

WHERE ARE OUR MARKETING GRADUATES GOING? A SURVEY OF UNDERGRADUATE MAJORS

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Abstract

In June 1991, the Marketing Department of CSUH conducted a survey of recent graduates. All 643 under-graduate students who had received a B.S. degree in Business Administration with a marketing option within the past four years were sent a questionnaire. The survey asked graduates to describe their career paths since leaving school and to assess the quality of the education they had received while at CSUH in preparing them for their careers. One hundred and ten students responded, a rate of 17% return. The following report summarizes the results of this survey. A complete copy of the report is available from the author upon request.

Question #1: When did you complete your undergraduate degree at CSUH?

Responses varied from August 1987 to March 1991. From the distribution, we see a strong tendency for students to graduate in the traditional pattern—48% graduated in June—with the remainder equally distributed among the other three quarters.

**Question #2: What was age at graduation?
Question #3: Please circle male/female.**

CSUH graduates in Marketing report the following demographics:

Age	Male	Female	Total
20-25	30 (27%)	48 (44%)	78 (71%)
26-30	10 (9%)	7 (6%)	17 (15%)
31-35	5 (5%)	4 (4%)	9 (8%)
36+	2 (2%)	4 (4%)	6 (6%)
Total	47 (43%)	63 (57%)	110 (100%)

From these statistics, we see that female students outnumber male graduates in Marketing by 57% to 43%, and that by far the most highly represented age at time of graduation is under 25.

Question #4: Please describe the type of employment you had/took immediately after graduation by checking one of the following:

From these figures we see two important trends. Male graduates are more likely to take a new position with a new company at time of graduation: 66% of males compared with 49% of females. Similarly, female graduates are more likely to stay with the same company, either in an old position, by promotion, or in a new position: 41% of females compared with 28% of males.

Secondly, female students are more likely to become or remain unemployed after graduation: 8% of females compared to no males. 2 male students went to graduate school immediately after graduation, while one each male and female graduates operated their own businesses.

Question #5: What was the entry salary range of the first job you took after graduation?

Marketing graduates reported the following average starting salaries upon graduation (reported in thousands of dollars per year):

Age	Male	Female	(Averages)
20-25	\$25.4	\$21.4	\$22.9
26-30	\$30.6	\$25.1	\$28.6
31-35	\$29	\$42	\$35.5
36+	\$32.5	\$48.5	\$43.2
(Averages)	\$27.25	\$24.96	

Graduates' starting salaries upon graduation ranged from a low of \$10K to a high of \$100K per year. The means for the graduates who reported incomes, however, reveal some startling trends. These statistics illustrate that women can expect to earn less upon graduation than their male counterparts. This is especially true for younger women, where there is a 20% difference in starting salaries: for the 20-25 year old graduate, men averaged \$25.4K while women averaged \$21.4K per year in starting salary.

The statistics are a bit misleading for the two older age categories since the number of students in each cell was small, and one woman's reported salary of \$100,000 distorted the average for the 36+ age group. When linked with the above finding on type of employment after graduation, it appears that older women are more likely than men to complete the

undergraduate degree while holding a high-paying job and return to that position after graduation.

Question #6: Please describe your employment history after graduation.

Question #7: Please describe briefly the title and tasks of the job you now hold.

The purpose of these two questions was to ascertain the types of jobs that CSUH Marketing majors take after graduation and to plot the first three years of progress in their careers. Responses from graduates are divided into sales and non-sales positions.

Age		Sales	Non-Sales
20-25	Male	20 (66%)	10 (33%)
	Female	22 (46%)	26 (54%)
26-30	Male	8 (80%)	2 (20%)
	Female	5 (71%)	2 (29%)
31-35	Male	2 (40%)	3 (60%)
	Female	3 (75%)	1 (25%)
36+	Male	0	2 (100%)
	Female	2 (50%)	2 (50%)
Total	Male	30 (64%)	17 (36%)
	Female	32 (51%)	31 (49%)

