

Integrating Marketing and Operations Management in a Global Environment: an MBA Course Approach

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Abstract

Creating and delivering an interdisciplinary course that integrates marketing and operations management in a global environment is the challenge that faced two business faculty members. While both are experienced instructors in their own disciplines, developing a team-taught course that integrates their two disciplines in a meaningful and coherent course required considerable research, thought, and planning. During the teaching of the course, however, several aspects of the course required modifications due to unanticipated issues. This paper describes the planning efforts, the course, unexpected issues encountered, student reactions, and the instructors' concluding thoughts.

The course was part of a newly designed integrated MBA program which is taught in a Executive MBA cohort lock-step format. The program is designed for employed adults and the average age of the students is 34. The background of the students included at minimum one previous marketing course at the graduate level and one Quality Management course which covered some aspects of operations management.

This is the only course in the program that is specifically targeted toward global or international issues, therefore, the global aspects of the course received primary emphasis.

The goals of the course are that it should provide (1) a framework of analysis that integrates marketing initiatives with manufacturing and service strategies, (2) understanding of the potential benefits of looking beyond traditional national and cultural boundaries and (3) knowledge of best business practices and the transferability of practices into different environments. Other goals were to provide

an opportunity for students to improve analytical and oral and written communication skills. We decided to use cases as a primary vehicle for accomplishing these goals. In addition to case analyses, there were lectures by instructors, guest speakers with international business experience, videos, and hand-on learning of quantitative analysis using the computer.

Each student was required to be a member of one of eight case teams within his/her cohort. The team was responsible for presenting the case and was also expected to handle a Q and A session and prepare an in-depth written analysis of the case. For each case students who were not involved in the team presentation were to analyze the case and submit an individual written analysis not to exceed two pages. All written case analyses were graded in a holistic scoring manner. Particular attention was given to *analysis* of the case information, logical development of alternatives and recommendations, and writing. In addition to individual and group case grades, 30% of the students' grades were based on class participation.

In designing the course it was apparent that more than one topic could be approached from either the marketing or operations management perspective. For example product can be approached from either perspective. We decided to include both perspectives in the course, which meant that the product dimensions were not all addressed under a general "product" topic, but integrated throughout the course.

We believe the course was successful, but due primarily to the similarity in values and standards and similar teaching philosophies of the two instructors. Also contributing to the success was a huge time commitment by both instructors.