

## REPLACING TEACHING EVALUATION WITH LEARNING EVALUATION - A CASE HISTORY

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### ABSTRACT

The teaching evaluation system used at the Lubin Business School is viewed by some faculty members as an inadequate measure of achievement of the School's mission to "prepare students for successful business careers." An alternative measure based on surveys of MBA students' perceived learning needs has been developed.

This paper compares results obtained with the two methods: teaching evaluation and learning evaluation and asks the reader to judge which method does a better job of measuring progress toward achieving the School's mission.

### BACKGROUND

The Lubin Business School is a private AACSB-accredited school located in a large Eastern city. It enrolls several thousand students in its graduate and undergraduate programs. Its mission statement starts by saying that: "The mission of the School is to prepare students for successful business careers."

For the past ten years, the dean of the school has used a teaching evaluation survey in all classes, every semester. See Exhibit 1 for a replica of the form. The reverse side of the form asks students to comment on the strengths and weaknesses of the course and of the instructor. Results of the survey are used in calculating merit increments for all faculty members. Promotion and tenure decisions are also heavily influenced by teaching evaluation survey data.

Many tenured faculty members criticize the teaching evaluation survey. They say that it is merely a popularity contest. Others say that it really measures how comfortable the students feel in the course, not how much they learned. My tendency is to agree with both critical views. Beyond that, I find that the survey results do not give me any guidance for increasing my effectiveness as a teacher because the numbers are meaningless and very few students write any useful comments on the reverse side of the form. For years, I had complained about the lack of meaning of the survey, but I had not been able to offer a better substitute. I tried the portfolio approach one time but that resulted in a 150 page loose leaf book that caused much consternation among the deans and department chairs, so I gave that up. Then, during the 1999-2000 academic year, I had a breakthrough. I designed the Learning Evaluation Form. The following discussion is presented in four parts: "The Entry

Survey," "The Exit Survey," "Comparison of Answers" and "The Learning Evaluation Form."

### THE ENTRY SURVEY

In the Spring of 1999, the director of the MBA program asked me to conduct a survey of graduating MBA students. I had conducted several surveys during the 1988-1993 period that had developed information leading to beneficial changes in the MBA program and the feeling was that further improvements were possible. The new exit survey was to be administered during November of 1999 to all students enrolled in the Business Policy capstone course.

During August of 1999, I designed the form for the exit survey. As I was completing the task, I realized that the first page of the exit survey could be used as an entry survey. See Exhibit 2. This form was administered to all 377 entering MBA students. We expected to obtain information about what the students needed to learn.

Exhibit 3 shows the 310 respondents' (82.2% response rate) evaluations of sixteen abilities. "Ability to recognize business opportunities," "Ability to solve business problems," "Skill in marketing yourself" and "Skill in giving oral presentations" are ranked highest, in terms of value for maximizing success in business and students' need for improvement. At the opposite end, "Ability to develop spreadsheet models" and "Ability to use the Internet" are ranked lowest.

### The Exit Survey

The issues investigated in the Exit survey (160 students, 124 respondents, 77.5% response rate) are listed below with summaries of the findings.

**Willingness to Recommend the Program to A Friend.** In answer to the question, "If a friend asked you whether to enroll in the MBA program, what would you say?" 57% said "Go to 'General' for an MBA." In a survey conducted eight years previously, 50% gave that answer.

**Perceived Value of Core Courses.** Respondents were asked to evaluate thirteen core courses with respect to this question: "To what extent are each of the core courses helping you maximize your success in business?" On 10 point scale, with 0 = "not at all" and 10 = "to a great extent," the average rating for the core courses was 6.2. The answer on a similar survey done in 1992 was 5.7.

**Perceived Value of Courses in Student's**

**Major.** Respondents were asked to evaluate courses in their major with respect to this question: "To what extent are courses in your Major helping you maximize your success in business?" the average rating for all majors was 7.1, compared to 6.6 on the similar 1992 survey

In all cases, while there had been some improvement, the 1999 results were not good enough to be usable in any promotion of the MBA program. Considering the substantial amount effort dedicated by faculty and students to bring the students from entry to exit, this did not seem to be an acceptable outcome. The troublesome question was why was the School not getting better results, considering that it was following AACSB approved curricula?

**COMPARISON OF ANSWERS**

If we think of the 1999 Entry and Exit studies as two ends of a longitudinal study and compare answers to Questions 17 to 32, which ask respondents how much improvement they need, we see that in every instance, Exit respondents say that they need less, but not much less, improvement. See Exhibit 4, entitled "How Little They Learned."

Column 4 shows the perceived reduction in need for improvement from Entry to Exit. For example, the exiting students said that they needed only 13.1% less improvement in "Skill in starting your own business than entering students. With respect to Competence in an important business discipline," the reduction in need for improvement was only

0.0%. That is truly astounding considering that

students had taken five courses in their major.

