



CREATIVITY IN MARKETING: A NEW CLASS

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This paper represents a qualitative assessment of a new marketing course designed to meet the learning objectives of the business school and marketing department, provide learning experiences that further the mission of the university and most importantly, provide necessary skills/experiences to meet the needs of marketing departments in the business sector.

This paper is a qualitative assessment of a marketing course taught 3 times over 3 different semesters. Data was collected from the end of year, university-wide, student evaluations; student journals which were maintained weekly and a faculty survey conducted at the end of the year.

The course was developed with a primary theme of “creativity”. The vast majority of business school curriculums emphasize content, the body of knowledge acknowledged by various business disciplines. Over the past 3 decades, business curriculums have started adding specific skills to the curriculum to better meet the needs of the workplace. Some of the skills identified by business schools are very specific: e.g. the mastery of pivot tables in Excel, or certification in Google Analytics. Other general skills that are frequently described are teamwork, leadership, communication, public speaking, and critical thinking. Surprisingly, creative thinking is not emphasized but it has been acknowledged by some businesses and educators as a critical component for success in business careers, especially marketing. This paper described a marketing course that emphasizes developing creative thinking skills, and applying those skills to marketing issues and contributing to the university mission. A qualitative assessment is presented at the end of the paper regarding students’ reactions to the course, as well as the professor’s thoughts.

Keywords: Marketing education, Creativity, Learning objectives.

Introduction

Creativity is the essence of artistic expression, dare one say, the essence of life. Whether one is engaged in sports, social interactions, business endeavors or research, there is both value and pleasure in the application of creativity. It is that ingredient that inspires us to go beyond anything we have already achieved. Although creative expression may not be necessary to sustain life or to perform satisfactorily in school or at work, the exercise of creativity can lead to innovation in problem-solving and product design. Without creativity, we are only capable of maintaining the status quo and producing solutions or products that have already been produced and experienced.

There is another aspect of creativity and that is the emotional impact of the experience. Creativity produces the psychological “aha” or “wow” moment; “never seen that before”, “didn’t see that coming”, “wasn’t expecting that”, “who would have thought that?” Creativity serves as the spice of life, it produces

moments of wonder, excitement, pleasure, and joy. For many people, whether they are engaged in the crafts, the arts, the sciences, engineering, business or sports, creating new solutions to problems provides both an emotional and intellectual charge that yields a wonderful sense of accomplishment and happiness, not only for the producers but also for an audience, coworkers, friends, consumers or witnesses.

Marketers need to continually communicate with the marketplace. Marketers need to continually review the buyer-seller exchange process and the emotional impact on consumers that result from the exchange process and the product experience. Marketers need to continually look at environmental changes that potentially impact the communication and exchange process. Marketers need to respond to new environmental and competitive conditions and need to respond with innovative and creative solutions. As society advances the need for novelty with social value increases. The academic community needs to modify the current marketing curriculum to develop “creative” marketers.

Academics need to develop creativity in the classroom. What model should they use? Is there relevant content and structure for something that by its’ very nature demands no limitations and no structure? Do we augment our current courses with creativity exercises? Do we create a separate course and require it for all majors?

This paper describes a marketing course called “Creativity in Marketing”, taught at a public university in the Northeast of the United States. Some guidelines for the course are discussed. Data was collected for three semesters which describes the students’ reaction and the professor’s observations about the course. Recommendations are made for future curriculum changes.

Literature Review

Creativity reflects something novel and has value (Ramock 2008, 2014; Csikszentmihayi 1996). It is the ability to transcend traditional ideas, rules, patterns, relationships, or the like and to create meaningful new ideas, forms, methods, interpretations, etc., originality, progressiveness or imagination (Definition.com). As it relates to marketing programs, Andrews & Smith (1996) define creativity as the extent to which the actions take to market a product (e.g., change the package) represent a meaningful difference from marketing practices in the product category. Alvino (1990) offers a novel way of seeing or doing things that consist of 4 aspects: fluency (generating multiple ideas), flexibility (shifting perspectives), originality (conceiving of something new) and elaboration (building on others ideas).

