, just now beginning to emerge globally, imposes fundamentally new requirements on marketing and general business education. The traditional, functionally organized profit-oriented firm is fast becoming inefficient and obsolete, and replacing this firm is a newer, flatter organization. The new organization is predicated upon cross-functional coordination and cooperation.

In the business environment the implementation of technology is a gradient process. The three phases necessary to integrate information technology into business: The adoption phase, introduction phase, and diffusion phase. In an educational setting these phases can be used to guide the successful implementation of information technology in the curriculum.

The decision to adopt information technology has to be made by the school's administrators. Obtaining their cooperation might be the first hurdle. The administration has to recognize the need for the adoption of information technology as an instructional tool. The introduction phase is the prerequisite for the installation of an information network. Schools will need to undergo changes similar to those of business organizations (adhocracy) that have moved from the traditional control system to the information control system. The integration of information technology is a continuous process. In its early stages it may involve only a few classes. Once established, information technology will have to be continuously updated and fine tuned. Also inherent in this stage is the continuous development of the faculty. As information technology begins to facilitate education the faculty must be able to provide those skills to the student.

The future confronts marketing educators with the infusion of new marketing technologies and information sources. Appropriately introduced into marketing and general business education, this new technology will lead to the provision of student skills that are demanded by the "new" workplace.

The first in a series of papers to explore the adoption of information technology within marketing and business education, the authors introduce a three-phased framework: adoption, introduction, and diffusion. The development of a technology facilitated cross-functional curriculum presents an alternative to merely traditional cross-functional education. Cross-functional education can be facilitated by information technology.