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ABSTRACT

According to the United States Department of Labor, sales and related occupations are expected to grow by 1.5 million jobs by 2014. Related research indicates that marketing majors who have completed multiple sales courses as part of their program of study have higher placement rates and starting salaries than students completing only the basic sales course or having taken no sales courses (Weilbaker

and Williams 2005). This article describes a sales program at one of Georgia's large public universities. In addition to describing a sales program, this article provides a foundation for universities to build an integrated sales program.

While there is compelling evidence for offering sales courses to students who are interested in careers in sales, many universities fail to provide students with enough sales courses, and some even fail to offer a single course to distinguish their students on the job market. Considering the failure of many universities to offer a sufficient number of sales courses, the marketing department at a public university in Georgia has identified a combination of three courses that create a foundation to effectively prepare students for successful careers in sales.

The purpose of this article is to discuss the three courses that are used at this university to effectively prepare students for careers in sales. To accomplish this, provided first is a brief background of the following three courses: 1) The Art of Selling and Personal Dynamics, 2) Sales Management, and 3) Business-to-Business Marketing. This is followed by a discussion of experiential learning provided along with a section about using experiential learning to integrate the three courses. This is followed by a discussion about the rewards students obtain from the integration of the courses. The article concludes with a section about how to design and advance a sales curriculum along with a brief summary of the article.

COURSE OVERVIEWS

The Art of Selling and Personal Dynamics

The central purpose of this course is to acquaint the student with the theoretical, analytical, and practical framework in which personal selling occurs. The course concentrates on structured experiences using the experiential learning model, sales presentations, lectures, and student participation. The goals of the class include the students practicing selling with several sales presentations, learning more about win-win negotiating strategies, improving self-awareness and understanding personal dynamics better, and enhancing genuine self-confidence. Students are strongly encouraged to participate fully, take personal responsibility for their learning, practice rigorous honesty, and focus on skills that will be useful outside of the classroom. Some of the useful skills that are explored experientially are direct communication skills; learning more about your real self; how to use personal power more effectively; techniques for giving and receiving feedback (doing performance reviews with happy outcomes); modeling leadership by example; and clarifying your life's mission. One of the most effective teaching tools about integrity is the agreement that is signed by each student that requires their attendance at every class and to be on time. Underlying each structured experience are the goals of enhancing self-awareness and improving self-confidence.

Business-to-Business Marketing

The focus of the Business-to-Business Marketing course is to acquaint the student with concepts pertaining to the industrial buying and selling process from practical, analytical and theoretical perspectives. The students are introduced to key concepts and terms within the text and class presentations. Students engage in a simulation called SimCRM (Nentl and Miller 2003a) which stresses the importance of customer relationship management in the success or failure of an organization. Students are also expected to act as a buyer and seller of industrial products and services. The primary purpose of this course is to: 1) advance the students understanding of sales from the perspective of the buying firm and 2) expand students understanding of the importance of relationship management.

Sales Management

Sales management is a course designed to teach prospective managers the skills of salesperson management. Topics are presented from theoretical, analytical, and practical perspectives. Topics include motivating, controlling, and evaluating salespersons for results. Trends and recent developments in sales management are also covered. Students engage in a simulation called SimSales Management (Nentl and Miller 2003b) which stresses the role of the sales manager within a selling organization. Students are expected to role play as a buyer, salesperson, and sales manager in which products and services from both consumer and industrial markets are used. The primary purpose of this course is to: 1) expand the students understanding of the process of managing the sales force, 2) become more confident in evaluating and giving feedback to others, and 3) increase their level of understanding about themselves and how to manage others based on the understanding of oneself.