For marketers, creativity as an inventive problem-solving process is insufficient; it must also have “value” to the intended audience, and through an exchange, it must yield value to the producer and seller. Harnad (2006) adds a third component, “unexpectedness” or surprise, that is, the contribution should not be obvious. In business, creativity is an important resource throughout the organization. In the text, *Rhetoric and Discourse*, Stephen Colwell (Lall, 2012) asserts that to remain competitive in current society, a society faced with: global competition, deregulated financial institutions, flexible labor markets, privatization, transnational corporations, etc., creativity is essential. It is needed within the R &D team to continually improve existing products and create new products. It is necessary among marketers to deliver improved product benefits to consumers, to more fully address consumer needs and wants in the market place and to deliver superior products and services to meet those needs and wants. Management is faced with the challenge: continually improving the organization, enhancing the value proposition to consumers, delivering substantial, financial return to investors, effectively coordinating the acquisition and allocation of resources to company processes and to creating a superior work environment for employees. It all requires creative thinking.

Business schools have recognized the need for creativity for more than 20 years (Pettigrew & Hommel, 2013; McIntyre, Hite & Richard, 2003). The marketing education literature has recognized that preparing students for marketing careers require more than content knowledge, for example, Lamb Jr, et al (1995) mention: computer usage, creativity, and brainstorming; Kelly and Bridges (2005) enumerate the following skills for marketing students: people skills, teamwork, communication, leadership, negotiation, and creative thinking.

There is both need and justification for developing creativity in the classroom. How one should incorporate creativity into the marketing curriculum is subject to further investigation.

Marketing students will be entering a business environment that requires both content mastery as well as business skills, e.g. computer technology, leadership, teamwork, communication, critical thinking, public speaking, social media development, etc. They will need to be flexible and agile learners, possessing the ability to adjust rapidly to a new environment. Possibly most importantly, they will need the skill to create new solutions to business challenges.

Dweck, (2006) posits that a “growth” mindset (a willingness to consider new ideas), is not genetic but rather something that can be developed. Ramocki (2008, 2014) also concurs with this belief as he describes the efforts of his students in his classes. The college curriculum is filled with courses that transfer knowledge and cultural values to students. This preserves the current body of knowledge. In this paper, it is argued that marketing professionals will need to be more creative and as such will need to practice being more creative before completing their academic studies. Where can marketing students practice their creative skills? In this paper, it is suggested that early on in a marketing student’s college curriculum that they are exposed to concepts and experiences and then, given opportunities to practice applying creative solutions to various marketing issues. It is further proposed that for all subsequent marketing courses, students be given multiple opportunities to stretch their creative minds and practice solving more marketing problems under different conditions.

Fostering Creativity – Good teachers do more than present the accepted content of the discipline. Good teachers are creative in their presentations and classroom activities in which they develop enthusiasm among their students. Really good teachers encourage the development of creativity among their students, they encourage students to step out of their comfort zones and challenge their beliefs and understanding of the world. They encourage students to question the “rules” of the discipline. They encourage students to connect accepted knowledge to new ideas and disciplines. Creative teachers continually change their pedagogical techniques to improve their effectiveness and to enhance student learning. Some of the ingredients discussed for nurturing a creative environment are motivation, inspiration, gestation, and collaboration (Fisher and Williams, 2004 page 14). Students will not create unless they are motivated and are given enough time. Collaboration may benefit students if they have an opportunity to interact with others who have different perspectives. Csikszentmihalyi (1996) discusses the value of curiosity. “the first step toward a more creative life is the cultivation of curiosity.... Fisher and Williams (2004 page 15) state, a good teacher will encourage curiosity, will instill a sense of wonder about the world and the human experience.

