

A CASE STUDY OF TEACHING COMMUNITY-BASED LEARNING COURSES IN MARKETING

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Introduction

Community-Based Learning (CBL) allows students and community organizations to work together to meet both an organization's need and students' academic requirements. It allows students to integrate theory and practice, to gain real life experiences, to enrich role as a citizen of the local community, and to build leadership skills. It also enables the students to feel they can make a difference in the real business entity. CBL allows faculty to connect research interests with community organizations and to form a closer bond with community organizations. Finally, CBL allows community organizations to receive assistance on research needs that the organization might struggle to address for various reasons, to build a broader volunteer and support network within the college, and to obtain assistance with gathering data and information about improving the business practices.

This case study will describe multiple phases of CBL projects of Retail Management and Direct Marketing courses and address the outcome of the CBL approach by presenting student course evaluations for the past three years of its application. It will then discuss the results, and the benefits and challenges of the method. It will conclude with practical recommendations for marketing educators. The following is brief description of the method.

Method

Retail Management Course

Phase 1: SWOT Analysis

A representative at the community organization will speak to the class and the students will tour the organization. Then the students will study the strengths and weaknesses of the organization and collect secondary data about the environmental forces and discuss the opportunities and threats in the environment.

Phase 2: Marketing Research

Students will design survey questionnaire, collect the data, and analyze the responses. Depending on the nature of the customers, the instructor might need to arrange interviews and focus groups.

Phase 3: Retail Management Strategy Formulation

Students will formulate retail management strategy for the organization. They should study the SWOT analysis in Phase 1 and the marketing research data in Phase 2 and then formulate a strategy.

Direct Marketing Course

Phase 1: SWOT Analysis

Phase 1 of this course will be the same as in Retail Management course.

Phase 2: Direct Mail Design

Students will study their secondary research data gathered in Phase 1 and design direct mail piece to the prospective customers. In designing the direct mail, their goal is to maximize the strengths, minimize the weaknesses, take advantage of the opportunities, and overcome the threats.

Phase 3: Direct Mail Rollout

In this phase, either the community organization or the instructor will mail the direct mail (i.e., postcard) to the prospective customers.

Phases 4: Response Analysis

In the last phase, the community organization will measure the response to the direct mail by email, phone inquiry, and physical visits and award the best performing student group in class.

Reference Available upon Request