INTEGRATING THE MARKETING CURRICULUM
USING COLLABORATIVE LEARNING

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to illustrate how two marketing classes were integrated using collaborative learning. This paper discusses how Management Information Science (Computerized Business Applications) was integrated into a New Product and a Promotional Strategy class. The assignment for the two classes consisted in developing a computerized data base, written in ACCESS, containing 5000 sales entries for a sporting goods manufacturer during a calendar year.

INTRODUCTION

The term collaborative learning, also referred to as cooperative learning, has been present in education circles for many years. (Deutsch, 1968; and Mason, 1972). Whether referred to as collaborative, or cooperative, it is the main pedagogical process detailed in this paper. Numerous references document the characteristics and advantages in the use of cooperative and collaborative learning. (Bruffee 1995; Cohen 1985; Cooper 1990; Davidson 1992; and Schmuck 1988.) One of the better distinctions between cooperative and collaborative learning was found on the Internet: "Collaboration is a philosophy of interaction and personal lifestyle; cooperative is a structure of interaction designed to facilitate the accomplishment of an end product or goal through people working together in groups." (Panitz, 1997.) Research in the area of cooperative and collaborative learning has been conducted by several business researchers. (Markulis and Strang, 1997; Efraty and Stratton, 1997; Howard, Markulis, Malik, Strang, 1997; and Vik and Venable, 1996.)

Through time, the nature of university teaching has evolved. What was once considered innovative, such as the use of experiential exercises, is now considered the standard in teaching. (Thank you, ABSEL.) Today, the new pedagogy driving higher education has been integration, even at the undergraduate level. Recently, the School of Business at Indiana State University, has taken six specialized functional courses in the core curriculum and integrated these concepts into three block courses.

Several factors emerge as the motivating force in the move toward integration: Innovative faculty, deans, employees, students, advisory boards, and of course, the AACSB.

Business schools and colleges wishing to obtain accreditation and reaffirmation follow the rules and guidelines set forth by the newly named AACSB - the International Association for Management Education (American Assembly of Collegiate Schools of Business, 1997). To gain insights into the process, many Business schools send faculty to workshops and seminars at the "Continuous Improvement Symposium," sponsored by AACSBIAMIE. One of the recurring symposium themes relates to the Integration of the Business curriculum.
(http://www.AAC5B.edu/97cisprog.html)

Additional evidence for the need to integrate the business curriculum comes from the bible of the AACSB, "The Standards for Accreditation." Although only implicitly mentioned for the undergraduate curriculum, the standards for the MBA curriculum state, "The curriculum should integrate the core areas and apply cross-functional approaches to organizational issues." (American Assembly of Collegiate Schools of Business, 1995.) This type of integration has been implemented at the University of Denver where they have replaced twenty freestanding discipline-focused courses into six "functionally integrated mega-courses." (Howard, 1997).

Parenthetically, don't be misled. I hardly qualify as your basic avid rulefollower. *"Au contraire,* "when implementing innovations into my classroom activities, it is because I envision a resulting learning advantage in the use of the new pedagogy.

METHODOLOGY

Before discussing the methodology, let me preface the discussion with a few comments. First, I have been looking for some time to purchase, or obtain an inexpensive, realistic, and fin data base for use in my undergraduate and M.B.A. classes. I haven't had much success. Secondly, our School of Business curriculum will be implementing a more integrated approach starting in 1998. Therefore, I decided to develop a multipurpose data base capable of being easily accessed and used for a variety of purposes. Students would filter and query the data base to develop marketing strategies such as: targeting, new product introductions, promotional mix selection and marketing management decisions. With these factors in mind, it was decided to develop a data base with the collaborative help of my students.

To meet the stated purpose of this paper the following methodology was formulated.

In each class, students selected team members. Groups ranged in size from two to four team members, with three being considered ideal. This totaled 17 groups for the two classes.

