

## THE VALUE OF GUEST SPEAKERS

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This special session examines the value of utilizing guest speakers in both undergraduate and graduate marketing courses. Utilizing guest speakers in marketing courses is not new, nor innovative. However, the effective incorporation of working professional into advertising and selling courses can have immeasurable benefits for students. The instructor must understand and establish the flow of learning in the course to best utilize the applied nature of the knowledge the guest speaker imparts. Effective guest speakers engage the students by telling stories based on their experiences. The personal, applied nature of the material a working professional brings to class can add tremendous value by integrating “real world” with the traditional course material. Effective guest speakers are not merely classroom time fillers for uninspired instructors. Rather, guest speakers become vital to the successful learning outcomes for students. Incorporating guest speakers into the curriculum does not lessen the work for the instructor. It adds to the work load by requiring instructors to identify and develop relationships with valuable working professionals, planning for optimal incorporation of the material into class, scheduling and follow up. Utilizing guest speakers also entails preparation for each class by the instructor due to unintended speaker scheduling issues. To ensure that the guest speaker is adding value with experience and stories an instructor must facilitate the integration of guest speaker knowledge with course material.

This requires tremendous effort in establishing relationships with working professionals in order to understand what individual strengths are provided by each speaker. To facilitate this, a faculty member must constantly be networking with working professionals to find suitable speakers. One source of speakers that has proven invaluable has been alumni-both undergraduate and graduate students.

The guest speaking opportunities afford alumni the ability to give back and stay connected to the institution. The alumni guest speakers also show the current students that the course material was valuable to their professional work. Students relate to the alumni speakers because of the common bond.

The guest speakers can also be valuable sources of internships and employment for students. Every fall semester an average of seven advertising agency speakers present work and share their experiences to the class. These interactions have proven invaluable for internship opportunities for students. Internships in advertising agencies are critical to employment in the field. Many internships

have been offered to numerous students over the years. One of the authors has developed an extensive network of advertising agency contacts. In consultation with these contacts the one of the authors recommends which students would be best to fill internship opportunities. Many interns have gone on to full time employment with advertising agencies in positions such as Director of Media Buying, Associate Media Buyer, Account Services Coordinator and Account Executives. Students in a Professional Selling class have an average of eight speakers share experiences every semester. Often because of the speakers students have chosen to go into selling after graduating.

To facilitate engagement by students and respect for the guest speakers one of the instructor's has developed simple guidelines for students. Included are two recent forms utilized. Each student completes a form while listening to the guest speaker. The guest speaker analysis form must be completed and handed in after the speaker leaves to obtain 10 points.

The feedback from both graduate and undergraduate students has always been positive.

Comments from the 2010 institutional senior survey were recently sent to one of the authors which validate the positive feedback.