Business curriculums at universities appear to be in direct opposition with themselves. On the one hand business schools want to improve their professionalism and competence. They seek impartial acknowledgments, certifications, and accreditations; **requiring: conformity**, structure, procedures, developing curriculums and assessment tools, teaching well- accepted subject matter and assessing performance according to standards generally accepted by the business education community. On the other hand, business schools recognize that business students need to develop critical thinking and creative thinking skills to succeed as professional business employees and to help their organizations grow and evolve, to better meet the needs of the market place. And there are no standards and procedures for developing these skills. It is more difficult to develop a format and assessment tools for this type of learning.

The first challenge can be met by developing a curriculum that follows practices of the “best” schools and employs well-trained professors, possibly modifying the curriculum to capture the unique talents and perspectives of the faculty. The second challenge, preparing students for unknown business challenges via experiential learning activities, requires providing “real world” experiences. For example, the professor may organize and schedule: business simulation games; provide and discuss relevant case studies, create class contests centered on business issues; arrange for relevant internships, acquire consulting tasks or work experiences. In many cases, the students will be challenged to exercise creative thinking skills to develop new and effective solutions when participating in these experiences.

The problem with many experiential learning activities is that they do not require a significant effort in creative thinking. They do require analytical thinking and critical thinking skills, but not necessarily creative thinking skills. Students are typically asked to gather, analyze and synthesize data and then create meaningful managerial recommendations, but they are not necessarily challenged to think beyond what they have already learned or to make connections that they have never experienced. Creative thinking requires a heuristic approach to problem-solving rather than an algorithmic approach (Titus, 2000).

This paper suggests that if marketing students benefit from developing their creative thinking skills, then marketing faculty need to develop specific exercises, activities, and assignments that contribute to the development of creative thinking skills. Additionally, these creative exercises should be applied to a variety of marketing issues so that students experience the value of creativity in marketing across many issues, e.g., developing new products, creating social media campaigns, creating advertising, providing more meaningful services, etc.

Consider the following exercise. Starko (2014) enumerates the 4 Ps of creativity (person, process, product, press (environment)). Consider a marketing manager, looking for ideas for delivering better products and/or services in the market place. Consider the following brainstorming activity for a class exercise, students are asked to respond to the following question using the 4Ps of creativity

Class Challenge - A pizza restaurant wants to differentiate itself from nearby competitors. Using Starko 4 Ps, what can you do? **Personnel** – Change the chef - bring in a chef with different baking experiences. Mexican, Asian, French, Middle Eastern? The wait staff - can you dress them up in a theme? Train them to act or sing in an entertaining and relevant manner. Among your personnel, are there any: athletes, scholars, musicians, artists, actors, health-conscious, vegetarians? What suggestions would they make for pizza and store atmosphere? In other words, encourage suggestions from employees with different perspectives. **Process** - Currently the pizzas are baked in a 450-degree electric oven. Can you change the process? Fry the pizza, boil the dough, use a wood furnace or a ceramic kiln. Toast the pizza or deep fry the dough? Examine the customer experience: decrease the wait time? Add some entertainment value during the wait time? **Product** - Can you change the recipe or change the ingredients: pastry flour, whole wheat flour, gluten free flour or rice flour? – Can you make it with pita bread, English muffins, Jewish Hallah, cracker crust? How about pizza with no sauce, hot, spicy sauce, peanut butter sauce, pineapple sauce,..... salad dressing sauce and/or unusual meat toppings? Can you use bagel dough or giant pretzel dough? Can you make dessert pizza using pastry dough and fruit toppings or cinnamon and sugar? How about pizza dogs – beef hotdogs sautéed in tomato sauce, sprinkled with mozzarella, baked in pizza dough? **Press** – Can you serve pizza via a drive-thru window, use the internet to call in advance and have hot pizza ready when the customer arrives? Can you modify the distribution/delivery service with sexy pizza guys or gals? Sell pizza in a new format, short and thin rectangular strips, allow customers to build pizzas, select toppings as they walk through a topping bar and then re-bake the pizza? Can you change the atmosphere of the restaurant, allow customers to bake pizza at each table?

