

INTEGRATING COLOR CODE INTO MARKETING COURSES

Robert A. Lupton and William Chandler, Information Technology and Administrative Management, Central Washington University, 400 East 8th Avenue, Ellensburg, Washington 98926-7488, 509.963.2611

ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the Hartman *Color Code Personality Profile* as a tool for marketing educators to integrate into curriculum. Developed by Taylor Hartman in 1987, the color code instrument explains human motive by identifying four primary motives -- power, intimacy, peace, and fun -- using four labels to represent these motives: (a) Red, (b) Blue, (c) White, and (d) Yellow. The authors have used the color code in university level marketing, sales, retail management, and advertising classes for the past five years to incite student introspection and understanding of others. The paper presents an overview of the personality profile, explores the application of the concept in marketing, and discusses the color code as an experiential learning tool in marketing education courses.

OVERVIEW

The managerial significance of using the Hartman *Color Code Personality Profile* (Hartman, 1998) is that unlike the Myers-Briggs, Keirsey, and other personality inventories. The color code measures motivation; that is, the instrument measures the primary motive of an individual rather than her behavior. The advantage of the prime motivational approach is that it allows educators and managers to explore a person's psyche from a different perspective than that of an inventory measurement tool which focuses on behavior modalities or other less fundamental dynamics. Indeed, no two individuals perform the same action for exactly the same reason, however, individuals with similar motives may behave alike and may be motivated by similar objectives, circumstances, and rewards. This is the foundation of the Hartman *Color Code Personality Profile* - to easily identify, understand and apply motive based theory in order to motivate, resolve conflict, and even predict the performance of an individual or group.

THE COLOR CODE AS A TEACHING TOOL

In the classroom, the color code helps with classroom management and student motivation. As with all subjects, effective student motivation and conflict resolution come when educators are able to understand a person's or group's primary motive, and help find a way to fulfill these needs. The greatest power in the color code is in its application to more subjective learning such as: introspection,

understanding of others, understanding that each person thinks, and therefore is, different, and understanding that these differences are vital -- the world needs all types. The moment the marketing student starts taking the color code inventory the process has begun - introspection is taking place. The participants are asking themselves - who am I? It is the color code's motive-based theory, its ease of use, and its simplicity that make it a straightforward, fun, interesting, applicable, and profound educational tool providing students with a vehicle they can use to actually begin applying theory base learning to the marketing and business disciplines and beyond. For example, two of the most valuable color code learning activities the authors have integrated into marketing classes are Homogeneous Group Skits and Production Assembly Line.

In Homogeneous Group Skits the marketing students in a class are divided up into homogeneous groups by their primary color code and given the following assignment: In ten minutes each group will prepare a short marketing-related skit for the class (i.e. sales presentation). The only rule is that everyone in the group must participate. The disparity between groups indeed starts immediately. The Yellow personalities often wander off unsure about the assignment. The Blue personalities want more guidance and rules. The Red personalities feel the exercise is a waste of their valuable time, and the White personalities want to know if they can do a writing assignment instead.

The Production Assembly Line assignment comprises of five student groups: Red, Blue, White, Yellow, and a heterogeneous group. Each group receives a single piece of paper with directions to assemble large quantities of some simple paper-constructed device. This color code assignment provides opportunities for leadership, teamwork, introspection, motivation and conflict resolution. Each group must begin by disseminating the information on the piece of paper. Thus, will they read it together as a team? Will they be contentious about who gets the paper? Will someone designate herself as the group leader dictating how the task is to be performed? Questions such as these are asked and answered throughout the assignment, as each team wrestles through the dynamics of their unique group. Indeed, a fascinating dynamic typically ensues where each member of the team attempts to meet his or her needs and find a comfortable place within the group.