

DIARY OF A SENIOR MARKETING PROFESSOR: ADVICE ON HOW TO GET THE MOST FROM STUDENT PROJECTS

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ABSTRACT

Thirty years of teaching experience imparts valuable wisdom as to how to be the most effective teacher. Senior faculty recognize the significance of applied projects in improving the learning experience. A literature review on experiential learning, project-based learning, and design thinking approaches supports this notion. Over a three-decade period of teaching the Introduction to Marketing course, a new product development project morphed into an effective, practical, and useful assignment for students. The professor discovered what worked and what did not work to develop a student experience that reinforced marketing knowledge and advanced important business competencies. This project required students, in groups, to invent a new product or service and develop a complete strategic marketing plan including a professional presentation. Projects were evaluated on the creativity of the new product ideas, the marketing mix elements, and the use of multi-media. The concept of synergy was used to bind all of the marketing mix elements together into a cohesive marketing strategy. Presentations were recorded and viewed by students who submitted self-critiques of their communication skills. Students benefitted by not only understanding marketing concepts, but also developed communication, teamwork, and leadership proficiencies. Through qualitative analysis of the projects over a 30 year period, this paper provides advice to assist instructors in the execution of a new product development project to enhance student learning and outlines do's and don'ts, which can be generalized to other student projects. Recommendations include encouraging creativity and competition, selection of groups, ways to effectively work in teams, tips for coaching, guidelines for self-critiques and peer evaluations, rubrics for grading, how to provide feedback, and demonstrating professional behavior and attire. Project-based learning encourages faculty to not only focus their efforts in the classroom on concept knowledge, but to expand opportunities for students to grow as professionals and for faculty to move from teacher to mentor.

Keywords: experiential learning, project-based learning, new product development process, student success

INTRODUCTION

Over the course of 30 years of being a marketing professor, one's teaching style and methods advance and hopefully become more effective. As a rookie faculty member, I began assigning a new product development project in the Introduction to Marketing course, which evolved over time. As I matured in my teaching practices, the project morphed into a

complete, well-structured assignment. Through trial and error, I learned what to do and what not to do regarding a project in which students design a new product or service and develop a marketing strategy plan. This project combines different skills and methods to accommodate the visual learner as well as other types of learners. The student presentations were recorded and detailed feedback on their presentation skills was provided with the goal to improve communication skills. Professors, particularly senior faculty members, recognize that projects are instrumental in efficient and effective teaching. As faculty, we know the requirement for students to do challenging projects is essential to the overall learning experience. For academics, this is a great opportunity to gather data for a research study. For students, the benefits of assignments such as this are to advance their skills and provide a real world experience in the classroom. For future employers, real world projects train students with the skills companies are looking for in an exceptional employee.

METHODOLOGY

The research methodology for this paper is exploratory in nature, combining a review of the literature and a comparison of the researcher's professional experience to the literature findings. The qualitative research, using a form of observation research, provides a reflective paper focusing on teaching pedagogy and offers advice to less senior faculty. The purpose of the research is to provide guidelines and recommendations to junior faculty regarding the utilization of a marketing project. This paper addresses a key topic of interest to faculty - improving the learning experience of students.

The purpose of qualitative research is to get a better understanding of the concept through first-hand experience, honest reporting, and quotations from actual student conversations. This study aims to understand how students derive knowledge from a project, and how their acquired knowledge influences their behavior.

According to Morse and Field (1996), "doing qualitative research requires the researcher to be methodologically versatile, to have an extensive knowledge of social science theory, to interact skillfully with others, and to be persistent, focused and single-mindedly committed to research. Doing qualitative research is an intense experience. It enriches one's life; it captures one's soul and intellect. Qualitative researchers begin data collection by examining observations and reports of the phenomena as they occur in everyday life. Data is then organized so that it is drawn together into a cohesive whole. Thus, qualitative researchers are primarily concerned with the development of description of an observed phenomenon to generate solid theory as an outcome, or the product of their research" (pp.1 - 2).

In defining qualitative research, it is naturalistic and deals with non-numerical data seeking to explain and explore versus manipulating variables. It is contextualized and interpretive, emphasizing the process or patterns of development rather than the product or outcome of the research. Data are collected through qualitative data collection tools such as interviews, field notes, diaries, and observations. Good qualitative research is robust, well informed, and thoroughly documented. Although naturalistic and interpretive, similar to quantitative research, qualitative research is also systematic, involving a careful process of

identifying the problem, collecting, analyzing, explaining, evaluating, and interpreting the data ([Nassaji, 2020](#)).

