

## SPECIAL SESSIONS

### Getting Your Students Better Prepared to Use Excel and Marketing Metrics

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This is a proposal for a MEA 2018 special session that would describe, in detail, first time implementations of two, outside of class, Fall 2017 exercises. They are each worth 10% of the 1,000 semester points and seek to improve (1) the Excel worksheet and (2) Marketing Metrics abilities of the students. The author has implemented these exercises in the undergraduate Marketing Metrics class but they may also be easily used in the capstone case class or a Marketing Management class.

**Exercise One:** This challenges students to achieve certification as a “Microsoft Office Specialist in Excel 2016” by the end of the semester through a three-stage process. In stage 1, students complete online training in Excel 2016 at the Lynda.com website which is part of LinkedIn. The training consists of seven video lessons that collectively require 3 to 6 hours for completion. Lessons 2 through 6 conclude with a challenge exercise based on the specific Excel skills addressed in each lesson. Students are given the opportunity to complete that challenge within the prescribed time limit using a downloadable Excel file and then watch a video of the correct way to complete the various tasks in that challenge. Lesson 7 is a complete practice test that mimics the actual certification examination in terms of content and time limit. This mock-up certification examination is also accompanied by a downloadable Excel file and a video of the correct solution. Upon completion of all 7 lessons, students simply post to the Discussion Board of the Blackboard class site that they are “done with Lynda.” The university has site-licensed and customized Lynda.com which provides a very large collection of other, similarly-implemented training opportunities, e.g., Word 2016, PowerPoint 2016, Excel Expert 2016, Google Analytics etc.

In stage 2, students receive further training using the site-licensed GMetrix platform in the computer lab. GMetrix is a Pearson company and a Microsoft training partner. Once students setup an account and sign in, GMetrix uses a set of six Excel workbooks to build various worksheet skills. Each workbook consists of a number of worksheets with two horizontal panes: the grid work area at the top and task instructions at the bottom. Each workbook may be completed in two modes: the training mode in which there is no time limit and “how to do this” help is available for every task and the testing mode where there is a time limit and no help facility. The task content of both modes is identical. Therefore, across the six workbooks, the students have 12 practice opportunities. After completing each of these workbooks (between 50-70 things to do in each), the student is immediately informed whether they have passed (70% or more tasks correctly completed.) The author estimates that students would spend about 20 hours in completing GMetrix and requires students to show a downloadable proof that they have passed all six workbooks in the testing mode.

In stage 3, those students who have passed Gmetrix in stage 2 are allowed to take the online, proctored, lock-down browser certification examination which is conducted in the university’s online testing facility. For this, they need to sign-up for an account with Certiport, another Pearson firm which is the testing partner for Microsoft. The certification exam is 45 minutes long and at the end of that, students are immediately informed whether they passed (70% of the

questions correctly answered). Later, they have the opportunity to download a pdf of their completion certificate and test performance statistics as well as optionally order a high quality printed certificate for display purposes. It is the author's strong recommendation that faculty wanting to put their students thru Excel 2016 certification become familiar with the entire process by doing it themselves.

**Exercise Two:** In this, students attempt to improve their Marketing Metrics skills by completing modules from Management-by-the-numbers.com. That website presently consists of 37 modules of which 21 are marketing-related metrics and the others deal with accounting, finance, operations management (inventory management), game theory etc. This being the first time for MBTN, the author has chosen to implement a custom package of 7 marketing modules: Market Share I and II, Advertising Metrics, Web Metrics, Distribution Metrics, Net Present Value I and Customer Lifetime Value. Together, these seven modules supplement the rest of the mostly-case material in the Marketing Metrics class because they develop very good familiarity with metrics not addressed in the cases.

In Fall 2017, the MBTN implementation began with the author sending the university e-mail addresses of all enrolled students to MBTN once the registration window closed. Subsequently, students were directly emailed their unique UserID and initial password by MBTN. They logged in and were first taken to a payment screen to complete their purchase and then were able to access the 7-module website for the rest of the semester.

Each module has an overview PDF presentation that briefly explains the concepts covered in it and includes worked examples. After previewing this PDF, students proceed to the first of 4 problem sets in that module that are arranged from easy to challenging. Each problem set consists of a micro-case with 4-10 numeric questions which are mostly non-multiple choice and must be answered by actually calculating the answer. The student gets two attempts to answer each question correctly. After the second wrong answer, MBTN displays the correct answer and the mechanics of how to calculate it whereupon the student moves onto the next question. MBTN remembers the questions missed in each problem set and upon completion of all four sets, repeats the problem sets with different numbers. This time, students may skip previously correctly answered questions but not those that they got wrong. Their goal is 100% correct answers to ALL the questions in all 4 problem sets in all 7 modules.

Students start the semester as a Mail Room Clerk in all 7 modules and move through the levels of Brand Assistant (one problem set completely and correctly solved OR 60% of all questions across all 4 problem sets in that module), Brand Manager (two problem sets completely and correctly solved OR 80% of all questions across all 4 problem sets in that module) and finally CEO/CMO (100% of all questions correctly solved in all 4 problem sets in that module.) For Fall 2017, students have been given until 30<sup>th</sup> November to complete the task. Based on this experience, intermediate deadlines maybe set in future semesters for different modules. If MBT is well received, the author also plans to increase the content to at least 15 modules and might even consider all 21 marketing modules.

During the MEA 2018 special session, the author will take attending colleagues through a comprehensive demo of both exercises, showing the various online resources, the syllabus,

handouts etc. Since Fall 2017 will have concluded by then, the author will also comment on how it went, grading aspects, what would need to be done differently, student enthusiasm etc.