

USE OF A MARKETING PLAN TEAM PROJECT TO ENHANCE STUDENT INVOLVEMENT IN A MARKETING PRINCIPLES CLASS

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ABSTRACT

In this article the authors describe a marketing plan team project that can be utilized to increase the level of involvement and active learning for students enrolled in a Marketing Principles course.

Project Design and Development

Students typically work in groups of no less than four and no more than six, depending on total class size. In order to increase student involvement with the project and to instill a sense of ownership, students are allowed to: (1) choose those with whom they would like to work, (2) create/select and design the company and product of their choice, and (3) make a number of "reasonable" assumptions, subject to instructor approval, regarding their current situation.

The written portion of the assignment requires each team to develop a comprehensive marketing plan for a product or service that their created company will be responsible for manufacturing and marketing. Toward the end of their work on the written marketing plan, students are required to make a formal oral presentation to the class with the objective of persuading the audience that the proposed product/service represents a venture that should be supported.

The project was developed over a four-year period in a combined total of 17 sections of Marketing Principles. Over 130 teams of students participated in the project (665 students) during that time frame. Overall, student major composition was fairly typical with a broad range of business majors, as well as a smaller percentage of majors from other areas.

Student Evaluations of the Project

In order to measure the effectiveness of the project, a questionnaire was designed and used to assess student perceptions of its value. The sample consisted of 43 students enrolled in a Marketing Principles course. In addition to the classification questions of major and sex, the remainder of the questionnaire consisted of 11 five-point, Likert statements ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree." Each statement was designed to assess the extent to which the student perceived that a given

"process," "outcome," or "overall" benefit had been derived from completion of the project.

In general, the results of the student evaluations were very favorable. The majority (83.3%) of the students agreed that the assignment helped them to better understand marketing. In addition, 83.7% agreed that the assignment made them aware of how the course material applied to the real world, and 86% felt that completing the assignment helped them to learn more about marketing than they would have learned without it.

Most of the students (69.8%) felt that completing the project helped them to improve their ability to work with others. As for whether completion of the project was felt to have enhanced oral presentation skills, 72.1% of the students felt that such skills had been improved. A majority (72.1%) also agreed that assignment completion had helped them to improve their creative skills. Results concerning the final outcome benefit assessed were less desirable than expected. Only 32.6% of the students felt that their writing skills had been improved. The majority (60.5%) reported that they did enjoy completing the assignment, and slightly more than a majority (59.5%) reported that being involved in the project helped increase their class participation.

Conclusions and Recommendations

As stated earlier, a general objective for implementing the project was to motivate students to increase their levels of active learning as opposed to passive learning. Although the current student evaluation procedures were not designed to thoroughly assess this goal, the feedback obtained from the written forms, along with numerous student comments to the instructor did seem to indicate that students were learning more actively. Students: (1) spent more time with each other outside of class discussing things they had read in their texts and heard discussed in class, (2) asked more questions about the course material during class sessions, (3) made more visits to the instructor's office to seek additional advice on how to apply course concepts to their projects, and (4) found themselves integrating much of the material learned in other business courses (e.g., financial accounting, business law).