Sales positions included the following job titles:

sales	sales engineer
product sales manager	sales representative
retail management and sales	inside sales
outside sales representative	account executive
account representative	sales associate
sales account coordinator	project manager for
sales team	account coordinator
marketing sales coordinator	sales administrator
assistant sales manager	sales manager
local account sales rep	broker
consumer sales representative	sales account
specialist	
sales system analyst	product manager
sales support	sales unit manager
marketing assistant in incentives and promotions	

Non-sales positions included the following job titles:

collection correspondent	office manager
customer service rep	credit analyst
communication specialist	asst. branch manager
asst. manager retail store	customer administ.
business owner	personnel manager
temporary/part-time clerical	buyer
retail store manager	personnel assistant

guest service rep (hotel)	public relations rep
car rental rep	paralegal
health care management	operations manager
information services director	branch manager
district head manager	restaurant manager
tour guide/manager	computer programmer
regional recruiter	credit collector
computer operations manager	tax consultant
information services support	business union rep
supervisor	flight attendant

These results reveal the importance of sales in career opportunities for Marketing graduates, particularly early in their careers. Male graduates are more likely than female to take sales positions, by 64% of males to 51% of females. In later age groups, females seem more likely than males to take sales positions, but this findings may be suspect due to the small number of respondents in each cell.

The wide variety of non-sales positions which graduates have taken illustrates the benefit of a broadly-based professional business education, and several respondents noted the particular value of the breadth of training they received from the CSUH business program.

Many respondents recorded steady progress in advancement through job titles after graduation. The most consistent pattern was an entry position as trainee or assistant for three to six months, an initial line position as sales rep for one to two years, and a promotion to assistant or area manager in the third year.

Question #8: What were the strengths of the CSUH Marketing Department in preparing you for your job after graduation?

Graduates recorded the following elements of the Marketing Program as most beneficial to their careers:

- well-rounded business program (12% of respondents)
- excellent teachers (12%)
- communication skills training (12%)
- practical/real-life preparation for work (10%)
- oral presentation skills training (6%)
- independent/group projects (6%)
- sales training (6%)
- career search preparation (4%)
- case study activities (3%)
- AMA activities (2%)
- creativity development (2%)
- problem-solving development (2%)
- management skills development (2%)

Responses to this question revealed an overwhelming degree of satisfaction with the quality of the under-

graduate education received by respondents. Only three responders of the 110 gave a negative response to this question.

The breadth and thoroughness of the business education curriculum was the first of the three major strengths as perceived by respondents. Graduates felt that the program gave a good overview of marketing as a profession and that the breadth of the curriculum provided them with many career insights and opportunities.

Training in communication skills, both written and oral, were perceived as the third of the three most important strengths of the program. Eighteen percent of respondents mentioned either one or both of these areas as strengths.

Finally, there was a strong perception of the practical, real-life, and hands-on as most beneficial in education. This preference surfaced in both perceptions of teachers and in attitudes towards classes and assignments in courses.

Question #9: What were your favorite and least favorite classes in Marketing?

There were no clear trends in the responses to this question. It appears that student preferences were based more on personal reactions than on job-related value of course contents. Additionally, several comments were made that it was the instructor, and not the content of a course, that made a class valuable.

Question #10: How might the Marketing Department have prepared you better for your first job after graduation?

In response to this open-ended question, graduates identified seven major themes for improvement within the CSUH Marketing program:

- 1) more focus on career preparation, including interviewing skills, career options, internships, and co-op education: 22 respondents (20%)
- 2) more emphasis on sales skills: 15 (13%)
- 3) more communication skills training, both written and oral: 9 (8%)
- 4) more marketing classes and fewer classes in economics and accounting for business majors: 9 (8%)
- 5) more real-world management skills training and less emphasis on theoretical information, including skills in negotiation, interpersonal communications, customer relations, and ethics: 8 (7%)

6) more hands-on computer instruction, including word-processing and spread-sheet: 4 (4%)

7) more information about realistic job expectations and preparation for a "fall back" position when job hunting: 4 (4%)

Graduates perceive practical skills training and a deeper coverage of marketing as desirable. Likewise, more realistic career preparation is perceived as valuable.