In examining reflexivity in qualitative research, Barrett, Kajamaa, and Johnston (2020) encourage qualitative researchers to become reflexive as they develop their critical research skills, differentiating between the familiar concept of reflection and reflective practice and that of reflexivity. The aim is to improve practice, through a continual process of engaging with and articulating the place of the researcher and the context of the research.

EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

Krajcik and Blumenfeld (2006) posited that project-based learning roots go back to John Dewey (1938) who argued that students would develop a personal investment in the material if they engaged in real, meaningful tasks. Kolb (2015) believes the contributions of Dewey, along with Lewis and Piaget, have set the foundation for contemporary applications of experiential learning theory.

Studies have shown that students create a deeper understanding of material with hands-on interactions. Horan, Lavaroni, and Beldon (1996) found students of all levels showed an increase in the ability to critically think and socially participate after doing project-based assignments. Another study found that students were more effective in applying lecture concepts when they participated in fieldwork, simulations, labs, or consulting projects (Young, Caudill, & Murphy, 2008). Students gravitate toward this type of information transformation and marketing students prefer activities that incorporate interaction, hands-on experience, and connection to the real world (Bridges, 1999; Davis, Misra, & van Auken, 2000; Karns, 2005).

More professors are adopting project-based learning to connect students with actual business and community organizations to help solve real problems (Smith & Gibson, 2016). Marketing classes that emphasize experiential learning through project-based assignments helped students acquire leadership and communication skills while meeting both the needs of future employers and academic accreditation institutions (Stutts & West, 2005). According to Graeff (2010), an exercise must provide students with an opportunity to “learn the skills and abilities necessary to achieve their future professional and academic goals” (pp. 266 - 267).

Other researchers in marketing education suggest the need to close the loop in experiential learning in order to cement new knowledge (Kolb, 2015). Bobbitt, Inks, Kemp, and Mayo (2000) used a semester-long exercise integrated across three courses—principles, selling, and sales management. They determined that experiential learning in marketing leads to greater student involvement and improved decision making, problem solving, and planning skills. Munoz and Huser (2008) required students to do a situational analysis in a packaged goods category and found that experiential learning fostered student engagement, realism, and involvement, leading to better critical thinking and communication skills.

Experiential learning methods have become more popular in marketing education due to the desire to respond to the changing higher education environment, which is more student-customer focused; the need to endow students with employability skills; the common sense assumption that since marketing is a practical activity, learning from experience makes sense; and

pedagogic methods designed around experiential learning theory have been widely influential in recent decades (Ross, 2014).

An experiment was conducted by Chen, Benedicktus, and Kim (2018) to examine the effect of design thinking approaches (user-centered design, design-driven innovation) on design and marketing outcomes (perceived originality, perceived usefulness, and perceived value) and developed a step-by-step guide on how to execute a design thinking module in a product-oriented marketing course. This type of design thinking approach was used in this paper's new product development project.

PROJECT STRUCTURE

Students over a thirty-year period in Introduction to Marketing classes were required, in a group, to invent a new product or service and develop a complete strategic marketing plan. They were to create a product, promote it, plan for its distribution, price it, and determine a target market. The deliverables were a written report and a presentation using PowerPoint or another presentation software. The report was to include the four marketing mix elements (4 Ps), the target market, and the concept of synergy, which relates how each of the 4 Ps fit together. This project enabled students to apply their marketing knowledge and expertise to a real-life situation by designing the marketing strategy of a new product.

Projects were evaluated on the creativity of new product ideas, thoroughness of the marketing mix strategy, and use of multi-media. Every student was required to participate in the presentation. The presentations were recorded and students watched the video with their group members and the professor in order to improve their communication skills. A self-critique of each student's own performance was also required. Students were encouraged to produce television commercials, radio commercials, magazine/newspaper ads, social media, and prototypes of the product and packaging. The class was invited to ask questions of the group after their presentation. The professor probed the group further, as needed.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR A NEW PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

The following are recommendations from thirty years of incorporating this new product development (NPD) project in an Introduction to Marketing class.

Do's

-Be clear in the assignment. From an instructor's perspective, a project will be most effective with a well-planned question or problem presented to students that engages them and requires that they generate artifacts and organic problem-resolutions (Blumenfeld, Soloway, Marx, Krajcik, Guzdial, & Palincsar, 1991). When students were given consistent, concrete project guidelines, it was found they were more productive. In order to enhance students' learning through problem solving, professors should present students with problems that are holistic, not divided by

narrow disciplinary boundaries, problems that mirror professional practice, problems that are realistic, and problems that are contemporary (Rob and Etnyre, 2009).