Both classes were given the assignment to develop a hypothetical computerized customer data base using Microsoft's Access. The data base would contain 5000 sales entries for 1998, from January 1 to December 3 ₁d• The advantages and thsadvantages of using the team approach were stressed to the students, as well as the evaluation procedure. This material was reiterated during the semester. Additionally, students were referred, when needing assistance, to their textbooks and a very thorough marketing plan manual (Hieberg and Cooper, 1997). The two classes began by working independently. That is, the New Product class would first determine

the types of product lines a hypothetical sporting goods manufacturer would market. Then, the Promotion class determined the types of(a) consumers and (b) the business to business customers purchasing the product. The class segmented the market and targeted potential buyers of the product.

The process continued. The product class determined the stock keeping units (SKU) and prices, while the Promotional class conducted research, using secondary data and the Internet, on the characteristics of the target market. The product class then calculated potential demand and established marketing objectives. With the product objectives finished the Promotion class determined communication objectives, using time, target, and task, the Promotional Objectives Pyramid.

This process continued for the remainder of the demographic and psychographic variables. Naturally, conflicts and differences of opinion developed between the two classes. In the end, the promotional class became responsible for the promotional mix variables: radio, magazine and television. The product class maintained control of the total sales revenue, quantity purchased, cost of goods sold and the price of the product. The remaining variables were compromised between the two classes.

Once the rough ranges of the variables were estimated, the classes progressed into the next more difficult stage, the calculation of the exact frequency distributions for each variable. What a puzzle it became. Total amounts were determined for the entire data base For instance, what would be the percentage of consumer lines out of the 5000, and what would be the percentage of business to business customers. Furthermore, what would be the amount of sales revenue for each type of customer. Other questions emerged: Who was buying what SKU's; Was there a relationship between company size and purchasing amounts?; and, What did VALS2 have to do with anything?

With all the problems, giant sheets of colored paper with frequency distributions adorned every desk until each problem was resolved.

The next step seemed easy, have the students input their data sheets onto floppy disks. To ease part of the computer anxiety for the student, I initialized/opened a data base folder for each student team. I saved each file on a floppy disk and then labeled the outside of the disk with the appropriate student names, their SKU's, the key data base indicator, and the range of line numbers that each student team was responsible for when entering data.

Limitations

One of the main problems that surfaced in this student exercise came as a surprise to me, the floppy disk dilemma. Although our students in the School of Business have been well schooled in several computer skill classes, a phantom 3 **1/i..** disk eating monster reared its ugly head. Yes, it's true, the weak link for the entire project was the floppy disk.

Knowing I had 50 students, 25 enrolled in each class, I calculated someone might accidentally lose their disk. Very carefully, on each disk, I printed, "if found please return this important disk to Professor Chiesl in Room 917. Thanks for your help."

Listed below are several of the more interesting occurrences:

• Only two hours after I handed out the disks in class, a room monitor from our computer lab returned to me a lost disk.

• By the end of the first week, 5 more computer disks were returned to me by the monitors.

• One disk was ruined by a student's dog. The student showed me the disk with puppy bite marks.

• The shortstop of our University's baseball team closed a car door on his disk.

• A week later, the same good-hands shortstop fumbled his disk into an icy slush while walking to class.

• One girl mistakenly entered her data into her sorority sister's disk.

• Then her sorority sister inadvertently returned the favor and entered data on the first disk.

Well, the last five weeks of the semester painstakingly passed and everyone eventually handed in a clean copy of their data disk.

Results - the database

Students determined the variables to be included and the structure of the database. Sometimes their responses were whimsical, like the *$5,000* see-through diving board. But for the most part, the data they generated were based upon sound marketing principles.

Most of the data presented in the table below represent grouped data classified into categories which allowed for easy data input onto the floppy disks.

Table 1 presents the variables included in the database. Students in the two classes selected these variables after considerable heated discussions. Four lines of input are used to illustrate the different values of the variables.

