

DEVELOPING A CHOICE CRITERIA MODEL FOR SELECTING
LIVE-CASE MARKETING RESEARCH CLASS PROJECTS

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One method marketing research educators have utilized to introduce "real" business situations into the learning environment has been live-case class projects. Implementation of such projects often painfully reveals that the interaction among instructors, clients, and students does not always provide a "profitable" experience.

Students, clients, instructors, and academic institutions each have sets of benefits and costs which may derive their profitability from participating in live-case projects. Students gain experience and possibly employment enhancement, but may find high time demands with narrow exposure to the full research process. Clients may obtain low cost, objective information but must provide additional time involvement with the quality of results not being "guaranteed." Instructors may meet academic objectives and achieve enhanced real world exposure, but must often commit more time and energy with the potential risk of their professional image. The institution may gain or lose community relations advantage from the choice of clients, the findings, and final evaluation of results by clients. Funding may be required or provided by clients.

A two-stage decision criteria model was developed to evaluate research proposals for use as live-case class projects.

Given that the basic purpose of the projects is to provide a meaningful marketing research education, in order to be accepted a project must offer students experience in: problem definition, sampling plan design, data collection, data analysis/interpretation, and report writing. If these conditions exist, the major objectives of the students, instructor, and institution are likely to be met. The first stage, then is this disjunctive decision to reject any project that fails to offer exposure to all facets of the research process.

All proposals conforming to the above requirements are then evaluated, a priori, for their expected benefit, or "profit," to each group. Step 1. An examination is made of the relative importance of the students' vs. client's vs. instructor's vs. institution's benefit. Specific weights will depend on the nature of each institution. Step 2. Estimations are made on the probability (0% to 100%) of obtaining the desired benefits for each group assuming the project were undertaken. Step 3. The weighted importance score is multiplied by the benefit probability of each participant to get a weighted benefit value. Step 4. For each proposal, the weighted values of each participant are added to get a net weighted value score. Step 5. The highest net weighted valued project(s) are selected

for class use to provide the maximum total profit to all concerned.

An ex post facto evaluation of any class project should be performed in order to improve the model's predictive ability. Such improvements might include revised importance weights or procedures used to produce benefit expectations.