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EXPERIENTIAL APPROACH TO ENTREPRENEURSHIP

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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the importance of entrepreneurship and presents a teaching procedure utilized in a School of Business New Product course. The paper is intended to offer pedagogical insights for School of Business faculty. The procedure encompasses experiential and case-method teaching techniques. The four stages of this procedure are: 1) product ideation, 2) environment, 3) case analysis and 4) product development.

INTRODUCTION

Entrepreneurship is one of the hottest topics in today's literature. The reasons for this are as near as your imported Japanese VCR and television. Seriously, the United States is experiencing record trade deficits. Approximately 25,000 U.S. jobs are lost for every billion dollars of trade deficit. Because of these alarming figures, many types of government agencies are promoting entrepreneurship.

The purpose of this paper is to disseminate information on the procedure utilized in the teaching of entrepreneurship in a senior level School of Business marketing class. The New Product class contains 20-30 students and is broken down into groups of 3-4 students. A required written project consists of a thirty page double space typed paper with thirty references worth 30% of the student's final grad. The importance of this paper, as noted earlier, is that business schools, industry leaders and the government system realize the growing emergence of entrepreneurship and its necessary promotion and development.

THE PROCEDURE

The actual entrepreneurship procedure is composed of many types of interactive and related components rooted in experiential learning: the illustrative exercise, the practice-feedback exercise, and the vicarious learning exercise. Throughout the semester students are exposed to these three categories of experiential exercises. Therefore, the objective of the course, is to place the students in a continuing hands on entrepreneurial experience.

ENTREPRENEURSHIP TEACHING PROCEDURE: THE FOUR STAGES

- I. Product Ideation
 - A. Brainstorming
 - B. Forced Relationships
 - C. Scenario Writing
 - D. Creativity
- II. Situational Factors Environment
 - A. Ten Uncontrollable Factors

III. Case Analysis

- A. Demand
- B. Financial
- C. Marketing

IV. Product Development

- A. P.C. Paint Program
- B. Micro-Soft's Quick Basic
- C. CAD Program
- D. Video Tape
- E. Prototype
- F. A Scaled Drawing

Stage I: Product Ideation

A brainstorming session is scheduled and students give as many solutions or new product ideas as possible. New product ideas are not evaluated or criticized. Piggy backing of ideas is encouraged. During the brainstorming session, students invariably select service oriented new business ventures, especially restaurants. After a feedback session, the goal of the project is re-defined to include only a product to be manufactured inside the State of Indiana.

Stage II: Situational Analysis

In this phase students are made aware of the importance of monitoring the potential business's environment. The ten uncontrollable or environmental factors for analysis are: 1) competition, 2) demand, 3) economy, 4) the physical environment of location, geographics, climate and pollution, 5) goals and history of the organization, 6) institutions, such as financial, educational, distributors and government, 7) international, 8) political and legal, 9) social and cultural, and 10) technology.

Stage III: Case Analysis

This entire section utilizes a regular written case-method procedure.

Stage IV: Project Development

To be more realistic, students in this final stage are to design a work-up of their proposed new product.

CONCLUSION

Although there currently is no conclusive data, there is strong evidence supporting the effectiveness of the entrepreneurship learning experience discussed in this paper. The first evidence is the observation of the student's eagerness in their participation during the entire semester long project. The second is obtained from matriculated students who have written, phoned or personally shared their own experiences during the semester. The one common comment gleaned, "Teaching in the types of things I need to know for the rest of my life." The third evidence is from my peers who have inquired as to the innovative methodology utilized during the class.