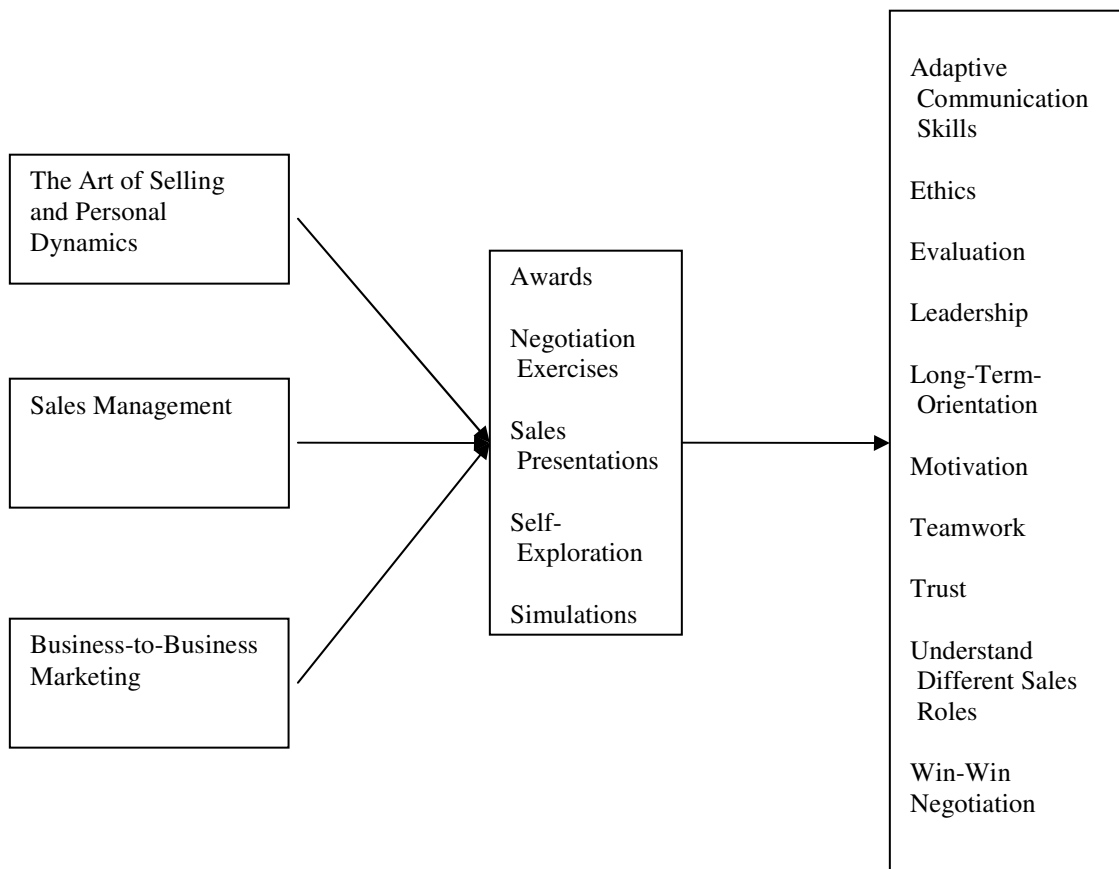
EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

Experiential learning is an orientation toward teaching and learning that engages students with direct experiences and a period of guided reflection (Frontczak 1998). A key foundation of experiential learning is the active involvement in higher-order thinking (Hunt and Laverie 2004). A second foundation is the actual experience plus a period of reflection on that experience. The experiential learning model begins with the learner participating in a structured experience in class that has specific learning goals. After the experience is completed, it is reviewed to determine any new knowledge and skills. Once the experience is reviewed, students discuss and report how the new knowledge and skills can be applied in a sales setting and in their own life.

Several articles have been published discussing the importance and application of experiential learning within sales courses. For example: Lollar and Leigh (1995) discuss screening and selection for a sales job; Macintosh (1995) discusses

negotiation; Tanner and Castleberry (1995) discuss partnering; and Hunt and Laverie (2004) discuss ethics. The three courses offered at this university include exposing students to experiential learning with regard to negotiation, self-exploration, sales presentations, and running day-to-day sales operations using simulated environments. (See Table One below)

Table One: Courses, Tools, and Ten Desired Outcomes



Negotiation Exercises

Both the Art of Selling and Personal Dynamics and Business-to-Business Marketing courses emphasize the importance of negotiation using win-win tactics. Students are exposed to situations where short-term personal sacrifices contribute to the establishment of strong long-term relationships. Futrell (2005) describes this as putting the needs of his customers before the quick sale. Students negotiate and come to agreements where the needs of both buyer and seller are met and a win-win situation is the result. For the Business-to-Business Marketing course, these exercises include negotiations in terms of prices, quantities, and contractual terms of sales and agreements between business partners. Students are

rewarded when a compromise is met and agreements that are beneficial to both the buyer and seller are reached.

