

USE OF A MARKETING SIMULATION TO TRAIN STUDENTS IN EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE SKILLS

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Emotional intelligence is crucial for success in business. It has been shown to be perhaps more important than technical skills or academic background for leadership (Goleman 1998), group work in business (Druskat and Wolff 2001) and sales (Rozell, Pettijohn, and Parker 2006). It can also have an impact on students as well.

A variety of studies have investigated the impact of emotional intelligence on student performance. For example, Zeidner, Shani-Zinovich, Matthews, and Roberts (2005), reported that EI was higher for gifted compared to non-gifted seventh through 10th grade Israeli students. Also, Petrides, Fredericckson, and Furnham (2004) reported in a study of 650 pupils in British secondary education (mean age 16.5 years old) that EI moderated the relationship between cognitive ability and academic performance. In addition, students with high EI scores were less likely to have unauthorized absences from school.

On the other hand, Parker, Summerfeldt, Hogan, and Majeski (2004) examined the impact of EI and academic success of 372 first-year full-time students at a small Ontario university in Canada transitioning from high school to the university reported divergent results depending on how academic success was operationalized. When the total sample was aggregated EI scores were found to be poor predictors of academic success (e.g., only predicting 8-10% of the variability in first-year GPA). However, when pupils were divided into successful (first-year GPA 80% or better) and compared with unsuccessful (first-year GPA 59% or less) students, academic success was strongly associated with several dimensions of EI (e.g., intrapersonal, adaptability, and stress management ability) assessed at the start of the year. These variables were found to be strong predictors in identifying 82% of academically successful and 91% of academically unsuccessful students.

Given this importance of emotional intelligence both in school and in the business world, the question is can marketing instructors help their students improve EI? Harvard Business School publishes a simulation called "Leading Teams With Emotional Intelligence" (Goleman 2009) that attempts to do so. It leads participants through a variety of scenarios designed to test the various components of emotional intelligence. Participants are scored after each scenario and directed to appropriate readings designed to help them to improve in a particular area before moving on the next one.

This simulation could be used in different contexts within a marketing program. It could be used effectively in a required introductory course, a gateway program, that prepares students for life ahead in their business programs. Such programs typically emphasize group work, interdisciplinary case analyses and general preparation for students before they move on to the specialized coursework of their disciplines. The simulation "Leading Teams With Emotional Intelligence" could be used in this context to prepare students for teamwork both in their classes

as well as in their careers after they graduate. Such a simulation could be used by individual students in a computer lab similar to other computer simulations. After each scenario students could come together as a class or in groups for discussion, examining what to do, what not to do and take away. The readings related to each of the scenarios would make great out of class reading that could be assigned afterward. If a business school has no inter-disciplinary course then it could be integrated into an introductory marketing course.

Another appropriate context for a simulation that helps students to improve emotional intelligence skills is a capstone course in marketing. These capstone courses are often amongst the last courses marketing students will take upon leaving the business school and entering the work world. As a result, they are designed to be a bridge between the classroom and the workplace where students are encouraged to apply the marketing knowledge they have acquired in various active learning assignments such as cases, projects and computer simulations. Given these goals, a simulation building up emotional intelligence skills needed for success in the workplace would be very appropriate. The skills learned would be applied almost immediately when students graduate and start on their careers.