Special Session Abstract
Teacher-Friendly Options for Incorporating Experiential Learning Projects in Marketing Courses

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Introduction
A wide variety of teaching methods are being used in college marketing courses, ranging from traditional lectures to new technologies, such as online simulations and blogging. While no one method is best-suited for all situations, research and first-hand instructor accounts suggest that active or experiential learning, i.e., learning by doing, and methods connected to the real-world tend to be more effective. Furthermore, students tend to prefer active, real-world teaching approaches and find them more beneficial.

While a growing number of marketing instructors are using experiential, real-world teaching methods, this approach presents many challenges, hindering greater use. A major impediment is the amount of time involved in designing and carrying out experiential learning activities, especially real-world class projects. Instructors often must find a willing company to serve as a “client” and manage this relationship.

Such projects also require instructors to provide a great deal of support for students outside the classroom. What’s more, it can be difficult to assess individual student learning and performance, as many of these projects are carried out by teams. Online simulations eliminate the need to find clients, but still require considerable advising time, not to mention the time needed to address the inevitable technical problems.

Teacher-Friendly Projects
With so many challenges, it is understandable that instructors might choose less active teaching methods. Fortunately, a number of experiential learning options are available for marketing courses that address these challenges. For example, Coca-Cola, Florida Tourism, General Motors, Google, J.C. Penney, SAP, State Farm and other companies and non-profits have developed comprehensive cases involving actual strategic marketing issues. Students, serving as consultants, conduct primary research, develop recommendations, and present their findings to the client company. Multiple universities can simultaneously utilize the cases, which usually include a competitive aspect, that is, student teams at participating schools compete against one another for recognition, and in some cases, prizes. Some projects also provide students with an opportunity to implement their recommendations.

Another teacher-friendly option is the enhanced online marketing simulations now available. Today’s simulations offer flexibility, i.e., they can be adapted to introductory and advanced marketing courses, and a wide variety of teaching resources, including 24/7 technical support and student advisors, and assignments and tests based on the simulation.

About this Special Session
This special session involves a panel of marketing educators discussing proven, teacher-friendly experiential learning projects they have used. The specific projects we will explore are:

- The American Advertising Federation’s National Student Advertising Competition. Student teams develop an integrated communications campaign to address a real-world marketing problem facing the sponsoring company or non-profit, and “pitch” it to a panel of judges in regional competitions. The top team in each region advances to the national finals.
- The Google Online Marketing Challenge. Student teams receive $200 of Google advertising, and work with local companies or NGOs to create online marketing campaigns. The challenge is open to colleges around the world. Regional winners and their professor receive a trip to a regional Google office; the global winners and their professor receive a trip to Google’s world headquarters.
- The Music2Go Marketing online simulation developed by SmartSims. Students take over the MP3 player division of a large consumer electronics company, and formulate sales, distribution, pricing, new product development, and promotion strategies, as they attempt to build their firm into the leading player in the market. Students compete against others in their course.
- Marketing Internship Program (MI), one of two types of industry-education collaborative programs created by EdVenture Partners. In the MI program, students, while enrolled in a for-credit, marketing or advertising class, research the target audience, create an IMC plan, pitch strategies to their client for approval, and actually implement their plan using a budget provided by the client. Students also analyze their results and present their findings to their client.

Our panel will discuss the pros and cons of these projects, offers tips on how to implement them and overcome potential pitfalls, and address important instructional issues, including:

- The type of students the projects are suited for;
- How to adapt these projects for various subjects within the marketing discipline;
- How to integrate these projects into a typical syllabus;
- The instructor’s role in these projects;
- Forming and managing student teams; and
- Assessing student learning outcomes and performance.

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