

COPING WITH TIME/EFFORT-STINGY STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

Marketing professors must increasingly cope with substantial heterogeneity in their students' dedication to higher education. Most lesser dedicated students could be described as time and effort stingy.

Time-stingy students are so overcommitted to non-course-related activities that their course performance suffers. Examples of time-stingy students include co-op students, who often work long days hundreds of miles from campus, and dollar-constrained students, who either carry excessive course loads to graduate early or work excessive hours for financial reasons.

Effort-stingy students try to earn adequate grades while exerting minimum efforts. Encouraged to believe that they are customers rather than either trusting, respectful, and participative clients in a professional relationship or "coworkers in the educational enterprise" (Franz, 1998, p.66), such students prize work avoidance goals (i.e., complete work with minimal effort) more than mastery goals (i.e., desire to develop competence) (Harackiewicz et al., 1997). Effort-stingy students believe "they have a right to a degree because they have purchased it" (Bailey, 2000, p.357). For them, learning is incidental to passing a course, which is viewed merely as a step toward a degree that warrants acceptable employment. Although often generalizable to an entire degree program, their effort stinginess may be limited to a single required course believed of little value.

If required to attend class, time/effort-stingy students often sabotage other students' efforts to learn. Motivated by work avoidance goals, they intentionally impede learning—and thus limit the scope of testable knowledge and/or the performance of other students—by being disruptive and poisoning the instructional environment. Furthermore, they often debase cooperative-learning/group-learning exercises by posing a free rider problem (Joyce, 1999).

To accommodate time/effort-stingy students and isolate them from other students, instructors could create alternative, distance education versions of their regularly scheduled courses. Unfortunately,

multimedia courses delivered via two-way video links to remote sites, the Internet, or video on demand (which includes low-tech prepackaged videotapes available for purchase or rent) impose an excessive development burden on instructors and may inflict buggy video technology on students (especially over a narrow bandwidth network). Furthermore, distance education courses with a synchronous component (e.g., regularly scheduled chat rooms that students must visit and instructors must moderate) may pose an excessive administrative burden on faculty and impractical time restrictions on students.

As an alternative to an in-class course or traditional distance education course, time/effort-stingy students can be encouraged to select a parallel, text-only, on-line version of the course. For this version, most or all assignments are from end-of-chapter questions and cases (or the like). Only existing pedagogical materials are used, so the copyright issues inherent to most distance education courses are eliminated. Because detailed teacher's manuals are now de rigueur with textbooks, instructors can be assigned (or hire) graders familiar with their courses to assess these assignments. Furthermore, exam grading and recording can be automated (as in Web-CT). Thus, instructors' development and administrative burdens are minimized.

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