

HOW TO PUT TOGETHER A MARKETING CLASS FOR ONLINE DELIVERY

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ABSTRACT

This special session described an approach for preparing web-delivered marketing classes. It was the result of the trial and experience of putting together three such complete classes, two of which delivered typically considered “difficult to teach” marketing research at the graduate and undergraduate levels. Session participants were provided a good idea of how to do various things themselves. It helped faculty colleagues at resource-limited schools incorporate materials delivered online into their classes.

BACKGROUND

In many U.S. business schools, there has been an emphasis in the past five years on offering courses via the Internet. While online classes undoubtedly offer great flexibility and convenience to the student and the professor, there are serious challenges as well. For starters, the course content has to be delivered in the absence of the traditional classroom environment. This might be a problem, especially in sustaining student interest and motivation. Sufficient opportunities would have to be provided to students to ask and receive adequate clarifications and answers to questions on assignments and other class-related issues. In addition, there are also the technological issues of how to implement detailed problem solving tools like the blackboard or overhead projector that professors take for granted in a traditional classroom and might not, therefore, even realize their value and vital role until their absence is noted in an online environment!

In this special session the author shared the experiences of developing three online courses. One of these is the marketing math course called Marketing and Money while the other two are both marketing research courses at the graduate and undergraduate levels. Because the need to develop these courses coincided with the lack of funding to hire help, the author pretty much did everything independently, making use of undergraduate student worker help for some limited, routine tasks. Thanks to this somewhat frustrating process, the author was able to develop a pretty good sense of how to do many things, some in unusual, if not “unorthodox,” ways.

KEY RESOURCES

- Lecture outline delivered as an enhanced Adobe pdf PowerPoint presentation.
- Cases and assigned problems delivered as Adobe pdf files within lecture.
- Numerical problems delivered as hyper-linked xlsx Excel files within lecture. Most workbooks use a standardized Input-Output format that “looks” similar.
- Numeric and formula solutions to the Excel problems delivered as Adobe pdf files. Afterwards, using simple techniques to control what is made available, how much and when, the challenge levels of assignments can be manipulated quite well.
- Use of Camtasia Audio+Video to illustrate “how to do this” segments. This comes in very handy for incorporating software tutorials, e.g., Excel. Turning standard faculty offices into a recording studio is a great help, avoiding unnecessary trips to the University’s recording studio.
- Use of a digital artist’s writing tablet as a substitute for the overhead projector.

OTHER FEATURES OF THE CLASS

- Student discussions via the Online Discussion Area and Chat.
- Multiple graded assignments.
- Internet-administered, as well as traditional, exams modified to online format.

FLEXIBILITY OF THE APPROACH

The author’s approach easily works well with to multiple delivery formats, viz:

- Dominant online teaching platforms such as Blackboard.
- Customized platforms such as those offered by major publishers, e.g., McGraw-Hill’s Pageout or Prentice-Hall’s Course Compass.
- Straight out of the faculty member’s own folder on the college’s web server, completely avoiding the need for any platform. Of course, this will require some adaptations.
- On one or more CDs, doing away with the need for an Internet connection for the most part.

However, online activity would still be needed for student interaction

The special session touched upon all of the above aspects and stimulated vigorous discussion.

Attendees were provided with tips, tools and techniques they can use right away, leapfrogging the learning curve. They can use the knowledge in either designing their own online courses or to develop online supplements to their traditional classes.