

## A COLLABORATIVE APPROACH TO CREATING A SENSE OF PURPOSE

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*We stand at a critical moment in Earth's history, a time when humanity must choose its future. As the world becomes increasingly interdependent and fragile, the future at once holds great peril and great promise. To move forward we must recognize that in the midst of a magnificent diversity of cultures and life forms we are one human family and one Earth community with a common destiny. We must join together to bring forth a sustainable global society founded on respect for nature, universal human rights, economic justice, and a culture of peace. Towards this end, it is imperative that we, the peoples of Earth, declare our responsibility to one another, to the greater community of life, and to future generations.*

The Earth Charter Preamble 2000

### The Imperative

The past decades have been littered with ethical failures in business from Enron to Yahoo! on the one hand and with hope from the growth and successes of social entrepreneurs combining profitable growth with social good, on the other. In order to tilt the balance in favor of meaningful contribution to community, balanced prosperity, and security, educators must make a commitment to awakening students and ourselves alike to the relationship between action and consequence, privilege and responsibility, the material and spiritual, the individual and the collective, and competition and collaboration. While some may feel that this development, much like learning to write, is the task of general education classes and curriculum, we hope to discuss the importance of, much like writing across the curriculum, infusing it across the curriculum and specifically into a marketing curriculum.

### The Choice

As educators, we have the privilege of shaping the development of whole persons--active contributors to the world, or narcissistic, self-occupied individuals. Given the imperatives of our disciplines--business and marketing--and our individualistic culture, we are naturally driven by the dominant logic of individual success, materialism, the quest for profit, and winning. While ethics, and marketing and society are a component in our course work, they may be relegated to a rote memorization of a code of ethics or a footnote in a last lecture.

Alternately, the perspectives we take in our daily work in curriculum and course design, implementation, and strategies for student success, can have great impact on developing ethical, purposeful members of society who can use the tools of our trade to create a better world. While not new to our discipline--recall the development of social marketing--the concomitant reality of growing class sizes and competitive pressures may result in undermining efforts to ensure that we encourage crucial conversations about the contributions that students and practitioners of marketing make and can make, and not just to individual businesses.

### The Possibility

What if we as educators can somehow move students from the kind of survival thinking encoded in questions such as "*How do I succeed? What do I need to do to get ahead? Get a job? Get a passing grade/out of this course?*" into the universe of possibility, a world in which they see their work as a *contribution* to their careers, their class, their cohort, their college, their communities, and the world? Taking a lead from Benjamin Zander, Conductor of the Boston Philharmonic for nearly three and a half decades and teacher at the New England Conservatory, we propose two approaches for developing this mindset to open our discussion.

## The Opportunity

Fortunately, MEA membership offers an opportunity for cross-national and cross- university collaboration in these areas. Not only do faculty from the largest university system in the U.S., the twenty-three university CSU, form a large percentage of the active membership of the MEA, but they also play a key role in educating those who “work for California” and therefore for the nation. A key goal for this session is to share practices in the area of curriculum, course, and assignment design that facilitate the development of the contributory mindset in our students and faculty thoughts on how this approach contributes to student success.

The purpose of this special session is to discuss what elements we can and do include in our courses to nurture the development of this whole person. This session offers an opportunity to share how we develop the pedagogical mindset for a universe of possibilities. To stimulate discussion, it provides initial examples of approaches, assignments, and student work in core and capstone marketing classes that are generative and contributing. Some examples are:

- a. Framing our courses and course content in the context of their fit within the business and university curriculum and business-societal needs.
- b. Having students frame their own role in our courses in the context of their career goals, that is “being a contribution.”
- c. “Giving an A.”
- d. Selecting reading and case materials that provide a broad context for developing social, cultural, and spiritual consciousness, including historical and ripped from the headlines, while learning the disciplinary content.

And finally, this session provides initial evidence of the power of creating a world of possibilities for our students.