Question #11: How important are the following skills to the position you now hold:

On a scale of 1 (very important), 2 (some importance), 3(neutral), to 4 (unimportant), respondents ranked the following skills in the following order of importance:

oral communication skills	1.11
written communication skills	1.33
management skills	1.50
selling skills	1.70
knowledge of marketing concepts	1.79
knowledge of promotional activities	2.10
wordprocessing/data entry	2.14
knowledge of economics	2.33
marketing research skills	2.47
accounting/bookkeeping	2.51

There were no appreciable differences between male and female respondents. These findings are consistent with the elements desired for improvement of the CSUH program as expressed in responses to Question 10 above.

Question #12: Have you considered getting an MBA?

Graduates were overwhelming positive in response to this question. 82% of males and 72% of females answered that they had considered pursuing the MBA degree. This findings should hold significance for recruiting of MBA students. It appears that the best prospect pool consists of the graduates of CSUH.

Reasons for pursuing the MBA degree were reported to include the following:

career advancement	enjoy learning
self development	increase knowledge
opens more opportunities	professional growth
branch into related career	gain credibility
enjoy the college experience	advance in company

Reasons for not pursuing the MBA were reported to include the following:

too much competition at MBA level
do not need it for advancement in present company
too many MBA's in market now
tight schedule
too old

Recommendations

Based on the above findings, the author makes the following recommendations and proposes that they be discussed for action by the Marketing Department.

1) Since almost one half of undergraduate students are graduating in the June quarter, the Marketing Department should continue to organize classes in a progression towards the traditional June graduation date.

2) Since most undergraduates are graduating under the age of 25, the program should reflect a career exploratory emphasis and expect less actual work experience or applications of class material to actual work settings from students.

3) Since the employment paths of male and female graduates are markedly different, women students should be encouraged to explore the issue of returning to current or prior employers as opposed to taking new positions with new companies upon graduation. This is a complex issue, since the reasons for this behavior have not yet been explored. Women students, however, may need more encouragement and advising to take this riskier and more competitive step. As faculty we may need to work more proactively to make equal opportunity a workable reality.

4) Because of the disparity between salaries for male and female graduates, faculty should advise women students of salary expectations and be more proactive in preparing women who wish to compete on a par with men in securing equal employment and compensation.

5) Because sales is the greatest area of employment for Marketing graduates, the Marketing Department should position and develop sales as the central employment opportunity for its students. More training in sales skills should be included in the Marketing program, and students should be advised to prepare for sales as a strong career possibility.

6) Because sales is not the only avenue of career employment, however, the Marketing Department should develop clear and specific employment alternatives besides sales for its graduates to assist students in clarifying career goals and seeing the applications of a Marketing option in the work place.

7) Because of its perceived areas of strength, the Marketing Department should maintain its concern for excellent teaching, a broad overview approach to marketing as a field, emphasis on practical skills, group and individual projects, and communication skills training.

8) Because graduates perceive a need for subject depth, the Marketing Department should strive to include more Marketing course work in the option in order to create depth knowledge for students in one area of concentration within the Marketing field. This expansion of Marketing course work may have to be at the expense of fewer courses in accounting and economics in the core requirements.

9) Because of the strong concern in graduates for career preparation, the Marketing Department should develop a more proactive program for educating its majors in career planning, interviewing skills, career options, internships, and co-operative education opportunities.

10) Because of the prominence of oral and written communication skills as necessities in the work place, the Marketing Department should expand its emphasis on training in these areas.

11) Because of the strong positive consideration of continuing for the MBA among CSUH graduates, the Marketing Department should more actively introduce students to the idea of graduate study and encourage students to pursue the MBA when appropriate.

Conclusion

This survey will be extremely useful to the CSUH Marketing Department in future program planning. Graduates indicate preferences for certain types of training and note their needs in the jobs they are taking after graduation. Additionally, useful information for career planning and expectations can be shared with currently enrolled undergraduates that may be helpful to them in their course selection and class planning.

Other institutions wishing to use a similar survey should conduct a careful needs analysis to determine exactly the type of information that will be most useful. Additional measures that ask for quantifiable satisfaction level might be useful. Likewise, specific courses could be measured to determine their appeal and effectiveness in career planning for marketing graduates. A more in-depth analysis of specific sales skills might be useful for developing course contents in the sales area.