

TEACHING SALES: A WMEA 1990-91 CONFERENCE IDEA EXPANDED

Ruth Leshar Taylor, Southwest Texas State University, San Marcos,
Texas, 78666 (512) 245-2175

ABSTRACT

At the April 1991 Western Marketing Educator's Association (WMEA) conference held in San Diego, California, an innovative pedagogical method for teaching sales was presented in a special session by Gaulard, Majors and Soares (1991). Their idea was to have a class of university sales students fold paper into the form of a man's necktie, then put color and design on it using crayons, colored pencils or marks-a-lots. These neckties were then used for a one-class period customer/salesperson role-play. Through this experience students applied the principles of effective retail selling.

This paper illustrates how this WMEA 1991 conference idea was expanded into a semester long in-class sales project through which students can learn competitiveness, profitability, the need for a competitive advantage in mature markets and increase their appreciation of our free enterprise system. The project required the "manufacturing" of generic neckwear, then later neckwear with a competitive advantage. Pro forma income statements were used as guides to making sales decisions while selling in a monopolistic, pure competitive and a monopolistic competitive environment. A high level of creativity and concern for social issues were expressed in student designs.

Expected benefits of the expanded project included the students': 1) surprise to see the different selling skills needed in different selling environments, 2) realization that a competitive advantage is an absolute must in any other than a monopolistic environment and 3) amazement as to the effects of within-sales presentation/negotiation decisions on profit and loss statements. The unexpected benefits of the project included: 1) student's realization of how easy it is to fail if good managerial techniques are not practiced, 2) students' awareness of how ineffective managerial decisions affect personal lives of employees through failed businesses, 3) how the domino affect of increasing numbers of failed business could invite government intervention and possibly threaten our free enterprise system, and 4) the extent of product diversity possible when creativity is exercised using a given amount of raw material. Discussion of the project led students to make suggestions on how the government could control the domino affect of failed businesses. These suggestions included: 1) pre-testing before business permits are issued, 2) required business management courses, 3) increased fees, permits, etc. and 4) governmental monitoring of continuous profitability.

Samples of work are included as well as results of pre- and post-project testing.