Negotiation exercises in the Art of Selling and Personal Dynamics course teach a valuable lesson of trust. Group negotiations in this course are designed to set the stage for unethical behavior and betrayal in order to achieve monetary reward. Students learn the valuable lesson of how personal and professional relationships are based on trust and the consequences of unethical behavior are emphasized. Students are encouraged to discuss their feelings of betrayal, anger, and distrust and to explore how these real feelings affects relationships at the business and personal levels.

Self-Exploration

Self-exploration exercises such as personality instruments strive to give the student a strong foundation of self-understanding in order to encourage critical thinking and effective relations with others. Individual personality evaluations are conducted in the Art of Selling and Personal Dynamics and Sales Management courses. These personality descriptions give students the opportunity to discover their personality type and the personalities of others. Students discover that all personality styles have strengths and weaknesses. Students gain a better understanding of their basic emotional motivations and how to effectively manage relationships with people of various personality types. The importances of adapting their approach at all stages of the sales presentation and during the relationship management process are emphasized.

The Art of Selling and Personal Dynamics course emphasizes self-exploration which encourages students to think critically about themselves, their peers, and ethical concerns both personally and professionally. Exercises in this course, such as the personality inventory, seek to identify personal strengths and weaknesses of different personality styles, and try to demonstrate that weaknesses can be managed. Other structured experiences support trust building, genuinely serving others, and learning to like yourself more. One of the keys in selling is building effective long-term relationships in the professional setting. The essence of the course is establishing a strong self-understanding and self-respect in order to extend that respect to others. Exercises encourage abandoning preconceptions about ourselves and others in order to think critically and to successfully interact with others. A critical development is to face one's fears honestly and to accept oneself in spite of one's fears. Another important development is the increasing of self-confidence that is fostered by taking risks, open self-disclosure, and getting clear about one's life mission and goals.

The Sales Management course requires that students complete a shortened version of the Myers-Briggs personality test (e.g. <http://www.humanmetrics.com/cgi-win/JTypes1.htm>). This method evaluates personality based on four criteria: Extraversion-Introversion, Sensing-Intuition,

Thinking-Feeling, and Judging-Perceiving. Students complete a questionnaire and are given an analysis of their personality type. This analysis includes information about how the student may see themselves and others, how to react to certain situations, and provides information on career choices. Students are also required to identify the instructor's personality style. The task of identifying the instructor's personality traits is often frustrating for some students and the fear of guessing the instructor's style wrongly is apparent. This forces students to think more deeply about personality types. Most of the time students retake the test as if they were the instructor and are able to assess the personality type fairly close.

Sales Presentations

Sales presentations encourage confidence as students become more comfortable speaking publicly and performing in stressful sales situations. In all three courses, the students are evaluated not only by the professor but also by their peers. A multi-faceted approach is employed as students take on the roles of salesperson, buyer, and sales manager, thereby giving the student a well-rounded selling experience. The salesperson is responsible for directing the conversation, handling the objections, and closing the sale. The buyer must present objections and negotiate effectively. The sales manager's role is to evaluate the salesperson's overall presentation in terms of organization and effectiveness. Students are evaluated in their performance of each of the three roles and an award is presented to the best performance in the buyer and salesperson roles.

The Art of Selling and Personal Dynamics course builds the foundation for effective sales presentations. This course emphasizes how to adapt to buyers' personality styles, how to effectively handle buying objections, and how to appropriately match the sales presentation method with the selling situation and the needs of the buyer. The student is introduced to the stages of the sales presentation and how to effectively move through each phase beginning with prospecting and ending with the follow-up and service.. Students take on the role of salesperson in this course and conduct a sales presentation to the class. An award for the best sales presentation is given based upon students' scores of the presentations from their peers and the professor.

The Sales Management course expands the sales presentation to include the roles of the sales manager and the buyer. This course gives the students more extensive training in constructive feedback as the sales presentations are evaluated by the class using note cards in an effort to generate both positive and changeable behavior feedback. This gives the students a unique opportunity to get realistic uncensored feedback from their peers. Each student takes on the role of salesperson, buyer, and sales manager in three different sales presentations. Business-to-consumer products, business-to-business products, and business-to-business services are the three buying situations observed. Students are evaluated in their performance of each of the three roles and an award is presented to the best performance in the buyer and salesperson roles.