For the NPD project, students were provided a detailed assignment sheet that listed everything they needed to include in the presentation and paper. This structure gave students direction and made them aware of the rubric that would be used for grading. (See Appendix 1 - Assignment Sheet for a complete description of the requirements of the assignment.)

-Require students to choose a company or organization. In addition to inventing a product, the students selected a company that would produce and market their product. It could be a company that existed or a company that they originated. If it was a new company, they needed to develop a mission statement. About half of the groups chose a company that existed and the other half introduced a new organization. During the question and answer period, the professor typically asked the group what their company was planning for their next product launch.

-Encourage students to be creative in their new product. Envick (2020) looked at six design methods students could use during the idea generation stage of the new product development process. The study found that design thinking provided a more structured approach that led to more solution-based ideas. The NPD project in this paper encouraged students to use the What-If Analysis method which approaches the service idea from a question and answer tactic that allows students to reflect on existing and similar product or service businesses. This helps them see possible modifications and improvements, which leads to more and better ideas.

-Have students incorporate the concept of SYNERGY into the presentation and paper. One study examined the ways and results related to developing a research competence approach to improve student self-perceived competence in conducting a research project (Erdyneeva, Nikolaev, Azanova, Nurullina, Bogdanova, Shaikhislamov, Lebedeva, & Khairullina, 2016). The polypragmatic approach they used was an integration of dialectic, exploratory, synergetic and competence approaches that ensures success and effectiveness in developing student research competence. This approach was associated with a predominance of synergetic principles aimed at developing intellectual level, high-tech skills, and skills useful in making appropriate decisions in situations requiring high level of a person's inner organization, deep understanding of concepts, and ability to convert knowledge into competencies. The authors believed that to effectively apply the best practice as professionals, one must understand the basis and synergy of research. The study considered student attitudes towards research with regard to their ability to use theoretical and methodological basis needed to form their research competence, and concluded that the approach improved student self-perceived competence in conducting a research project. They also explored the structure and synergy of developing self-efficacy in self-organization and self-transformation when carrying out a research project.

For the NPD project, students were to apply the concept of synergy to the *product concept*. The product concept was defined as the dynamics of a product that highlights, in a short powerful statement (three-word descriptors), what the product is, as well as its competitive advantage. Students were to use the product concept as the common theme or thread that ran through their marketing mix strategy to develop synergy that would, in a concerted effort, fit the 4 P's together. They also had to articulate the synergy of the product with the company along with its appeal to the target market. This was an excellent way to develop critical thinking skills. This same

synergistic concept for the NPD project was revisited in an essay question on the final. For the final, students were to explain the concept of synergy and how the 4 P's of their product fit together, much like pieces of a puzzle, using the product concept as the connecting agent.

-Require the students to work in teams. Stott and Walker (1999) believe there is agreement among academics that teams form an increasingly important part of life in schools. This arises from the recognition that it is a valuable skill outside of academic settings. Yet it is still not being utilized enough in educational settings and an increased focus on teamwork skills is necessary to prepare graduates for the ever-developing business world (Somech & Drach-Zahavy, 2007). Team projects have the potential of encouraging students to develop norms that encourage helping behavior, and further cooperation (Byrd & Luthy, 2010).

Chad (2012) found that working in team based learning (TBL) situations is positive for students. Results indicated that the TBL innovation has a positive influence on student engagement and offers opportunities to assist learning. The study concluded that TBL is an effective teaching process enabling educators to offer students enhanced and stimulating learning experiences.

Students in the Introduction to Marketing class were appointed to work in teams of five to seven students. Students were assigned alphabetically. Because this course is a requirement for all business students, students majoring in marketing, accounting, finance, management, information systems, and economics were included in the different groups.

-Self-critiques and peer evaluations. A reoccurring problem with group projects is grading. Some students contribute more than their share and some students do not contribute enough. Williams (2017) investigated how individual grades can be allocated for each student working collaboratively within a group and what evidence teachers can collect in order to substantiate individual grades when segments of the work are completed outside of the classroom and/or online. They had students complete a self-assessment and peer assessments to evaluate the process of the project; to determine acquired skills, such as collaboration, research, participation; and to provide feedback for the contribution of each group member, including themselves.

Similar to the Williams (2017) study, the NPD project included self-evaluation of communication skills and peer evaluations. Each student was to provide a self-reflection of her/his communication skills – strengths and weaknesses. In addition, participants were to provide feedback for each group member regarding their level of contribution. Not only did this provide a fairer system of grading, it also allowed the learners to become more aware of the assessment process and what was actually expected of them.

