

## **EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING IN SELLING AND SALES MANAGEMENT: STUDENTS EXPERIENCING SALES IN A SAFE ENVIRONMENT**

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### **Proposal for Experiential Learning in Selling Courses**

Many students do not expect to take sales positions after graduation. Students often shun the thought of having sales positions. The reasons for this include rejection, low confidence, as well as sales being a non-glamorous profession. Movies, as well as personal experiences, create and validate student's perception of sales positions. According to *Monthly Labor Review* (2013) 19 percent of 2011 graduate cohort were employed in sales positions post-graduation. Marketing educators need to provide marketing students with a safe environment to for students to gain basic selling skills.

Experiential learning within sales courses is vital to student learning because it allows students to apply the sales knowledge they gain within the classroom. Knight (2014) summarizes the importance of experiential learning within sales courses. This type of learning provides students with world of work environments, while maintaining the safety of the classroom setting. As Kolb (1984) indicates, "learning is the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience" (p. 38). This position paper explores ways marketing educators can assist students in overcoming negative perceptions of the sales profession as well experience what a successful salesperson does to make a sale.

### **Learning Sales Techniques by Trading a Paperclip**

This project requires students to trade products a minimum of ten times in order to attain the highest priced item within the course. Students are provided a jumbo paperclip to start the project. The main focus of the assignment is to use the win-win concepts discussed in class. These win-win concepts include questioning, Golden Rule Selling principles, understanding the buyer, sales dialog, and concerns and commitment. Students must follow key guidelines as well as provide reflections of their learning.

### **Learning Competition and Teamwork through Social Learning**

Using a closed Facebook Group students share experiences and recommendations from the paperclip project to help other students within the course. Students post photos of the items traded. These posts help student see what other students are trading and the product's value. Students increase the number of item trades as well as augment the products to increase trade value. Within this group, students face the competitive environment salespeople experience when trying to outpace competitive environments. Students facing challenges experience teamwork through success stories from other students as well as recommendations on paths students can take to trade products more quickly.

### **Learning Quota and Commission Attainment through All or Nothing Assignments**

Quota assignments including in-class quizzes, role-plays, as well as guest speaker's follow-up notes, provide students with the ability to earn full credit for the assignment or no credit for the assignment. Students must earned a minimum of seventy percent on the quota assignments to earn full credit (one hundred percent) for the assignment. If students earn less than seventy percent the student earns no credit (zero percent) for the assignment. Students become familiar with the need to reach quota in order to gain commission. Students feel the positive and negative aspects of quota attainment and how working harder can reap rewards.

This proposal recommends designing strategic experiential learning opportunities for students will help provided fruitful learning experiences for prospective sales professionals. This exploratory pilot study yields results that will be shared to continue experiential learning activities within sales courses.

### References

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