The Business-to-Business Marketing course focuses on buying skills and emphasizes the importance of win-win negotiations. Students are encouraged to develop an atmosphere of good-will and trust, display professionalism, make use of visual aids, exhibit knowledge of the company, product and competitors, and explain features that promote benefits and effectively close the sale. The sales presentation again includes the three roles of salesperson, buyer, and sales manager within the business-to-business sales presentation. As in the Sales Management course, each student performs in each of the three roles and is evaluated by their classmates. Best presentation awards are presented for the best buyer and best salesperson as voted by the classmates. This course also utilizes the note card critiques by the classmates.

Simulations

The simulated business exercises are computer simulation games in which the students make business decisions and evaluate the financial and strategic impacts of those decisions for their business. In the Sales Management course, students have the opportunity to manage sales personnel using the SimSales Management program. The areas of salesperson motivation, compensation, evaluation, and territory and time management are explored. Budget allocations issues are also explored. Students strive to meet financial goals with regard to increases in sales, contribution income, and lifetime value of their accounts. Students are evaluated on how their decisions ultimately impact the stock price of their company both in the short and long-term.

The Business-to-Business simulation focuses on customer relationship management and utilizing databases to make strategic decisions regarding customer relations. Students evaluate and organize databases and explore the concepts of customer lifetime value and contribution income using the SimCRM program. Customers are segmented based on RFM scores, lifetime value, and contribution income. Then students make decisions based on their interpretations of customer value to the firm. Students are taken through a series of decisions involving database management, identification of best customers using various criterion and customer acquisition, retention, and termination methods.

REWARDS

Considering the number of college graduates that will enter into a sales position in their careers, students completing these courses are expected to have an advantage over others that have not obtained the useful skills provided from these courses. The function of these courses is to provide students with intrinsic benefits such as: having more confidence and experience in public speaking,

obtaining better skills with regard to negotiations, and developing the student's ability to be more flexible when making presentations to small and large groups. Students are also expected to gain a strong understanding and foundation with regard to the impact that buying and selling has on the overall organization. Further, students are expected to be able to identify and effectively communicate with others within the organization and people outside of the organization.

Students are expected to benefit from the amount of teamwork engaged in during these courses. Students learn to build trust and develop confidence in others, a skill in which they will later apply to relationships with co-workers. Being a team player is a necessity in all three roles of sales manager, salesperson, and buyer. Sales managers gain experience recognizing and organizing the talents of the team to most efficiently and effectively accomplish the goals of the organization. Salespeople learn the value of working as a team and practice listening, brainstorming, and compromise. Teamwork is important in the role of buyer, as well as buying centers which replace traditional individual decision makers. The synergy created by teamwork is an important lesson that students learn which can be taken into their selling careers.

The program also offers extrinsic rewards in the form of recognition. Students completing the courses are recognized with a certification from the department. Many students use this certification status to help obtain employment after graduation. Additional awards presented for best presentations in the sales classes are used to motivate students and encourage them to seek jobs in the sales field. Recognition is also given for the student teams winning the simulations.

BUILDING AN INTEGRATED SALES PROGRAM

When building an integrated sales program, many factors should be considered. Three of the most important factors identified by this department include: resources and awards, communication, and student feedback and tracking. While many programs will face limitations, focusing specifically on these three areas and balancing the limitations and advantages will help stimulate a successful sales program.

Resources and Awards

When considering building an integrated sales program, a department needs to consider its resources and what courses are being offered to expose students to the sales process. For example, many universities offer only one sales course. If this is the case, its faculty should consider allowing students to take courses in other departments. A psychology course that allows students to better understand themselves and others would help increase students' self knowledge and understanding of others. A course in sociology will allow students to better understand group dynamics. A course in public speaking should also be

encouraged to help students gain self-confidence in front of large groups. Students could also enroll in leadership courses offered in the management department. Independent studies and internships could be used to help build a sales program. In addition, courses in small group communication, interpersonal communication, and persuasion could be encouraged.

For universities offering more than one sales course, the integration of the courses is critical. In these cases, make sure students are awarded for completing more than one course. The simplest form of award could be a "Completion Award." The award serves to encourage students to take multiple courses and gives them something to put on their resume to differentiate themselves from applicants without sales training. As the number of courses offered increase, the department could use the completion of three courses as the requirement for a sales certificate that is recorded on the student's transcript. As the number of courses completed increases and the funding for the program increases, minors and majors in sales could be offered.