While there may be other reasons for the low level satisfaction expressed by exiting students, it seems probable that insufficient learning of valuable skills and abilities must be a very important reason. The cure appears evident: help students to acquire the skills and abilities they need for achieving success in their business careers.

**THE LEARNING EVALUATION FORM**

If the school is missing the target across all 16 skills and abilities, the problem can be solved only if all, or most teachers address it. Adding a course or two to the curriculum will not be enough. Aside from that, the curriculum is 61 credits now, so that there is really no room for increasing the curriculum.

To help teachers determine where they need to make changes, a reasonable place to start would be to evaluate the present position, with respect to each course. A tool is needed, a Learning Evaluation survey, instead of a Teaching Evaluation survey. This will serve two purposes: provide guidance for teachers

and reward the teachers who are helping students the most in preparing to achieve success in their business careers.

The next step was to design a form that I could test in my classes. See Exhibit 5. This is an end-of-term evaluation form drawn precisely from the forms used in the Entry and Exit surveys (Exhibit 2). The intention was use it in conjunction with the teaching evaluation form (Exhibit 1) to see which form provides more information to the instructor and which form provides a better basis for rewarding the teachers who help the school to implement the mission of the School, which is "to prepare students for successful business careers." See Exhibit 6 for a comparison.

In your opinion, which evaluation provides a better way for evaluating progress toward achievement of the Mission of the School?

**Exhibit 1. Student Opinion Survey On Teaching**

Please circle the numbers that best represent your opinion

1. How worthwhile did you find this course?  
Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 Very worthwhile
2. The professor explained the course requirements  
Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 Very clearly
3. The professor explained the grading system  
Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 Very clearly
4. How would you rate the professor's preparation for class sessions?  
Poorly 1 2 3 4 5 Very well prepared
5. The professor's attitude toward the course subject matter is  
Negative 1 2 3 4 5 Enthusiastic
6. How satisfied were you with the professor's availability?  
Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 Completely
7. How satisfied were you with the professor's respect for students?  
Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 Completely
8. How satisfied were you with the professor's management of classroom time?  
Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 Completely
9. How satisfied were you with feedback provided by the professor throughout the course?  
Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 Completely
10. Overall, how would you rate the professor?  
Poor 1 2 3 4 5 Outstanding

**Exhibit 2. Survey of Entering MBA Students. Also Page 1 of Exit Survey**

The purpose of this survey is to obtain your ideas for increasing the value of your MBA learning experience. Please answer candidly and do not sign your name. Thank you for participating. Please circle the numbers that reflect your opinion. Please use a pen in marking your answers.

For maximizing your success in business, how valuable are the following abilities?	Not at all valuable						Extremely valuable							
	↓						↓							
Competence in an important business discipline	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	1
Understanding of business areas outside your major	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	2
Ability to recognize business opportunities	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	3
Ability to solve business problems	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	4
Ability to integrate global issues into business decisions	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	5
Ability to apply theory to practice	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	6
Ability to develop spreadsheet models	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	7
Ability to use the Internet	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	8
Skill in writing business reports	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	9
Skill in giving oral presentations	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	10
Ability to work well with people of diverse backgrounds	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	11
Skill in directing the work of others	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	12
Skill in resolving conflicts	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Ability to prioritize activities	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	14
Skill in marketing yourself	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	15
Skill in starting your own business	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	16

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At the present time, how much improvement do you need in your . . . ?	I don't need any Improvement						I need a lot of Improvement							
	↓						↓							
Competence in an important business discipline	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	17
Understanding of business areas outside your major	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	18
Ability to recognize business opportunities	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	19
Ability to solve business problems	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	20
Ability to integrate global issues into business decisions	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	21
Ability to apply theory to practice	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	22
Ability to develop spreadsheet models	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	23
Ability to use the Internet	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	24
Skill in writing business reports	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	25
Skill in giving oral presentations	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	26
Ability to work well with people of diverse backgrounds	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	27
Skill in directing the work of others	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	28
Skill in resolving conflicts	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	29
Ability to prioritize activities	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	30
Skill in marketing yourself	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	31
Skill in starting your own business	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	32

