LOW-TECH AND NO-TECH CLASSES: DO THEY HAVE A PLACE IN MODERN MARKETING CURRICULUMS?

Gregory S. Black, Darrin C. Duber-Smith, and Clay Daughtrey
Metropolitan State University of Denver

Abstract

For many marketing professors, the idea of an effective marketing education evokes the use of computers and electronics in the classroom. For over a decade, school reformers complain that computer use in today's classrooms is meager and unimaginative. In 1999, a professor at Stanford University opined that "a very high percentage of professors use computers to do their work – to prepare lectures, handouts, and exams – but a very low percentage use them in the classroom" (Cuban 1999, pg. 53). This situation has certainly improved since then with the emergence of integrative programs, such as Blackboard. We contend that even in the presence of a high-tech teaching environment, where technology is available in the classroom and online, low-tech, or even no-tech, instructional methods can prove to be more effective for certain topics and to assure students get specific experiences and develop certain skills.

Cuban (1999) contends that regardless of the pressures by reformers and businesses to use high-technology in the classroom, the university classroom should be considered a different experience for students than a workplace is for employees where technologies can improve efficiency, decrease mistakes, etc. First, teaching differs from other work that has been automated to enhance productivity. The essence of teaching is a knowledgeable, caring adult building a relationship with one or more students to help them learn. It is a forging of emotional and intellectual relationships that gives a tone and texture to teaching and learning unlike what occurs in other work environments. This is especially true for the bonds formed between professors and graduate students. Second, schools have many purposes. Most techno-reformers see schools' only purpose as preparing students for the technological workplace. However, most teachers also strongly believe it is their duty to turn their young students into adults who act as caring, thoughtful citizens who are able to make ethical contributions to society. Third, technology is flighty. Why should professors discard what they ordinarily would do for something constantly changing and often not working when needed in the classroom?

A recent article lauds the chalkboard, and its modern equivalent, the whiteboard, as the most significant inventions to education (Ressler 2004). Information on a chalkboard is persistent. It remains visible to students, often even after the class has moved on to a new topic or concept.

In addition, more than any other communication medium used in the college classroom, the chalkboard is self-pacing. In other words, if the professor can write on the board at roughly the same speed as a student can take notes; if a professor has time to write notes on the chalkboard or whiteboard, students have time to write it in their notes. Using this medium also adds flexibility and spontaneity to the classroom. A professor is not locked into a set of PowerPoint slides. It allows students to generate lists as the professor may ask for a list of something that is relevant to marketing; whereas, a fixed PowerPoint presentation does not allow this interaction from students. It also allows the more flexibility to improvise and stray from a fixed lecture format depending on the immediate needs of the class, or to react to breaking news that might impact the specific topic being discussed.

Other research suggests additional benefits of using low-tech rather than high-tech media and techniques in the college classroom. These studies indicate that the student-professor relationships become much stronger in a low-tech classroom (Moran 1998), that student involvement increases in low-tech classrooms (Feldberg 1999), that a high-tech online environment cannot replace the advantages of face-to-face instruction (Feenberg 1999), that student interaction increases in low-tech and no-tech classes (Harrison 2006), that classroom discussion can be increased using low-tech approaches (Nath and Anderson 2006), and that professors can better engage students in active learning in a low-tech environment (Shaver 2010). From an institutional standpoint, combining low-tech classrooms with high-tech classrooms rather than having high-tech capabilities in every classroom will save money (McClure 2003).

In this special session, the panelists discuss literature and their own experiences in using low-tech or no-tech in their classrooms rather than high-tech. First, each panelist discusses specific examples of low/no technology in their classrooms and their rationale for using these methods. Then the session is opened for discussion of this topic among the panelists and attendees of the session.

References Available Upon Request