Communication

When developing an integrated sales program, communication is critical. The department needs to stress the importance of careers in sales to other departments. For example, students in management with a sales background will have an increased chance for a sales management position. Students in computer science and/or engineering with a sales background are in high demand by firms that sell highly technical products and services. Students in biology with a sales background have a higher chance of obtaining jobs in pharmaceutical sales than ones without a sales background.

Communication needs to be established with companies in the local area. When establishing this communication, selling internships with these firms should be stressed. If students can obtain course credit from a selling firm, they have a higher chance of continuing with them once they graduate. Even if students do not obtain a job from the internship, they will have received valuable training from the firm that could be used on their resume. Communication with local companies could be used to establish a sales job fair to increase student employment rates. Communication with these companies can also be used to bring the companies' sales personnel into the classrooms for class discussions that will provide valuable information to the students.

Communication can also be established with academic advisement units to help students select relevant foundation classes in their initial years of study. For example, when students have a list of courses that they can choose from in the core, pre-major advisers should know which classes are best for the student to take if he/she wants to enter into a sales career. Further, learning groups in which students are grouped together can be established. If these learning groups are formed early enough, students will greatly benefit. Hence, the establishment of

strong communication with academic advisers is important.

Lastly, and maybe most important, a strong commitment to communication and coordination should occur within the department. Faculty ability and willingness to teach courses within the program should be discussed. For example, faculty may be highly qualified to teach a course in retail selling but may not be qualified to teach a course in business-to-business selling or team selling. Further, issues of textbook selection will need to be addressed if multiple faculty and/or doctoral students are teaching the same course.

Student Feedback and Tracking

One critical step in developing an integrated sales program is obtaining student feedback. Once students complete the program and/or course, it is helpful to find out what they liked and disliked. Often times this feedback from the students will lead to improvements in the program and courses in the future. It is also important to track students that have completed the program. For example, once the students have been out of college for five or six years, invite several of the successful students back to talk with one of the classes. If possible, you may be able to setup a mentor program with former sales students and current students. If this can be accomplished, students will start building a strong business network. Further, students that have completed or are almost complete with the sales training can be used to aid in the evaluation of student sales presentations. This can be partially accomplished by giving students credit for 1 or 2 hours of class work as a teaching aid. Surveying former students of the sales program will allow for current students to see how much compensation they might receive starting and how much they might receive once they have established themselves in the sales field. These surveys could also be used to find ways to improve the program, build a strong alumni network, and increase recognition of the program by asking questions pertaining to compensation, past employment, current employment, training skills used on the job, etc.

SUMMARY

This article describes a sales program offered at a public university in Georgia and the benefits students receive from the completion of the program. Students completing the integrated sales program have a distinct advantage over students completing the basic marketing and business curriculum. Not only do students enjoy the benefits of intrinsic rewards such as increased confidence, they are recognized with certification and awards as well. Graduates that have completed the sales program can also expect increased job placement possibilities and higher starting salaries in the roles of sales manager, buyer, and salesperson. The article also includes a discussion on several ways in which a university can develop a sales program and ways in which existing programs can be expanded to increase student benefits. While outlining a truly ideal sales program is impossible

due to differing sources of funding, faculty involvement, and students in the program, there is a foundation that all sales programs should have. It is shown below in Table Two:

Table Two: Three Components of a Truly Ideal Sales Program

Component	Logic	Benefits
Courses beyond the introduction to personal selling course	Personal selling is just a small component of selling and sales management	Students will be exposed to the bigger picture of sales. Students will learn that selling and sales management is not just making a sales call. Given the additional exposure to courses, students will be able to better identify areas of selling and sales management that they would like a career in.
Recognition for completing the sales program	Students will want to have proof that they completed the training.	Students with some form of sales training should be distinguished from other students without the training. With recognition, these students can stand out from others when applying for positions in sales. The recognition can be as simple as a "sales certificate" or as advanced as actual majors in selling and sales management.
Strong communication with stakeholders	Letting others know about the program will create exposure and willingness to help	<p>Communication with other department can be used to create additional courses in the program of study. These courses will give students a broader level of exposure.</p> <p>Communication with the community will allow for increased donations in the program, the community will be a possible source of employment for students completing the training, and members of the community can be recruited to aid in the program.</p> <p>Communication with former students will allow for a source of funding through donations, a possible place for outside feedback for the program, and a great way to build a network.</p>

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Note: The title graphic was designed by Carole E. Scott

