

Student Self-Assessment of Job Interview Skills: The Need for Coaching in Marketing Education

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Abstract

It is widely known that one-on-one coaching is used to improve performance in a wide-variety of professional skills (Maurer and Solamon 2006). From dental students to football players to dancers to actors, coaching is used to improve the overall learning of students. Examples of coaching include the hiring of communications experts by professional and college sports teams to improve player communication skills prior to conducting interviews, and sales managers employing role playing exercises in order to improve sales' rep selling skills (Bradford et.al 2017). Numerous academic studies in a variety of fields have demonstrated that coaching is an effective tool to improve communicative performance (Tross and Maurer 2008). This brief study will examine the use of coaching as a means of not only improving marketing majors' job interview skills, but enhancing their long term career marketability.

Many unanswered questions surround the issue of how well marketing majors perform in job interviews. The authors found no published research on the question of how college marketing graduates, in particular, perform on job interviews. Similarly, no empirical research was found reporting how much training the average marketing major receives in terms of interview skills, or what training methods, if they exist, are being utilized. Further, very little exists to suggest whether classroom instruction to improve interviewing skills actually translates into success. Questions such as: Do graduates know what needs be included or excluded during the interview session? Are graduating seniors aware of their own level of eye-contact or how to properly shake hands? Are they aware of any mannerisms that may detract from their presentation (e.g., such as repeated use of the term, "you know?"), Do they know how to respond when stumped by a question?

The next phase of this research will thus investigate whether a potential gap exists between the skills business schools teach and the skills business practitioners desire (DeLong 2016, Kate 2014, Newberry and Conrad 2010, Raymond et.al. 2010), and whether coaching improves performance in job interviews (Shalonda et.al. 2017, Stuart and Mauer 2008, Widmier et.al. 2007). Further, the next phase will address the impact a lack of business communications skills has on a student's job search, and particularly, how it impacts the interview process. If marketing faculty and administrators truly wish to improve their graduates' chances of landing a job, they should therefore develop an effective method of addressing deficits in the student's communication skill during the interview process.

Several important issues are associated with introduction of non-traditional training (such as coaching communication skills) into marketing curricula. One of these is philosophical. For example, many academicians argue that it is not the job of academicians to provide practical skills such as how to control facial expressions or voice intonation. In other words, "it is up to the student" to gain these skills, and hence, such training should not be part of the university curricula. Further, the coaching of behavioral skills is not part of the traditional model of "lecture and tests" and indeed, most marketing professors are ill-equipped to provide that type training. Anecdotal evidence suggests this is the case and that marketing faculty would likely resist such efforts since it would obviously involve more time and effort in an area where most have no interest.

In conclusion, although systematic empirical information is lacking regarding the existence of marketing programs that provide coaching in the area of interpersonal and/or interviewing skills, this does not mean that no such programs exist. Kennesaw State University in Atlanta offers a professional selling program that coaches students in such skills (Kalamas et. al. 2016). The authors suggest that a need for increased research in this area exists. Future research should first assess whether interview coaching improves the interview skills of graduates, and more importantly, the degree to which this improvement relates to job offers. Other areas of interest include determining where marketing students rate against other disciplines and whether this is a worthwhile endeavor for

marketing faculty to consider. In other words, should business schools outsource this type training? Should such coaching be included for all business majors? If so, where, when, and how would such a class be incorporated?

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Relevance to Marketing Educators, Researchers and Practitioners: This paper is useful in developing marketing educator awareness for the need for improved communication/interviewing skills among marketing students.

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