After viewing the video of their presentation, students were required to do a one-page self-critique of their communication skills. The professor reviewed the self-critique and shared additional feedback with each student to improve the effectiveness of her/his presentation skills. In the self-critique, many students stated they believed this was a valuable learning experience in improving their speaking ability. Overall, students' comments were very positive. (See Appendix 2 - Selected Student Comments.)

Hanson (2006) recommends one means of improving group projects is to use peer reviews, whereby students grade assignments based on the teacher's benchmarks. These systems have been gradually implemented at universities and are used increasingly as an alternative method of

assessment (Wen & Tsai, 2006). Several studies have found that peer and self-assessment provide numerous benefits for the learning process, improving student motivation, participation, autonomy and responsibility; helping to develop a better understanding, encouraging in-depth learning, control and autonomy in the process; developing professional skills; treating assessment as part of the learning process; and increasing the capacity for critical analysis (Topping, Smith, Swanson, & Elliot, 2000; Vickerman, 2009). Not surprising, researchers found student ratings for themselves and for their peers were higher than the ratings from the instructor (Suñol, Arbat, Pujol, Feliu, Fraguell, & Planas-Lladó, 2016).

For the NPD project, students evaluated team members using a simple peer evaluation of a scale from 1 to 5. If a student's average score from their teammates was 4 or higher, up to 3 extra points were earned. If the student's average was 3 or lower, up to 10 points were lost, which is a full letter grade. Group work is not always fair to the overachievers and the slackers sometimes slide through, but in a project such as this, peer evaluations can reward or penalize students and increase or drop a grade.

-Introduce the project midway through semester and submission at the end of the semester. The ideal time to assign the project is at the end of the discussion of the material for the new product development process, which is halfway through the semester - about five weeks before it is due. The project should be due at the end of the semester, which allows ample time for thorough coverage of the marketing mix elements. Once the NPD project was assigned, students were able to relate what they were learning in the classroom to the project. Thus, positioning the project at the end of the semester provides an effective review for a comprehensive final.

-Provide class time for the groups to meet. Flipped classrooms is the practice of assigning lectures outside of class and devoting class time to a variety of learning activities (DeLozier & Rhodes, 2017). Many educators have touted the potential benefits of this model and research regarding implementation has been mostly positive. The rationale behind the flipped classroom methodology is to increase student engagement with content, increase and improve faculty contact time with students, and enhance learning (Rotteler & Cain, 2016).

Time in the classroom was allocated for work on the NPD project to supplement traditional lecture-based instructions. Since class time is a common time students have available, allow them the last ten minutes of two or three classes so they can organize and plan their project. This also allows the faculty to be available for questions and issues the groups may be facing. One entire class was devoted to time for the students to work on the project. They met out of the classroom, but the professor was available. However, as the flipped classroom technique suggests, additional time is needed outside of the classroom (DeLozier & Rhodes, 2017).

-Count the project for a significant portion of the grade. The NPD project counted for 15% of the grade, the same weighting as an exam. That is a way to encourage students to take this assignment seriously and put a significant amount of time into their work on the project.

-Coach the team members. It is crucial in this type of learning that students are coached by their professors and encouraged to start taking responsibility for their learning (Rob & Etnyre, 2009). Conklin (2013) suggests that professors should offer support to students, listen to them, create time for independent work, offer hints, and be responsive to questions and comments. The ability of students to work independently of instructors, with limited supervision, creates an

efficient working environment (Blumenfeld, Soloway, Marx, Krajcik, Guzdial, & Palincsar, 1991).

Knight, Elford, Hock, Dunekack, and Bradley (2015) give three steps to great coaching: collaborate to set a goal, learn to implement the strategy, and monitor how the students implement the chosen strategy and whether they met the goal.

For the NPD project, the professor spent time during class and outside the classroom offering advice and tips on how to improve the projects. Mentoring students is one of the most effective and rewarding ways to ensure student learning is happening. It is a great way to get to know the students and a great way for students to explore the field of marketing.

-Encourage students to produce a multi-media presentation. It was strongly recommended that the groups design a multi-media package of advertising, print, broadcast, and social media to encourage them to think visually. They may not be aspiring videographers, producers, digital marketers, and web designers, but in crafting videos, social media, and websites, they learn how to determine the objectives of a media plan, how to structure these various forms of media, and how to reach the target market. This was one way for the students to utilize their social media skills in a professional setting.

-Require every student to present. The ability to speak in front of groups is a valued skill for business professionals. Having the ability to speak effectively and with confidence can enhance career opportunities. Practice is the key to improving speaking skills, and class projects can provide that opportunity for students to polish their communication skills. Projects assigned in classroom settings create an environment that is very conducive to practicing public speaking skills, which is one of the primary ways this skill can be improved (Shyam & Salim, 2016). Communication skills are critically important and are aligned at the same level of importance with technical skills as determined by employers (Nickles, Parris, Gossett, & Alexander, 2010).

