

An Innovative Approach to Marketing Curriculum that Prepares Students for the Workforce

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Employers have complained about how prepared marketing graduates are for the workforce. This is because many students do not understand how material from one class connects to another. They also have difficulty communicating what they have learned to potential employers. Many graduates lack both the soft skills such as confidence and hard skills such as software knowledge that employers desire.

Because of this, the marketing curriculum needs adapted in order to make sure students are equipped with the necessary skills they need to be workplace ready. One way to help guarantee students are ready is to create an *entire* marketing curriculum focused on engagement, experiential learning, student reflection and deliverables that highlight student learning. Although many individual marketing professors may incorporate projects into their class, a curriculum-based program would incorporate these projects into all classes, regardless of the professor teaching the class. By focusing on the entire curriculum, content will also no longer be presented in a vacuum but instead course material will be integrated between all of the marketing classes that students take in the program. Moreover, the content of one class is no longer presented in a vacuum, but rather course material is integrated between the various marketing classes that students might take. This will help students bridge the gap between individual courses so that they understand the big picture.

In order to create an entire marketing curriculum focused on experiential learning, three distinct steps are involved. These steps are as follows: Step 1: Experiential Learning Project Development; Step 2: Self-Reflection; and Step 3: ePortfolio Creation. In Step 1, the goal is to foster students' creative, critical thinking, communication, and collaborative skills that students may face in real-world scenarios. Some examples of projects include creating a promotional plan for a real-world company, using role plays for real companies so students learn the steps of a sales call, and incorporating digital credentials such as Google Analytics Certification or Hootsuite Certification. In Step 2, students will not be just retelling their experiences but instead will focus on connecting these experiences within and across marketing courses. Students will also use the knowledge gained and showcase how it can be applied to new

situations. In Step 3, students will be creating a dynamic online portfolio to showcase the experiences they obtained both inside and outside the classroom.

There can be some obstacles with the implementation of this type of program. For example, this program requires support from administration at all levels due to the smaller class sizes needed. Additionally, this type of program may require some software and training resources. However, by adopting this type of curriculum, marketing departments will help build student confidence, allow students to go outside of their comfort zone, and provide them with real world experiences to make them ready for their first career job.

Keywords: Engage, Experiential Learning, ePortfolio, Marketing Curriculum, Self-Reflection

Relevance to Marketing Educators, Researchers and Practitioners: Marketing departments are increasingly looking for ways to help students be more prepared for the workforce, especially since employers perceive students as being ill-prepared. One innovative way to overcome this dilemma is to create an entire marketing curriculum geared towards experiential, project-based learning. This curriculum would incorporate self-reflection and the usage of ePortfolios as well as these experiential projects in order to ensure that students can connect their experiences across marketing courses.

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