

## STUDENT EVALUATION OF IN-CLASS PRESENTATIONS

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One of the most important skills for student hiring as well as for success on the job is oral communication skills. This was confirmed recently in a survey of employers of recent business school graduates. These employers were first asked to rank various skills as to importance in obtaining employment. Oral communication skills was ranked number two, out of nine items which included poise, personality, appearance, written communication skills, recommendations, social graces, and of course, school attended and grade point average. Employers were next asked to rank these skills as to their importance in success on the job. Oral communication skills was ranked number one.

Many universities require all business school students to take a course in communication skills, others do not. But in any case it would seem beneficial to the student to practice oral communication skills as applied to his or her business specialty whenever possible.

In an effort to sharpen the oral communication skills of our marketing students, for several years I have incorporated in-class student presentations of whatever report, marketing plan, marketing research, etc. was required in written form. While I believe this procedure has been of no small benefit to students making the presentation, its effects are generally an unrewarding experience for the remainder of the class even though it is generally felt that students definitely have something to learn from both the content and the style of the presentations of their classmates. Yet, it is difficult to motivate students to take full advantage of this additional opportunity to learn.

Recalling techniques used in training instructors in the Army, I implemented a procedure of student evaluation of in-class student evaluations on a trial basis. I was so pleased with the results, that after fine tuning I have adopted this technique in all classes in which student presentations are made. To date, I have supervised more than 800 student evaluations in thirty-three different marketing classes including Principles of Marketing, Principles of Advertising, Marketing Management, Marketing Research, Marketing Analysis and Strategy, Business Consulting, Consumer Behavior, Marketing for a New Business, Mail Order/Direct Response Marketing, and several graduate courses.

The general procedure followed is as follows:

1. Students receive a lecture on making the type of presentation required. They are not only taught presentation techniques, but are assigned a role for their presentation. For example, students making presentations of a marketing plan in a course "Marketing for a New Business" may be told that the object of their presentation is to secure funding for their project. They are therefore to consider the remainder of the class as potential investors.
2. Specific criteria for grading the presentation is supplied at the time of the lecture on presenting. These criteria are also contained on the student grading sheets. Exhibit I is a grading sheet with the grading criteria for research in consumer behavior presented in a course

on consumer behavior. Exhibit II is the grading sheet with criteria for a course in Business Consulting.

3. An explanation of the grading procedure is given at the time of the presentation lecture, as well as just prior to the presentations. Every effort is made to motivate honest and objective grading as well as a mildly competitive atmosphere for the presentations. To help foster the latter, a small prize, such as a pocket pointer is offered for the best presentation as determined by the overall student/professor presentation grade.

4. Immediately after the presentations, and before any comments from members of the class, or the instructor, the grading sheets are collected. Each grading sheet must be initialed by the student. (See Exhibits I and II).

5. The overall presentation grade is determined by first averaging the student grades and then averaging this grade with my grade. Thus, the student evaluation of their classmates presentations counts 50% of the overall presentation grade, and my own evaluation counts 50%. A sample calculation is shown in Exhibit III.

Clearly one major danger in student evaluations of other student presentations in this fashion is that the evaluations will not be honest or not based on the correct criteria. I believe the procedures followed have minimized this type of unwanted bias in the evaluations. The percentage point differences between the overall class average for the presentation and my own are usually very small. Typical results for presentations in various classes are shown in Exhibits IV, V, and VI. Note that while the range of grades awarded by the students are sometimes large, the average of the class grades when compared with my own are not. I believe this is true primarily because of the procedures followed. While there are occasional grades awarded on both high and low extremes, they tend to be few and are cancelled out by the majority of grades clustered about a class consensus of presentation performance.

The advantages of student participation in grading are several and they are not insignificant:

1. Students are no longer merely passive during presentations, but are observing the performance carefully.
2. Students learn more rapidly to be conscious of and to look for factors that the professor feels are important in content and in style of the presentation.
3. Students frequently are able to catch errors, or make suggestions which the professor may miss due to his concentration on evaluating the performance. I will discuss this more fully later.
4. Because the students know that their peers as well as the professor will be evaluating the performance, students tend to be motivated toward better preparation and higher performance.
5. Students learn to appreciate many facets of performance evaluation from the viewpoint of the professor.

Students are enthusiastic about the evaluations and what they learn from them. Despite extensive experience with this procedure, I have received very few negative comments.

<sup>1</sup>Allen Blitstein, "What Employers Are Seeking in Business Graduates," The Collegiate Forum, Winter 1980/81.

CONFIDENTIAL PRESENTATION EVALUATION

BUSINESS CONSULTING

Participant(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Evaluation Factors

1. Introduction
2. Background of the Company
3. Problems/Solution Methodology
4. Conclusions/Recommendations
5. Use of Visual Aids, Models, etc.
6. Presenters Style
7. Enthusiasm
8. Persuasiveness
9. Ability to Stimulate and Answer Questions
10. Other \_\_\_\_\_

Recommended Grade \_\_\_\_\_ %

Your Initials \_\_\_\_\_

Please Return This Form To Me Immediately

EXHIBIT I

CONFIDENTIAL PRESENTATION EVALUATION

CONSUMER BEHAVIOR

Participant(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Evaluation Factors

1. Organization of Presentation
2. Content
3. Presenter(s) Style
4. Enthusiasm
5. Innovativeness
6. Creativity
7. Use of Training Aids (Visuals, Sample Products, Etc.)
8. Ability to Stimulate Questions
9. Ability to Answer Questions
10. Other \_\_\_\_\_

Recommended Grade \_\_\_\_\_ %

Your Initials \_\_\_\_\_

EXHIBIT II

SAMPLE CALCULATION

- 80
- 83
- 73
- 80
- 87
- 90
- 85
- 75
- 85
- 90
- 90
- 90
- 100
- 99
- 100
- 94
- 98
- 85
- 83
- 82
- 91
- 88
- 90
- 85
- 85
- 80
- 90

$$2,360 \div 27 = 87.4 \text{ Class Average}$$

$$\begin{array}{r} 89 \text{ Professor's Grade} \\ 176.4 \\ + 2 \\ \hline 88 \text{ Presentation Grade} \end{array}$$

EXHIBIT III

CLASS GRADE AVERAGE, PROFESSOR'S GRADE, AND PRESENTATION GRADE IN A CONSUMER BEHAVIOR CLASS

Presentation No.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Range	62-100	70-95	69-100	75-100	70-100	50-90	78-100	
Class Grade Average	96.42	82.66	79.3	84.75	80.6	75.1	87.7	
Professor's Grade	93	85	75	87	90	83	84	
Presentation Grade	95	84	84	91	89	81	84	
Difference Between Professor's Grade and Presentation Grade	-2	-3	-2	-4	-2	-2	-4	
8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
72-100	60-100	60-100	70-100	78-100	60-100	80-100	80-100	65-100
89.5	83.12	87.4	87	89.91	84.4	91.7	90	83
90	97	83	88	88	86	95	86	83.2
90	97	88	88	89	85	94	99	83
0	-3	-1	0	+1	-1	-1	-1	-0.2

EXHIBIT IV