

THE MARKETING MAJOR HANDBOOK: A MARKETING STUDENTS' GUIDE TO SUCCESSFUL DIFFERENTIATION IN THE MARKET PLACE

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As is the case in many human and natural phenomena, marketing majors span a wide range of marketability. A number of contributing factors include personality characteristics, physical appearance, experience, and basic ability. While some of these may be considered inherent personal characteristics, many are the result of conscious (or unconscious) decisions made over time by the students themselves. While some students enter the job market with a portfolio rich in internships, discipline-related job experience, membership and leadership roles in student organizations, research experience and publications, in addition to outstanding academic performance, others simply have a college transcript indicating completion of the minimal degree requirements. While there may be many reasons for these discrepancies in marketability, such as family and financial considerations, in as much as possible, students should take a proactive role in fashioning themselves into a highly desirable product for the job market. While the amount and type of effort put forth during a college career is ultimately the decision of the student, it is the responsibility of the institution, its faculty and staff to make students aware of the necessity, and opportunities available to differentiate themselves from the masses.

A Marketing Major Handbook is a useful tool to help make students aware of the necessity to develop a long-term strategy for professional development, as well as opportunities beyond the classroom for doing so. In addition to simply presenting a check sheet of required and elective courses for the degree to be taken, this Handbook would include the rationale, information, and check sheets for further immersion into the discipline and development of professionalism. As such, it serves a single document to help them focus their efforts throughout their college career. Specific information would include:

- Basic information on career opportunities and college placement programs,
- Employer/recruiter suggestions to help make the student stand out in the job market,

- Statement of the student's career goals and objectives,
- Strategies and tactics for achieving their goals,
- Time management strategies and tactics,
- Regular self-assessment of the student's progress towards goals,
- Information on student organizations, lecture series, internship procedures and opportunities, mentoring programs, and research opportunities,
- Forms to be used by the student to record goals, objectives and accomplishment on a year-by-year basis.

The Marketing Major Handbook would be used by the student's academic advisor to help chart the student's progress, both in coursework and professional activities, and to make recommendations for continued growth and development. Students would receive their copy of the Marketing Major Handbook as early in their college career as possible. At the very least, students would receive a copy when they formally declared a Marketing major. It may be possible, however, to deliver the Handbook to high school seniors who indicate an interest in marketing when visiting the college/university or when requesting academic information. As such, the Handbook could serve as a useful tool for student recruitment. The ultimate goal is to have students view their university experience as whole, rather than a semester-by-semester exercise of merely surviving the gauntlet. Viewing the end as a killer portfolio, with each course and activity as a step in the development process, should foster greater identification with the institution and business program, thus increasing student retention.