

ABSTRACT

JOURNALS IN MARKETING EDUCATION: WRITING TO LEARN

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INTRODUCTION

During the past few years there has been a continuing interest in expanding the college level teaching of writing skills from its traditional English Department base to include the various other academic disciplines. To support this interest, there has been a steady stream of papers, workshops, and conferences devoted to this concept which is commonly referred to as "Writing Across the Curriculum."

JOURNAL WRITING

In its simplest form, a journal could be compared to a daily personal diary. The individual records events of interest or his/her feelings about the day's activities. Writing acts as a cathartic tool, helping to work out emotional problems or better understand and express feelings and thoughts. The diary also serves as a log of past experiences that can be remembered and used for future guidance.

There are many different ways, but no general agreement concerning how journals can be used in college course. Still, there is considerable agreement as to how they should be assigned and evaluated. The goals and expectations of the exercise need to be clearly spelled out. The most important point is that students realize that they are writing for themselves. Journals should be vehicles for introspection and exploration and students should feel free to write as they see the situation. This does not mean that the instructor should not read or even make comments on the journals; he or she should. Rather, the grading task is one of checking to see that the assignment has been completed and of encouraging students to make the most of the educational opportunity journal writing affords.

THE MARKETING NOTEBOOK

In order to investigate the potential benefits of journal writing assignments in marketing education, the author assigned a marketing notebook in two of his marketing principles courses. It was hoped that this writing assignment would accomplish two objectives: (1) help students better understand and appreciate marketing concepts, and (2) improve students' overall writing ability.

Each student was asked to keep a separate spiral bound notebook to be used for this assignment and

to bring it to class each class period. The notebook was to be divided into three areas for three different types of writing assignments: in-class journal writes, marketing strategy profiles, and personal feelings.

THE CURRENT STUDY

Approximately ten months after the conclusion of the two classes described above were completed, the author sent each student a follow-up questionnaire to elicit feelings about the marketing notebook assignment. It was hoped that the ten month delay would be sufficient to put the assignment into a broader perspective so that its actual value could be interpreted.

There were a total of 59 students in the two original classes and 25 questionnaires were returned resulting in a 42% response rate.

DISCUSSION

The results from this study need to be interpreted with some degree of caution because of possible nonresponse bias. It is quite likely that students who enjoyed the class, liked the instructor, and in particular, liked the marketing notebook assignment, would be more likely to respond to the questionnaire.

In general, the results of the survey indicate that some of the goals of the marketing notebook assignment were met. Students report an increase in awareness and understanding of marketing issues and concepts as a result of writing in their notebooks. It is questionable, however, whether writing in the notebook also increased the student's ability or interest in writing. It should be noted though that students themselves may not be the best judge of whether any writing improvement did in fact take place.

Overall, even if no noticeable improvements occurred in writing abilities, the assignment does appear to have been a success. The marketing notebook clearly facilitated class discussions during the course and student response to this survey indicates a continuing increased awareness of marketing. Perhaps the best argument is the strong support given by the survey respondents for a continuation of the marketing notebook assignment.