

## **An Alternative Approach to Group Projects –Creating an Advertising Agency**

Targeted Area – General Marketing Issues

Amy Parsons, Elzbieta Lepkowska-White

### **INTRODUCTION**

Group projects are a standard component of many business courses because they help develop the teamwork skills that future employers believe to be valuable (Kim, Baek and Kim, 2011). Group projects also offer the opportunity to merge theory with practice and allow students to apply their knowledge to “real life” situations and help to integrate their learning (Craciun and Corrigan, 2010; Skilton, Fosyth and White 2008). Students who complete group projects are more likely to be more active learners and participants in the process (Beard, 1997).

Traditionally, group projects in advertising and marketing courses involve students breaking into smaller teams and completing assigned tasks outside of the classroom. During the process, students often divide tasks up among team members and observable leadership and collaboration by the instructor is often limited. With this approach, instructors often only hear about the negative experiences students have as students who have positive experiences are less likely to share this information with instructors (Chapman, Meuter, Toy and Wright, 2010). Peer review evaluation is one option to evaluate individual contributions (Porr, 2016).

An alternative approach to conducting a group project was pilot tested in an introductory advertising where the students were asked to develop an advertising campaign for one client and the class became an advertising agency. Students were part of multiple groups and were required to work within and across teams to complete the campaign. The instructor played the role of Agency Director and supervised the flow of the required tasks. Students were asked to evaluate their group member’s contributions and the instructor also evaluated each student’s contribution. Details of the project and the process of implementing it follow.

### **OBJECTIVES OF THE PROJECT**

The overall goal of the project was to have students observe and learn about the process of developing an advertising campaign as it might happen in an actual advertising agency. The specific learning goals of the project were to 1) develop information literacy skills 2) think critically about a client problem, 3) apply advertising and marketing knowledge to solving a problem for a client, 4) think creatively to develop advertising and marketing materials and develop a campaign budget, 5) develop written and oral communication skills, 7) develop teamwork skills within and across teams, and 8) enhance Microsoft Power Point skills.

Prior to beginning the project, students were provided with a list of potential roles they might play during the development of the campaign. Students were told they would be part of a different group for each part of the project. All students participated in the first part of the project which involved researching the client and the target audience. Students were provided with a scenario describing an actual organization and a problem or challenge the organization was facing. Students were required to conduct secondary research about the client and the target audience. Part 2 of the project required students to be Account Planners or Account Managers. From the research, students were asked to conduct a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis related to the organization’s current situation and to prepare

a strategic brief to guide the campaign. Part 3 required students to be a member of the Creative: Artist/Designer, Creative: Copywriter or Media/Budget Planner team. The Creative teams worked together to create advertising materials for the campaign. The media team was given a budget and instructed to conduct a multi-channel campaign with an emphasis on new media to help the organization address the marketing challenge. Students were also asked to determine how the campaign would be measured and to calculate the potential revenue generated that could be expected from the campaign.

## LIMITATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

This project was administered in a small class with just 24 students in just one semester. This format might be more challenging to administer in larger classes but could be done with multiple clients. Students were asked to complete smaller tasks on a regular basis rather than to complete one large task which allowed the work for most of the students to be more evenly distributed throughout the duration of the project. Throughout the project, students specialized more and thus learned more in-depth about the area they focused on. There were fewer free riders as students were responsible for specific tasks and had to deliver and the instructor could observe the process more closely. There was also seemed to be more enthusiasm and motivation as students worked in areas they were interested in. They also learned how an agency works which is rarely the case in group projects.

## References

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