For the NPD project, every student was required to present. It did not have to be equal time for each student, but every student needed to participate. The presentations were formal, as if presenting to a group of senior managers. The students were required to dress professionally. The presentation lasted no more than 20 minutes. PowerPoint or some other presentation software package were to be used. PowerPoint has been shown to be an effective teaching tool and a skill necessary for business students (Alkash & Al-Dersi, 2013).

A study by Cho, Kidd, Morthland, and Adkinson (2017) found that a multidisciplinary cooperative and situated learning construct enhanced student learning of soft skills through a social application of their discipline knowledge. Another study learned that the most important soft skills are: ability to work in a team structure; ability to make decisions and solve problems; ability to communicate verbally with people inside and outside an organization; ability to plan, organize, and prioritize work; and ability to obtain and process information (Adams, 2014).

-Record presentations and watch the video with students. Students' ability to improve their public speaking is enhanced when given the ability to critique recordings of themselves for future improvement (Beebe & Beebe, 1997). Murphy and Barry (2016) looked at students' perceptions of the learning and feed-forward value of an oral presentation assessment, by having students watch their presentation on video, and then self-mark their performance immediately after their presentation. Students also wrote a reflection relating to their experience. The survey data

revealed that most students viewed all aspects of the assessment task positively and they rated the process as providing substantial learning value. They also indicated that the video review and overall assessment exercise provided valuable feed-forward information that would assist them to improve future presentations. Students noted that they perceived the video review task as self-enabling. They also mentioned that the self-reflection and self-marking exercise provided time for thought although it was personally challenging. The researchers concluded it is possible to provide a deep learning opportunity from oral presentations that can feed-forward to enhance students' future presentations (Murphy & Barry, 2016).

This technique was employed in the NPD project to give students a better grasp of their strengths and shortcomings in the area of communication. In order to improve presentation skills, it is critical that students watch their performance. The video was viewed by the professor and the entire group. Having the students view their own presentation within the comfort and support of their group helped them improve their speaking skills. They then completed the self-critique of their communication skills focusing on what they did well and what they would improve for their next presentation.

In large classes, students can get lost and they may have limited interaction with faculty and other students. Sitting down with each small group to watch their video is a great way to work around the difficulties of the impersonalization of large classes and emulate a small class setting. The dynamics are intense and students benefit from this one-on-one interaction. Faculty can connect and get to know their students on an individual basis. Students usually shared their positive experience of this project with their group and professor as they watched their video. Students bonded and formed friendships. As a teacher, I found this a very rewarding experience.

-Provide effective feedback. Brookhart (2017) believes effective feedback depends on timing, amount, mode, and audience. Feedback should be immediate for knowledge of facts, and slightly delayed for reviews that are more comprehensive. The amount of feedback should be related to the assignment. The best mode for the message should be chosen whether it be a casual comment, a meeting, or more formal written comments. Feedback should be individualized to the student and in the voice of the student.

Andrade, Workman, and Gardiner (2020) demonstrated the importance of rubrics on teaching and learning and found rubrics not only benefit students and faculty, but also meet the assurance of learning standards for the AACSB. In the study, faculty were given opportunities to assess written and oral communication skills using standardized, but adaptable, rubrics which reinforced what faculty were teaching and how it was perceived by students.

For the NPD project, by using a rubric, students were able to determine the quality of their work for each section of the project. The written report was worth 50 points and the presentation was worth 45 points with the self-evaluation being worth 5 points. (See Appendix 3 - Grade Sheet with Rubric Used for the New Product Development Project.) Students in a group were given an overall base grade. This grade could be raised or lowered for individual students if they were rewarded by their peers, or if their performance was deficient, or if their professional behavior or dress was inappropriate. Grades and feedback were provided in a timely manner, usually the next class period. Many times, feedback was provided the same day of the presentation while students watched the video.

-Engage the class during the presentations. After the presentation, other students in the class were encouraged to ask the presenting group questions. In addition to keeping the students engaged, it helped develop listening skills as well as debate skills. Not surprising, the student questions from the class usually concentrated on the design and functions of the product, not the marketing strategy. Encourage students to ask questions that relate to the marketing of the product and not just the design and functioning of the product. The faculty should also question the group, focusing on the group's rationale for their marketing strategies. The professor should wait to ask questions until after the class has participated.