TABLE 1
DATABASE

LINE	CUST ID	SKU	QUANT	PRICE	CGS	DATE
1	1414	590	900	$29.95	$20.05	JAN 4, 98
2	9279	714	1	$5000.00	$2,000.00	JAN 5, 98
3	1735	110	20	$100.00	$66.00	JAN 6, 98
4	4	333	19	$35.00	$22.00	JAN 7, 98

LINE	B 2 B	SIC	CS SIZE	ZIP	VALS2
1	1	6061	2	20070	0
2	0	0	0	47803	8
3	1	2731	5	10036	0
4	0	0	0	60004	3

LINE	GENDER	AGE	ED	Y	FAMILY
1	0	0	16	0	0
2	1	53	22	8	4
3	0	0	16	0	0
4	2	25	11	4	1

LINE	POL	RAD 1	RAD 2	RAD 3	MAG 1
1	4	7	1	2	121
2	14	9	15	14	56
3	3	14	12	5	10
4	7	2	1	7	56

LINE	MAG 2	MAG 3	MAG 4	MAG 5	TV 1	TV 2	TV 3
1	14	7	37	43	5	25	29
2	59	78	79	106	10	8	2
3	19	225	226	227	9	31	44
4	78	7	12	121	14	1	19

For line #1, in the database, the customer's ID equals 1414. The SKU, stock keeping unit, *5* indicates a baseball related item, the "90" portion designates the product. The Quantity, Price, Cost of Goods Sold and the Date are self explanatory. B2B denotes the Business to Business market: 1=yes; 2=no. The SIC stands for Standard Industrial Classification, while CSIZE groups the companies into ten classifications, 1 being the smallest, 10 the largest. VALS2 stands for Values and Lifestyles Segmentation. Students were suggested to read more on VALS2 from marketing texts. (Kotler, 1997; and Belch, 1997.)

The variable, education, equaled by years attended school. Income, **"Y,"** was grouped into categories. For the B2B market, family did not matter. Students actually wanted political affiliation to be included from liberal, a 14, to conservative, a one value.

The remaining values consisted of the elements in the promotional mix: radio, magazines, and television. Students determined, for example, a customer's favorite radio format, favorite magazine and television format. I did have to influence the classes, slightly, so that the X-Files was not every customer's favorite television program. I also reminded them about business and professional magazines.

Peer Evaluation

Many of my colleagues have inquired into the nature of the grading process for group projects. I believe the entire collaborative/cooperative learning experience depends upon the student peer evaluation by their group members. Exhibit 1 presents the form used. Students are informed in advance, from the first day of class, the significance of this evaluation. It counts 100% toward their grade of the term project. Not 10%, not 30%, not *50%,* but 100 percent. Yes, if a group receives an "A" for their project, a group member could potentially receive a zero for their lack of effort. Students for the last 15 years have not had a problem with this method. They like it. It's fair. And most importantly the Professor has fewer group problems since this procedure tends to reduce the amount and level of student non performance.

EXHIBIT 1
PEER REVIEW FORM

	Your Name:	Group Member:	Group Member:	Group Member:
Research Divide up 10 pts.				
Leadership Divide up 10 pts.				
Amount of work Divide up 20 pts.				
Communication Skills Divide up 20 pts.				
Quality of ideas: Divide up 20 pts.				
Reliability Divide up 20 pts.				
Totals				

Written comments on back.

CONCLUSION

This paper has attempted to explore a collaborative learning exercise developed for two distinct classes in a marketing curriculum. Without a doubt, things could have progressed somewhat better for both professor and students. However, this was the first attempt at developing a large, complex data base. Perhaps we were too ambitious and should have narrowed the scope of the project. Nonetheless, the class, including me, learned a great deal concerning the construction of the data base. For one thing,

don't use floppy disks, use individual student network accounts.

In conclusion, more and more business schools will be integrating their undergraduate and graduate curriculums. To me this is a given. The future destination has been clearly defined. Business schools need to map their individual journey. How will each business school respond to the integration challenge? This paper has suggested one pedagogy. Each business school must find their own unique formula. By attending two AACSB's Continuous Improvement Symposiums, I have insightfully learned at least one thing. The mission statement, the current and past students, the community, employers, and advisory boards, in concert, shape a business school 's curriculum. Professors acting alone will not.

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