Where do new ideas come from? One method is to explore different cultures or different subgroups within a population and observe the way they dress, cook, eat, play and work. What do they value? How can it be incorporated into an established business or product? Another suggestion for developing creative thinking in the classroom is to start with some general creative exercises, exercises that require the student to develop a solution for problems, which are not the logical extension of prior experience. After practicing general creative problem solving, challenge students to apply creative problem-solving skills to marketing situations relevant to course content.

There is no definitive set of activities for exercising creativity. One can find expressions of creativity in every walk of life and one can apply creativity in virtually every situation. Creativity exercises must remain as unconstrained as possible, providing maximum freedom of choice.

A Framework for the Course: Creativity in Marketing

Objectives of the course: Produce a curriculum that supports the mission of the university, the school of business, the marketing department, the needs of the local business community and that exercises student creativity.

The university wants to be known as a “Campus of Compassion”. As such students should be engaged in local community service projects. The school of business has specifically recognized the need for students to develop skills in communication, strategic planning, team-work, and critical thinking. The Marketing Department has identified the need for developing creative thinking skills. Local business leaders have mentioned many of the objectives listed above.

The Creativity in Marketing course is designed to give students opportunities to experience the concepts listed above, specifically to: encourage students to think beyond the ordinary; reinforce basic marketing concepts; provide students opportunities to practice their: presentation skills and team-work skills, provide students with opportunities to apply creativity and imagination to addressing specific marketing issues; provide students opportunities to participate in local community service projects.

Listed below are sample activities used in the class.

- Encourage students to think beyond the ordinary

Solve problems: math sequence, mechanical puzzles, logic problems, decorate rocks, stack rocks; interpret stories; create jokes; create stories

- Reinforce Basic Marketing Concepts:

Definition of Marketing, The Marketing Plan, Importance of the Target Audience, SWOT Analysis, Value of Marketing Research - qualitative /quantitative data, exploratory research, new product development – brain-storming, Creative Brief, AIDA model, Constructing Storyboards for ads in different media, Communicating to customers through different channels.

- Develop presentation skills and team-work skills.

Tell stories, tell jokes, present a storyboard, (in teams) present results of a charity event

- Apply creativity and imagination to marketing issues

Create: business slogans, business logos, creative briefs for an advertising campaign, print advertisements, create storyboards for radio and video ads, develop a business plan for a charity event

- Develop technology skill

Advanced Power Pont – continuous looping with music, video editing

- Engage students in community service.

Student teams create marketing plans, generate donations for nonprofits, Organizations - Domestic Violence Shelter and a Food Pantry

The general philosophy of the course is “experiential learning provides deeper learning of a topic or skill”. Successful marketers need to be creative thinkers and need to practice creative thinking to resolve various marketing issues.

In addition to turning in weekly projects, students maintain a weekly diary, record what occurred each week, reflect on the activity and describe how it enhances a marketing issue or how it helps develop a skill useful for marketing.

Observations - The course, Creativity in Marketing, was taught, Fall of 2017, Spring 2018 and Fall of 2018. There were 35 students in the Fall semester, 24 students in the Spring semester and 25 in the

second Fall semester. In 3 semesters only 1 student dropped the course after the first day of school. The class size was reduced to 25 due to the time spent on student presentations.

The Success of the course was evaluated from the student's perspective, several sources of feedback were used, University student evaluations, student diaries and an informal survey conducted by the instructor. Student reflections as they pertain to the learning objectives are presented, each student is separated with a “;” Duplicate comments have been eliminated.

