

SOLVING THE MARKETING FACULTY SHORTAGE IN THE 1980s

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ABSTRACT

The current shortage of qualified marketing faculty is discussed. Solutions to this shortage are suggested including retooling of educators in other disciplines; recruiting of marketing professionals who are currently employed in nonacademic institutions; and changing the reward structure of universities in order to offer competitive salaries.

INTRODUCTION

Why are there six marketing faculty positions available for every qualified applicant? What can be done to solve this nationwide shortage? In this paper I will review the potential sources which could produce qualified applicants for the hundreds of unfilled positions.

The problem is well known and bemoaned by all business school administrators: the current demand for marketing educators far exceeds the supply and business schools continue to project an increased need for marketing faculty. But while the demand for qualified faculty increases, many of our colleagues are leaving academia for the greener pastures of industry and government. The problem is particularly acute because, according to the American Assembly of Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB), the production of new Ph.D.s in marketing is not even sufficient to fill the existing and anticipated job openings (Newline, 1985).

This problem is not felt equally by all business schools. While some have over half of their authorized positions unfilled, there are many which are reasonably well staffed. But even those who are currently in a good staffing situation cannot help but notice that more than a few prestigious schools have lost a substantial portion of their faculty in a single year.

The available responses to the marketing faculty shortage can be categorized as retooling, recruiting and rewarding. I will point out the difficulties and advantages of each.

RETOOLING

The group with the highest potential for retooling consists of educators in other disciplines. For current Ph.D.s two considerations will affect whether the retooling option will attract their interest; whether their current discipline is applicable to marketing and the "softness" of the demand for their existing area of expertise. Social scientists, especially psychologists, have already shown their capability to become marketing faculty. For other disciplines some formal course work or post-doctoral study programs could bring existing faculty into the marketing fold. This is

one area where the American Marketing Association (AMA) could play an important role by either stimulating or developing educational programs which are designed to retool nonmarketing faculty. Interaction with the AACSB to ensure that such faculty are qualified to teach marketing would be essential if such a program was undertaken by the AMA.

An example of a retooling program was run by Tennessee Technical University, Cookeville during the Summer of 1982. In an attempt to increase the supply of business educators, a six-week, intensive program was established to give a crash course in business to a pilot group of 10 professors from liberal arts and science. The program participants also were encouraged to continue their retooling after the course by conducting research with business faculty, writing articles for business journals and taking additional courses in a business discipline (Whalen, 1983).

In evaluating the course, administrators at Tennessee Tech noted that nine of ten who participated have decided to enter business education. They were either already teaching business courses or planning to do so in the future.

For any such program a key question is what category of retooled faculty can be happy and productive? Younger faculty are probably better candidates because they will not have to give up rank and tenure if they switch fields. Those in disciplines which are closely related to marketing will have an easier time transferring. For example, social scientists and mathematicians could be expected to acclimate more readily than engineering or education faculty (Fisher and Garrett, 1984).

NONACADEMIC RECRUITING

Of course, the major recruiting activity for any marketing department is concerned with attracting doctorally qualified faculty from other universities or from the supply of new Ph.D.s. This is the talent pool from which we traditionally fill our open positions. But why are we not trying to reverse the flow of marketers from business schools to industry by nonacademic recruiting efforts. This is "the best defense is a good offense" strategy which focuses on finding qualified or close to qualified faculty in industry or government. While it is inevitable that some marketing faculty will leave the teaching profession, there are many marketers in industry who are ready and qualified to handle a full-time or part-time teaching load.

The problem is how to recruit from those who are busily and successfully recruiting from you? First we must make people aware of their potential as faculty members. In many cases these practitioners do not consider teaching because they have never been recruited for these positions. Another problem

with this approach is the academic preparation of most marketing practitioners. They have the hands-on experiences but need a strong dose of marketing theory and probably an exposure to a wider scope of marketing areas than they are likely to have gained in their private sector or government careers.

This is another retooling task in which the AMA, in cooperation with some major universities, could have an impact. Focused educational programs would allow practitioners to develop their competence in marketing theory and broaden their base of marketing knowledge. I am not suggesting that we promote nondoctorates into regular faculty slots. However, the competence level and size of the potential pool of part-time and nontenure-track faculty could be enhanced substantially by non-degree retooling efforts. AACSB accreditation standards severely restrict the number and types of nondoctorates who can be recruited. But these standards are becoming less restrictive so that each marketing program must review its current status to see if nonacademic recruiting could provide new faculty resources.

REWARDING

Insufficient rewards is probably the major reason for the faculty shortage in marketing. Both current and new faculty have to forego substantial additional salary if they choose to teach rather than take a nonacademic position. Some universities can pay a differential to faculty in high demand disciplines such as marketing. Others, including some of the large state supported institutions, are unable to go "above scale" to pay competitive salaries. On these campuses, administrative or personnel committees must be persuaded that the laws of supply and demand also apply to the academic marketplace.

CONCLUSION

Solving this marketing faculty shortage will require different responses from each university. The major research universities and the small teaching institutions require different background and skills for their faculty and therefore each of the alternatives I have suggested will not have the same applicability to each school.

Larger research institutions should be able to use all three of the options. An influx of retooled faculty and educators recruited from industry will be better accommodated when there is a larger core of existing faculty with traditional marketing training. In these situations AACSB standards will not be compromised if a relatively small portion of faculty have non-business degrees. The flexibility of the reward structure is also likely to favor larger institutions. However, in smaller institutions a persuasive Business School Dean may be able to get approval for better salaries more easily than the Dean in an institution where a lock-step academic salary schedule may leave little room for negotiating off-scale salaries.

The shortage of marketing faculty may be most

severe for the smaller department in an institution whose primary focus is on teaching. Especially if AACSB accreditation has been secured or is being sought, the hiring of retooled or industry recruited faculty may be precluded. In many cases this problem is more perceptual than real. Frequently the AACSB standards would not be compromised by the addition of faculty members without a business degree but the administration and faculty will settle for no less than a DBA.

A variable which will differentiate among all institutions is proximity to a large urban area. Because of the availability of research and consulting opportunities, most marketing faculty prefer a metropolitan location.

Perhaps the most important consideration is the attitude of existing marketing faculty towards their potential new recruits. The altruistic view is that, because of the severe shortage, a marketing department should be willing to accommodate and welcome those with non-traditional backgrounds if only for the reduced class loads which would be expected. A more realistic view is that existing faculty recognize the financial benefits of a sellers market and will be reluctant to alleviate the shortage. This protectionist perspective is illustrated in a recent article which states that "while many highly capable people wish to teach in business schools, they shouldn't be allowed to do so unless they've completed formal training in a recognized business school."

REFERENCES

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