

A HANDS-ON CATEGORY MANAGEMENT PROJECT FOR MARKETING MAJORS USING SAP RETAIL AND BUSINESS INTELLIGENCE SOFTWARE

Molly Jensen, Department of Marketing and Transportation, Sam M. Walton College of Business, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville AR 72701; mjensen@walton.uark.edu

Valerie Filek, School of Business, Lake Superior State University, 650 W. Easterday Avenue, Sault Ste. Marie, MI 49783; vfilek@lssu.edu

Kerrie Keech, School of Business Administration, University of Texas at Tyler, 3900 University Boulevard, Tyler, TX 75799; kerri_keeceh@uttyler.edu

Lucille Pointer, Department of Management, Marketing and Business, University of Houston, 4800 Calhoun Road, Houston, TX 77004; pointerl@uhd.edu

ABSTRACT

This special session comes from the collaborative work of the authors using SAP Retail and Business Explorer. The goal is not to teach SAP software per se, but to teach real business processes. Each of the authors is going to discuss how SAP Retail and Business Explorer was implemented in the classroom at his or her respective institutions.

All ranges of integration will be discussed. Discussion will run the gamut from a single lecture about the software to discussing a fully integrated project. The curriculum in both Undergraduate and MBA level classes will be discussed.

RATIONALE

It is a well-known phenomenon that marketing and management students avoid more technically-oriented fields of study. The coursework required of marketing and management majors is widely perceived by students as being less quantitatively-oriented than that required of majors such as finance, information technology and accounting (Pritchard et al., 2004). Davis et al (2002) found that marketing majors gave analytic skills the lowest priority out of nine possible categories related to their education. In his "gap analysis" study, Davis et al (2002) compared and contrasted marketing alumni's perceptions of various knowledge areas to their opinions of the preparation marketing programs provided them in those same areas.

Interestingly, out of the eleven areas measured, "quantitative skills" were rated in the middle (5th out of 11) in terms of importance. In contrast, alumni rated their preparedness in "quantitative skills" as very low in comparison to other skills.

As faculty and practitioners we know that there is a need for students to be educated in real world processes along with theory. Many of the processes are technical and quantitative in nature. The use of SAP software helps guide students into real-world skills that can and will be used upon graduation.

This type of curriculum is supported by organizations such as the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business. This accrediting body recognizes the need for students in business to have real-world applied experiences. Additionally, this type of curriculum addresses the need for faculty to demonstrate contributions to practice (AACSB, 2010)

As an added benefit, faculty will build their own skill set in working with these types of programs and databases. As AACSB (2010) promotes: "Likewise, faculty members must engage in constant learning activity to maintain currency with their fields' developing research and theory. Business schools should support faculty development activities that link business practice to the educational experience."

FORMAT

A brief presentation will be given about SAP Retail and Business Explorer software. Each panelist will then speak to the implementation of the curriculum in his or her institution. The types of classes and level of students at these institutions will be addressed. This will be followed by a question and answer session.