- Encourage students to think beyond the ordinary

Fall 2017 - Puzzle exercises challenged us to think outside the box; creating a vacation for elderly – cool assignment, conceptual maps were very stimulating; thinking how different concepts relate to one another ; story board helped me organize my video; cliff hanging story required the most creativity; 2 lies and a truth required a lot of creativity, making up false stories – a great way to get the imagination going; developing a business plan for a target audience – we thought it was great, the group had great ideas; creating new business opportunities for Uber- good exercise, good way to apply creativity to a business setting; brain storming ideas to make the campus a better place; developing rock sculptures- interesting; meditation exercise – nice way to open my mind; yak horn exercise – shed some light on what it means culturally to people of Tibet; cool to be creative with a product we know nothing about; brain storming ideas; nice to see everyone's perspective; happiness – causes us to reflect, interesting to see all of the different answers; making snacks – nice demonstration on how we all have different preferences; swamp jokes- not so easy – you have to be creative; Too many times, there are students who are held back by their lack of creative understanding. They let a grading rubric or self-doubt limit their ability to try something they normally wouldn't have. Now when I feel stuck on a problem or feel overwhelmed with anxiety and the possibility of failure, I'm going to take a step back and think, “how can I approach this problem differently?” I've noticed self- awareness has been a huge trend lately among people in the creative field

Spring 2018 - The course gave me more ideas; Important to see outside the box; Rocks can be creative; sometimes people lose sight of their creativity; yes, positioning a product for a particular target audience – people who vacation on cruises; yes, by using demographic analysis; this was one class that made me think about creating ads specific to target audiences

Fall 2018 -. By seeing how many things can be made of rock shows that your imagination is the limit; This connects to marketing because you need to think outside the box, the way the puzzles made us think about things differently; interesting to listen to all of the stories (student stories) as they were told in different ways. This shows creativity with marketing because there are always multiple solutions or ways to address a situation depending on the surrounding details; (Puzzle solution) I could not duplicate what I did, which was frustrating. But the task was interesting. It opened my mind and allowed me to look at the task from a different perspective, allowing me to complete it one time; we did a brain teaser to relax our minds and to think more outside the box. we have to be creative and create interest among our target audience; I found the Yak horn exercise fun because it is challenging to make a new product from a raw material that you are not familiar with; It was fun to do the riddles and take a little time to have creative thoughts. I have been trying to see things through an open lens, seeing in different ways than original; Class lectures are more like stories that include life lessons, Whether I was painting rocks, collecting rocks, taking photos of rocks or stacking them, I found joy in every aspect. I realize it was so much more than rocks.

- Class Atmosphere (anonymous assessment)

Fall 2017 - Many students enjoyed the activities, some did not, there were a few comments like: I learned absolutely nothing, I have never taken a more ridiculous course, the power points have nothing to do with marketing; every class I attended I questioned, what on earth is this man trying to teach us; To be honest, I did not learn much from this class, the professor did not contribute to my learning experience

Spring 2018 - The negative comments were greatly diminished in the second semester but there were still 2 angry students. Hardly any aspects of the course contributed to my education; professor doesn't care for his students, at least not all of them; (material) not extremely useful in marketing

Fall 2018 – There were no angry students this semester, students were very positive in their journals and on the anonymous survey. It was really fun and educational. You're a great teacher, friendly, smart, fun and creative; Great class to work on creativity and Professor XXX is amazing, definitely worth taking; I think it was terrific, a lot of creativity was used in the projects; great class; This was one of my favorite courses here, Professor XXX was great; I'm more creative than I was back in September; I enjoyed the course and it made me think more critically and creatively when finding cool ways to promote a product ; I liked most of the projects we were given, and even though I didn't love all of them I do think they were all good learning experiences and will come to play sometime in my life ; The term "lecture" has new meaning ; This [rock star project] made me feel so good that I could brighten someone else's day

- Reinforce basic marketing concepts

Fall 2017 - Yak horn exercise – understand the importance of the target audience; creating a business – team members had lots of ideas, brain-storming – nice to see different perspectives; vacation planning for seniors- paying attention to the needs of others; conceptual map – gave us a view of how marketers identify themes around different business concepts; ted talk videos – made me think about how I approach my life; final project – learned about planning and organizing and how it feels to give back to the community; project – people who like to travel and meet others- got me thinking about people as a whole, working on the community project – I love giving, it makes me feel good about myself, I learned you can't please everyone, brainstorming with a group of people is more valuable than trying it by yourself; opened my mind to project management ; We came up with other ideas for our business since our first idea didn't seem to be a big hit. In marketing you need to be flexible and work with your customer base so if your first idea doesn't work its important to be able to regroup to do a new project or pitch.;