-Offer some healthy competition. In order to encourage students to pay attention to their classmates while they are presenting, the non-presenting students "grade" the other groups. The team with the highest grade was awarded an automatic 100%. Of course, team members were not permitted to grade their own group. It is a good way to motivate the groups to work harder and to guarantee students attended class even if their group was not presenting. This also helped develop better listening skills since the students pay closer attention to the presentations if they know they have to evaluate the groups.

-Use the data from the projects for research. Document the projects because student projects are a rich database which can be incorporated into scholarly papers. Over a 30-year period, it was interesting to review the student projects and analyze how they had changed over time (Guskey, working paper). I had saved almost all of the students' projects. When this project was first assigned 30 years ago, digitizing was not available, so the only option was hard copies of the projects. Thanks to a graduate assistant or two, the 400+ projects were digitized and the data analyzed to determine how student ideas have changed over the years. Require students to send an electronic version of their report and their slides.

-Revisit the criteria of the project. Over time, using the same basic structure of the project, revise it and tweak it to improve its teaching effectiveness, to keep up with new technology and trends, and to apply innovative pedagogical theories. It is a good way for faculty to improve and update the effectiveness of the project's criteria as well as improve their teaching skills through innovative teaching techniques. A good example is the pandemic and how the project requirements changed due to social distancing. Zoom was used for the presentations and for the review of the video.

Don'ts

-Don't allow students to choose their own groups. Björk and Magnusson (2009) explored the interrelationship between innovation idea quality and idea providers' network connectivity using social network analysis. The analysis indicated that there is a clear interrelationship between the network connectivity and the quality of the innovation ideas created. The proportion of high-quality innovation ideas increased between the least connected group and the group thereafter. In these settings, where individuals work with others in different groups, the most connected groups perform worst in terms of the proportion of high-quality ideas generated, which points to the necessity to consider a multitude of factors when managing ideation. The findings suggest that to increase the number of high-quality innovation ideas created by individuals, the members of the

group should not be highly connected. Students' connectivity during the project was one of teamwork, but not of a very tight knit group since they were put into groups and not permitted to choose their friends as teammates. By forcing students into groups and not allowing them to pick their friends, one can assume that students were not in the most connected type of group, but were still near source groups and cohesive, but not super connected groups. Thus, encouraging students' interaction with other people outside of their close network should be supported and facilitated.

For the NPD project, groups of four to six students were assigned to teams alphabetically. If the students had been permitted to self-select, they would have joined with their friends. As research has found, the actual project would not be as good and the learning experience would not be as great due to the emphasis on social factors rather than productivity, creativity, and effectiveness. Over the course of years, in some semesters, students were allowed to self-select their groups. Not surprising, the grades were reflective of this with a less than quality performance. The selection of groups reflects the reality of the work place where teams are often assigned, not self-selected. Many of the students developed wonderful friendships during this project, perhaps the result of being put into non-selective groups.

-Don't allow students unlimited time for the presentations. Setting a time limit for the presentation and stopping the group if they exceed the time limit gives students the experience of the real world and its limitations on time and resources. The groups should hold to the time limit. At least five minutes per group should be allowed for questions. In a 50 to 60 minute class, two groups can present for 20 minutes each, followed by 5 to 10 minutes for questions.

-Don't allow your students to display unprofessional social behavior and unprofessional attire during the presentations. Help students learn proper business etiquette. Recently during the presentations, many students were on their devices. The most blatantly offensive students were called out by the professor and were directed to ask a question to the group, which they were not able to do because they were not paying attention. You can be sure everyone in the class paid attention to the next group. The solution may be to disallow cell phones during the presentations. Make sure students know that it is a matter of common courtesy to give full attention to the speakers.

Also, be sure to point out unprofessional dress. This is especially true for the female students because women have many more options for attire compared to men. As business students, they need to know what is appropriate and what is not. Understanding how to dress for success is also part of the learning process. Unfortunately, this has become a more reoccurring problem due to the acceptance of business casual.

ADDITIONAL REFLECTIONS

Many interesting stories have surfaced from the various products that the students invented. Elizabeth L. (2003) from Alaska had a friend who was handicapped and in wheelchair. As a young woman, Elizabeth's friend wanted to be fashionable and proper, but that was difficult because her legs were paralyzed. Elizabeth came up with the idea of Magna Shoes, shoes with magnets to keep one's feet together, and yet were fashionable. She wanted to market this product, but that never happened. Elizabeth became a marketing professor instead!

Mark B. (2016), a freshman in the class, had started his own business selling lip balm made from ingredients from his own bees, a product similar to Bert's Bees products. For the class project, Mark and his group marketed a product extension of the lip balm – Dry Bee Gone Lotion for the face and body.