**Exhibit 3. At Entry, What Do MBAs Want? Ranked by Composite Index**

Abilities	How Valuable Are?	How Much Do You Need?	Composite Index = Valuable+ Improvement	Composite Index As A % of Avg Index
	(0 to 6)	(0 to 6)		
3 Ability to recognize business opportunities	5.40	4.02	9.43	110%
4 Ability to solve business problems	5.48	3.89	9.37	109%
15 Skill in marketing yourself	5.31	4.01	9.32	109%
10 Skill in giving oral presentations	5.08	4.08	9.16	107%
1 Competence in an important business discipline	5.16	3.79	8.94	104%
6 Ability to apply theory to practice	5.07	3.87	8.93	104%
5 Ability to integrate global issues into business decisions	4.73	3.94	8.67	101%
13 Skill in resolving conflicts	5.17	3.46	8.63	101%
9 Skill in writing business reports	4.98	3.60	8.58	100%
12 Skill in directing the work of others	5.15	3.39	8.53	100%
2 Understanding of business areas outside your major	4.45	4.02	8.47	99%
16 Skill in starting your own business	4.28	4.11	8.39	98%
14 Ability to prioritize activities	5.26	3.00	8.26	96%
11 Ability to work well with people of diverse backgrounds	5.29	2.52	7.81	91%
7 Ability to develop spreadsheet models	4.31	3.25	7.56	88%
8 Ability to use the Internet	4.70	2.25	6.95	81%
Averages	4.99	3.57	8.56	100%

**Exhibit 4. How Little They Learned**

Answers to Questions 17 to 32 on the two surveys are compared.

Qu. No.	At the present time, how much improvement do you need in your . . . ? (0 = I don't need any improvement, 6 = I need a lot of improvement)	Entry	Exit	Remaining
		Study	Study	Need for Imp'vmt
32 Skill in starting your own business	4.11	3.57	86.9%	
17 Competence in an important business discipline	3.79	3.15	83.1%	
29 Skill in resolving conflicts	3.46	2.81	81.1%	
30 Ability to prioritize activities	3.00	2.39	79.6%	
20 Ability to solve business problems	3.89	3.04	78.2%	
24 Ability to use the Internet	2.25	1.73	77.2%	
28 Skill in directing the work of others	3.39	2.61	77.1%	
31 Skill in marketing yourself	4.01	3.07	76.6%	
18 Understanding of business areas outside your major	4.02	3.08	76.6%	
19 Ability to recognize business opportunities	4.02	3.06	76.2%	
23 Ability to develop spreadsheet models	3.25	2.48	76.1%	
21 Ability to integrate global issues into business decisions	3.94	2.97	75.3%	
27 Ability to work well with people of diverse backgrounds	2.52	1.89	74.8%	
22 Ability to apply theory to practice	3.87	2.88	74.4%	
25 Skill in writing business reports	3.60	2.67	74.1%	
26 Skill in giving oral presentations	4.08	2.81	68.9%	
Averages	3.57	2.76	77.3%	

**Exhibit 5. Learning Evaluation Form**

Please circle the numbers that reflect your opinion. Thank you.

<i>How much did this course help you to improve your . . . ?</i>	<b>Not at all</b>						<b>Very much</b>					
Competence in an important business discipline	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Understanding of business areas outside your major	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Ability to recognize business opportunities	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Ability to solve business problems	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Ability to integrate global issues into business decisions	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Ability to apply theory to practice	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Ability to develop spreadsheet models	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Ability to use the Internet	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Skill in writing business reports	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Skill in giving oral presentations	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Ability to work well with people of diverse backgrounds	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Skill in directing the work of others	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Skill in resolving conflicts	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Ability to prioritize activities	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Skill in marketing yourself	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Skill in starting your own business	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11

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**Exhibit 6. Teaching Evaluation vs. Learning Evaluation**

**Weighted Averages of three courses - Spring 2000**

<b>Teaching Evaluation (See Exhibit 1). 1 (worst) to 5 (best).</b>		<b>Mean</b>
1	How worthwhile did you find this course?	4.12
2	The Professor explained course requirements:	4.18
3	The professor explained the grading system:	4.26
4	How would you rate the professor's preparation for class sessions?	4.02
5	The professor's attitude toward the subject matter is:	4.42
6	How satisfied were you with the professor's availability?	4.15
7	How satisfied were you the professor's respect for students?	4.23
8	How satisfied were you with the professor's management of class time?	3.88
9	How satisfied were you with feedback throughout the course?	3.70
10	Overall, how would you rate the professor?	3.91

**Learning Evaluation**

*To what extent did this course help you to improve your . . . ?*

(0 = **Not at all** , 6 = **Very much** . Weighted by percentages shown in Exhibit 3).

15	Skill in marketing yourself	6.20%
10	Skill in giving oral presentations	6.08%
3	Ability to recognize business opportunities	5.84%
4	Ability to solve business problems	5.44%
9	Skill in writing business reports	5.40%
11	Ability to work well with people of diverse backgrounds	5.20%
1	Competence in an important business discipline	5.19%
16	Skill in starting your own business	5.12%
14	Ability to prioritize activities	5.04%
6	Ability to apply theory to practice	5.01%
12	Skill in directing the work of others	4.97%
13	Skill in resolving conflicts	4.80%
2	Understanding of business areas outside your major	4.63%
5	Ability to integrate global issues into business decisions	4.38%
8	Ability to use the Internet	3.11%
7	Ability to develop spreadsheet models	3.08%
<b>Total (maximum = 100%)</b>		<b>79.49%</b>