Spring 2018 - While on the surface, it may seem like a simple class, it does provide a deeper understanding of marketing as a whole. That was the great part about this class - you were learning, yet it didn't feel like the traditional class where you take a dozen notes just to repeat it all on an exam that you will forget about in a month;

Fall 2018 - you have to know your target audience, whom to market to; Maslow's hierarchy of needs...when planning to market to a consumer, their needs have to be taken into consideration; We discussed the AIDA model, we can use it when presenting to make sure that our audience is getting the most benefit from the information being presented; We discussed the four P's of marketing. These P's are marketing ingredients that we formulate to deliver appropriate communications and products to consumers; I found the conceptual map interesting because as a visual learner it helped me organize my thoughts and look at the problem from all dimensions; Storyboards were the focus of this week's lesson. I had never heard of storyboards before this week's class; a marketing plan is an outline to follow to succeed and if there is no plan, there is no goal that you will be able to reach.

- Provide students an opportunity to practice their presentation skills and team-work skills

Fall 2017 and Spring 2018 - Brain-storming in class or within teams – great experience and fun; we shared stories – I noticed we all had different hobbies and activities; We came up with some pretty interesting ideas

No one seemed to specifically comment on their feeling about making presentations or working with fellow students in a group

Fall 2018 - I wish I was a bit more convincing but it is something I can work on. By telling these stories, we have to be creative and create interest among our target audience; After seeing other presentations, I feel as though I could have done more than sell a spoon to raise money for this initiative. We are able to

hone down on our presentation skills to get better and better as time progresses; Our group is using our unique resources to help make this can drive a successful one; How to capture and maintain the audience's attention was the focus of this week's lecture; This lesson was important when it came to how we were to go about presenting. While some students stuck to the usual PowerPoint, other student used AIDA to their advantage and presented by either acting out skits, drawing on the board, or setting a scene by telling a story; This idea showed how easily you can capture the audience's attention with a strong opening sound or noise; The scavenger hunt gave me the chance to make some new friends and get to know the people who sit to my left and right. While it was an assignment, it was also the chance to build relationships and allowed for another opportunity to spend time outdoors which, as students, we don't usually get due to demanding schedules

- Apply creativity and imagination to address specific marketing issues

Fall 2017 and Spring 2018 New businesses for Uber – good way to apply creativity to a business problem; Yak horn – shed some light on identifying the needs of the target audience, culturally and geographically different; Developing a vacation plan for seniors- paying attention to their needs; Using conceptual maps to identify consumer needs and wants; Uber ideas were awesome – it would be nice to see some of these implemented; walking around campus and talking to students (qualitative research) – made me think, maybe there is something we could do to solve some big problems; planning the vacation for seniors; presenting different business concepts; writing slogans for cheese was fun

Fall 2018 - There was depth to that response that caused me to stop and rethink the answers that I had given. Responses given had covered at least one of Maslow's needs per every three given by a student. Corporate objectives that included 'upsell, cross-sell, more sell and new sell, and understand audience needs' were discussed. Also, always consider the environment when starting your business, as that environment can help or hurt. Once the obvious was stated, there was room to get creative; Professor XXX described the AIDA process, Attention, Interest, Desire and a Call to Action. This lesson was important when it came to how we were to go about presenting. While some students stuck to the usual PowerPoint, other students used AIDA to their advantage and presented by either acting out skits, drawing on the board, or setting a scene by telling a story; I believe that to create a successful business next to a college campus, you have to be creative, innovative, and original. This was a fun activity because it got us to think creatively as if we had our own business and what we could do to be different. Pitching new ideas in class was a great way to collaborate and discuss what would work, what wouldn't; By researching to see what people like and do not like, we can brainstorm different solutions that can be very effective in separating us from our competition.

- Develop technology skills

Students did not comment on developing technology skills

- Engage students in community service.