A fascinating delivery service developed by students, Best of Hausz (2013), was an in-home manicure/pedicure service for the elderly, to celebrate the lives of senior citizens. In this group, there was a non-traditional, older student. The student and her sister planned to start this business.

A favorite product was Duquesne monopoly (2004) with a fully designed board including the university's streets and buildings, with faculty and administrators faces on the Chance cards!

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

A project of this design is highly recommended to faculty of higher marketing education. It benefits students, the faculty, and corporate America, by cultivating necessary skills and interests in marketing.

Students benefit by developing many soft skills necessary in the business world. As faculty, we are sometimes myopically focused on the subject matter and forget that we are shaping our students' professional and personal lives. In addition to learning the key concepts of a subject such as marketing, opportunities can be offered to develop professional and lifetime skills such as speaking, writing, team building, confidence, discipline, maturity, and self-esteem. For the NPD project, the most significant training, teaching, and motivation occurred while sitting in small groups of four to six students watching and reviewing their video. While it is time consuming for the faculty member, it presents the opportunity to get to know students in a small group setting. As we watched the group videos, we laughed and talked about each of their speaking skills. I teased them that people's biggest fear next to dying was public speaking, and the next biggest fear was watching yourself presenting! The joy of seeing students passionate about their product has been a priceless, rewarding experience. This is an opportunity to talk about their plans and allow them to ask questions about marketing, careers, and how to develop into a professional.

Faculty administering such a project benefit by seeing students grow professionally and personally. Having a first-hand view of this growth is rewarding in an altruistic and career-related way. It also creates an environment in which an instructor can more clearly see ways in which to improve the classroom learning. Furthermore, the instructor can help students divulge interests in a marketing-related future by encouraging the behavior exhibited in the project and presentation. For future research, faculty can collect data over time to evaluate how a project impacted the career decisions of students.

In the teaching evaluations, student feedback noted this project was the best part of the class, and some even said it was the best experience of their college career! It is a fun, engaging, and powerful project for students. When I have encountered dozens of my former students over the years, they have told me they remember fondly "the project". They remember what their product was and who was in their group. When I tell them I have digitized their project along with the video, they request a copy.

It is suggested that faculty follow the guidelines of the project as recommended in this paper but add additional requirements to personalize the experience. For future research, it would be interesting to measure student learning before the project and after the project to assess their learning and determine if the objectives of the course were met.

By doing the same project over the course of one's career, it allows a professor to constantly improve the assignment and gives the opportunity to tweak and refine the requirements based upon their own evaluation and the input from students. It is a great *signature* project and a tremendous legacy to leave to your students as they move on from school to their careers and their lives. To those faculty who are starting their career teaching marketing, I hope you find as much reward in teaching as I have!

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APPENDIX 1 - Assignment Sheet

Introduction to Marketing – New Product Development Project

Each group is to select a new product that has been conceived by the group. Each group is responsible for presenting one new product idea to the class. **BE CREATIVE! YOU WILL BE GRADED ON YOUR INGENUITY!** The presentation should be formal and thorough, as if it were being presented to a group of senior product managers. The presentation should last no more than 20 minutes.

Be interesting -- use visuals!!! You are required to use PowerPoint for your presentation. It is also **strongly recommended that you produce television commercials, radio commercials, magazine/newspaper ads, and/or prototypes of the packaging.** The class will be allowed to ask questions of your group with regard to your product and its marketing strategies. Dr. G. will be asking questions, too☺

Also, a written paper, one per group, should be submitted the day of the presentation. This paper should be at least fifteen pages and should be structured along the lines of an executive report. Put all of your materials in a binder or get it bound. It should be typed, double-spaced, concise, and thorough covering all the key issues which are enumerated below.

1. What is the product's (or service's) core benefit?
2. How is this core benefit manifested in the tangible product? What functions does it perform?
3. What are the intangible factors?
4. What is the name of the product? What name strategy was used - family name extension, separate family name for different product lines, or individual brand name? Why?
5. Describe the logo and/or trademark.
6. Describe the design of the product.
7. How will the product be packaged? (May not be applicable for some products or services.)
8. How will this product help the organization compete? In other words, how does this product fit into the organization as far as the organization's resources and expertise, the organization's mission, and the environmental opportunities?
9. Describe the product's "promotion mix". Elaborate on the advertising (media type, media vehicle, and the theme of the ad), the sales promotion (type used), publicity, and personal selling.
10. Highlight your pricing structure. Is this a price skimming or price penetration strategy? What pricing method did you use (cost, demand, competition, customer-

oriented)? Why?

