

## SCANNING THE ENVIRONMENT: TOWARD A MORE CRITICAL LEARNING PROCESS IN PRINCIPLES OF MARKETING CLASSES

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### ABSTRACT

The marketing mix of product, place, promotion, and price was first introduced to the field of marketing education by E. Jerome McCarthy in 1960 (McCarthy, 1960; Yudelson, 1999). In the decades since it was first articulated, it has become unquestionably one of the most widely recognized concepts in principles of marketing courses and the central organizing structure of almost any marketing management textbook (Yudelson, 1999). By fully embracing the dominant structure of the four P's of marketing, marketing education has focused too narrowly on the management decision-making within organizations and failed to acknowledge the growing relevance of marketing within a wider moral, political, and societal context (Catterall, Maclaran, & Stevens, 2002). As a result, marketing education has consistently produced newly minted crops of marketing managers who possess strong technical skills and competencies for individual decision-making, but are poorly equipped to practice marketing in the dynamic, abstract, and "big picture" environment that 21<sup>st</sup> century marketing managers are confronted with on a daily basis. As noted by Catterall, Maclaran, & Stevens (2002), a greater emphasis in marketing curricula therefore needs to be placed on macro issues rather than managerial ones as marketers working in organizations are expected increasingly to make sense of and interpret the world outside of the organization. Such shifts in emphasis are increasingly important in today's global marketplace where managers are expected to recognize, be sensitive to, and cope with a multiplicity of contradictory discourses that exist (Burton, 2001; Catterall, Maclaran, & Stevens, 2002).

In an effort to address this timely concern, the authors propose the use of an environmental scanning project as an alternative to the traditional marketing plan project to help principles of marketing students begin to understand a macro perspective of the market. By doing so, they may begin the arduous task of learning how to think more holistically and strategically about the marketing practices within an organization. Additionally, it will trigger more critical thinking processes within students as they sometimes unknowingly learn how to see "the big picture," a skill and perspective that is of growing significance in an unpredictable global marketplace. The authors discussed the design and implementation of such projects, as well as the challenges and rewards involved in obtaining meaningful results. Completed student projects were available for review.

### REFERENCES

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