Fall 2017 and Spring 2018 Some people did a great job on the food pantry project; Maria's pantry – nice project; a bunch of people do not do enough for the community; creating an event to generate donations for a charity – learned about organizing and how good it feels when you give back to the community; food pantry – I know when we put our heads together we can accomplish something great; we crushed this project – felt good about being able to feed people who are hungry; we collected a pretty good amount of cans – I am sure the food pantry will appreciate it; professor joined the class in raising money for the food pantry – nice to know one of my professors is interested in the class and the assignments

Fall 2018 - We were given spoons to think creatively on selling something that is usually bought for under a dollar. We can shake up our ideas by polishing the spoons to make them look nicer and utilize our improvisational skills to make the recipient of the spoon feel as though they are getting a special deal and a special product. We need to make our product stand out, I informed the class that I received \$10 for the spoon and approached the sale to represent a symbol as opposed to a physical spoon itself. This approach

made me more confident in my selling ability but after seeing other presentations, I feel as though I could have done more than sell a spoon to raise money for this initiative.

No one in any of the 3 classes has said anything negative about the end of the year project or experience. Some overall thoughts from the

Spring 2018 semester - The best part of the course – video projects, watching videos, learning different ways to target, rocks and cans, group discussions, rocks, the class atmosphere, rocks

The worst part of the course – rocks – but I still had fun, not using Blackboard, rocks, and cans, can collecting, the workload, speaking in front of the class, projects, Nepal, rude people in the class, the final project, the time slot, writing in the journal

It is still not clear whether the rock projects should be eliminated, some students were very positive and some were very negative. As for cans – most students appreciate making a positive contribution to the community

Summary

Several marketing concepts were reinforced and found useful by students: Definition of Marketing, The Marketing Plan, The 4 Ps of Marketing, Maslow Hierarchy, Brain Storming, Specifying the target audience; Profiling the target audience; Researching the needs and behaviors of the target audience, being creative; segmenting, targeting and positioning; AIDA model, writing storyboards, and creating ads. By the third semester, students specifically acknowledged the value of developing presentation skills.

For the most part, students appreciated investigating marketing issues by doing hands-on projects. In the Spring semester, students were given a brief survey that asked: “Do you feel you have a better understanding of how marketers use creativity in their work?” And also “By taking this course, do you feel you will be more creative in your approach to marketing and life?” The survey was anonymous and students completed the survey in the room without a proctor. Response to the first question was 90% said yes and response to the second question, 100% said yes. In the Fall of 2018, students also demonstrated positive feelings about their creativity and felt confident that they would be able to apply creativity to their work and their lives. Students see value in the community engagement projects, some expressed feeling good about participating in them.

Conclusions

Based on students’ comments and the professor’s observations, the course is now a success. Students do express an appreciation for the material and seem to be more confident regarding applying creative thinking to marketing tasks. It does seem possible and valuable to offer a marketing course that can enhance creative thinking among students and which can also address the issues and learning objectives of the university and school of business.

Finally, a word of caution. The professor experienced some unanticipated negativity during the first 2 semesters of the course. Students complained about: a lack of organization; a lack of instruction and not being aware of the specific point the professor was trying to make. This was unanticipated and somewhat discouraging. College juniors and seniors are accustomed to courses that contain: a comprehensive syllabus, a well-developed outline of scheduled activities and assignments, specific chapters and readings with dates, summaries of chapters and test dates. This course was more informal and contained less content. Students were not given much direction because it did not seem appropriate to put limitations on their creative thinking. However, after the evaluations were gathered in the first semester, it seemed prudent to provide more details and explanations in the following semesters. It is questionable whether this is good for the students. The course was constructed with the philosophy, “you figure it out”, given that successful business people are frequently required to develop solutions to new problems in short time frames. There does seem to be a balancing act between student past experiences

and expectations (teach them within a format that they are comfortable with) and teaching in a completely different environment, designed to open up their creative mindset, where nothing is done similar to prior experiences, where the professor will experience lower evaluations from some students.

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