11. Discuss the distribution channels. Is this intensive, selective, or exclusive? Will you use wholesalers and/or retailers? Describe the places your product will be sold.
12. Evaluate this product as to whether you feel this product will be successful or not successful. Include information on the target market and why this strategy will reach this group.
13. **Elaborate on the concept of SYNERGY – HOW DO ALL THE PIECES OF THE 4 Ps PUZZLE FIT TOGETHER?**

PART OF THE GRADE FOR THE PROJECT WILL BE A CRITIQUE OF YOUR PRESENTATION SKILLS.

YOUR GROUP WILL VIEW THE VIDEO THE DAY OF THE PRESENTATION WITH DR. G. & DISCUSS WAYS TO IMPROVE YOUR PRESENTATION STYLE. WRITTEN SELF- CRITIQUE WILL BE TURNED IN TO DR. G. ALONG WITH A PEER EVALUATION FORM.

APPENDIX 2

Selected Student Comments

“I’m glad I was given the opportunity to see my weak spots and identify them so I will be careful to avoid the same mistakes in future presentations. I now know what I need to work on and how I actually appear to my audience.” - Michelle D. (1994)

“I would like to say that I am glad I had the opportunity to present my project to the groups. I think this presentation was a great idea. Although I have had bad presentations the past, it is always good to have more practice. This presentation definitely helped build my confidence and I plan on building it from this point forward. Also for me personally, I can look back on it and say I can talk to a group for 20 minutes.” - Meghan M. (2005)

“Watching the video of our presentation, I was surprised by my overall performance. I have been much more nervous for other things in the past but nonetheless, I was still a little uneasy... I looked more comfortable speaking than I actually felt inside.... I have always struggled with my basic speaking skills. I have never been happy with the clarity of my voice. I specifically focused on this during my presentation because I knew that I would be able to watch it later. It wasn’t terrible, but I still feel that it has room for improvement.” - Thomas H. (2007)

“Before I even watched the video, I thought I knew exactly what I did wrong. I was not looking forward to hearing my voice and realizing how bad my posture looked. But I realized there were a lot of little things I completely overlooked. I went into it being a lot more critical about myself than I needed to be. I can’t lie, I looked very professional and to be honest I was having a pretty good hair day. I know I am my toughest critic, but at least I got to see areas that needed improvement and next time I will learn from mistakes I made in this presentation.”

- Krista P. (2008)

“Overall there are many things I need to work on and this project helped me realize those things so that I am better prepared in the future.” - Thomas F. (2008)

“After watching the video and talking to Dr. G, I have realized that I would have changed parts of my section of the presentation, but I believe I said everything with confidence.... I have learned how to become a better professional speaker after finding ways to fix my mistakes after this marketing speech. Everyone learns from mistakes, and I am more prepared for the next time I will have to give a presentation in the next class. I really enjoyed this project, and I am happy I learned so much from it for the future.” – Alex B. (2015)

APPENDIX 3

Grade Sheet with Rubric Used for the New Product Development Project

GROUP NUMBER ____ **DAY PRESENTED:**

PRODUCT NAME _____

ORAL PRESENTATION

- ____ **PRODUCT BENEFITS (5 points)**
- ____ **PRODUCT ELEMENT (name, logo, design, package) (5 points)**
- ____ **PROMOTION MIX (10 points)**
- ____ **PRICING MIX (5 points)**
- ____ **DISTRIBUTION MIX (5 points)**
- ____ **SYNERGY OF PRODUCT AND ORGANIZATION (5 points)**
- ____ **EVALUATION OF PRODUCT'S SUCCESS (5 points)**
- ____ **OVERALL PRESENTATION/SLIDES (5 points)**
- ____ **CRITIQUE OF YOUR OWN PRESENTATION STYLE (5 points)**

____ **TOTAL POINTS FOR ORAL PRESENTATION**

WRITTEN PRESENTATION

- ____ **PRODUCT BENEFITS (5 points)**
- ____ **PRODUCT ELEMENT (name, logo, design, package) (5 points)**
- ____ **PROMOTION MIX (10 points)**
- ____ **PRICING MIX (5 points)**
- ____ **DISTRIBUTION MIX (5 points)**
- ____ **SYNERGY OF PRODUCT AND ORGANIZATION (5 points)**
- ____ **EVALUATION OF PRODUCT'S SUCCESS (5 points)**
- ____ **OVERALL PAPER (professional style of writing, spelling & grammar, use of charts) (10 points)**

____ **TOTAL POINTS FOR WRITTEN PRESENTATION COMMENTS:**