

A Commentary on “Business Marketing in Master’s Programs: A Part of the Fabric”: Cut from the Same Cloth?

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ABSTRACT. The authors of this article and their colleagues at the Richard Ivey School of Business at the University of Western Ontario are to be commended not only for this well-crafted article but also for their efforts to elevate and incorporate essential knowledge of business marketing into the fabric of their school’s master’s program. The provocative argument that the authors make is that business marketing behaviors, concepts and topics should not be the focus of just one elective course but that they should serve as a foundation of a school’s entire master’s program. According to the authors, that foundation can be built around four pillars or business marketing essentials—organizational buyer behavior, relationship marketing, customer value, and business markets. In this article, they present not only a process and guidelines for imbedding

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these pillars into a master's program but also recommend specific topics and cases for various master's level courses. For these reasons, this article is a "must read" for marketing scholars who seek not only to create and/or improve elective courses business marketing but also to enhance the prominence of the study of business marketing at their respective universities. doi:10.1300/J033v14n01_06 [Article copies available for a fee from The Haworth Document Delivery Service: 1-800-HAWORTH. E-mail address: <docdelivery@haworthpress.com> Website: <<http://www.HaworthPress.com>> © 2007 by The Haworth Press, Inc. All rights reserved.]

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We would like to congratulate the authors of the article (Barclay, Deutscher, and Vandebosch) and their colleagues at the Richard Ivey School of Business at the University of Western Ontario not only for this well-crafted article but also for their efforts to elevate and incorporate essential knowledge of business marketing into the fabric of their school's master's programs. Clearly, the Ivey School sets an enviable standard for business marketing education.

The critical and intriguing argument that the authors make at the onset of their article is that business marketing behaviors, concepts, and topics should not just be the focus of one elective course, but that they should be integrated into the entire fabric of a school's business program. Their rationale or value proposition for doing so is well articulated—the majority of business school graduates actually go on to careers in business markets such as investment banking and management consulting. For this reason, business schools have an obligation to expose students to business marketing concepts and strategies and to teach them business marketing skills that will be critical to the future success of their careers.

Perhaps the major contribution the authors make to the discipline is the identification of four pillars or business marketing essentials—organizational buying behavior, relationship marketing, customer value, and business networks. These pillars not only capture the essence of business marketing but can also be used as the foundation for a business marketing program or course. In the preceding article, the authors do this by recommending topics and cases that pivot around one or more of these pillars.

HOW DID THEY DO IT?

As is likely the case with many readers, we too wondered how the marketing faculty of the Ivey School managed to conceive and execute this proposed business marketing focus for their school's master's programs. To find the answer, we interviewed the authors of the paper by telephone. We came away impressed with the marketing faculty's camaraderie, common vision, and infectious enthusiasm for business marketing. Furthermore, we found consensus among them on a number of important concerns. The faculty members have a general management orientation and are devoted to the case method of teaching. Apparently, they share these values with faculty members in other disciplines as well. This enables them to shift discussions over curriculum issues from goals and pedagogy to specific themes or topics.

The entire faculty utilizes the case teaching method and is committed to research and writing cases. Thus, once the faculty identifies central issues, they can readily craft cases around those issues and work them into the curriculum at appropriate places. Another important part of the Ivey School's culture is the willingness of faculty members to share teaching materials as well as to teach in each other's classes. This permits the best expertise on a given topic to be brought into the classroom when and where it is needed, regardless of discipline. Finally, it is important to point out that the marketing faculty did not undertake this initiative in one grand move but did so incrementally over a period of many years. This approach allowed them not only to avoid resistance to change but also to pilot test and fine-tune concepts and cases.

In their article, the authors go into depth describing the "enablers" that facilitated the implementation of their approach to business marketing education at the program level. They divide these into three categories—school-level enablers, program-level enablers, and marketing group enablers. At the school level, the ones that stand out as most important include the school's desire to position the program as specializing in general management education, support for faculty in the form of chairs and professorships in business marketing, credit for researching and writing management case studies, and instructor assignments that provide credit for teaching in other faculty member's classes. At the program level, they point to their ability to include business marketing cases in the first year core classes and the school's support of team-teaching. And at the marketing group level, the authors point to the fact that they have multiple faculty members who specialize in business marketing. Reflecting upon all of these enablers, we conclude that the

Ivey School provides the ideal environment and required resources for incorporating business marketing into the fabric of their programs.

CAN THIS APPROACH BE DUPLICATED ELSEWHERE?

As we read through the list of enablers, it became clear to us that there are only a handful of schools in North America and Europe that are immediate candidates for implementing the Ivey School's approach. In fact, most of our business marketing colleagues are "lone wolves" at business schools dominated by consumer product marketing specialists who see little reason to change the status quo. Most institutions with which we are familiar possess few, if any, of the enablers the authors cite.

Let's begin with the school level. While it is true that most MBA Programs focus on general management education, our experience suggests that most undergraduate programs favor specialized degrees in functional areas (e.g., advertising, personal selling, marketing research). Thus, the Ivey School's approach may be best suited for MBA Programs. It is also our observation that only a handful of schools have at best one chair or professorship in business marketing. As a result, there is often little support for scholarship in business marketing.

Case research and teaching presents another impediment. To the best of our knowledge, few schools provide academic rewards (e.g., tenure, promotion, and salary increases) for writing management case studies. Furthermore, many schools feature eclectic pedagogies of which case teaching is just one. In such an environment, an advocate of the Ivey School's approach would first have to argue for the legitimacy of case teaching before he/she could advocate the inclusion of business marketing topics. Lastly, we have seen few schools that give instructors credit for either team-teaching or for participating in another instructor's class. Without credit for efforts, the conflicting tugs and pulls on most professors' time would limit a faculty member's willingness to undertake this work.

At the program level, it may be possible to incorporate some business marketing case studies into the core program, assuming that a given school uses case studies. However, this will demand a high level of persuasive skills on the part of the business marketer. And, at far too many schools with which we are familiar, there is no culture of team-teaching. Instead, instructors focus on their courses and make little attempt to integrate their materials or concepts with others.

At the marketing group level, we find the presence of more than one business marketer to be the exception rather than the rule. Furthermore, it is our experience that many schools configure their marketing departments to be a loose confederacy of functional specialists rather than an integrated collection of market-focused scholars. As a result, far too many schools simply do not have the critical mass of business marketing scholars to make the Ivey School's approach possible.

Rather than viewing this lack of critical mass as a dead end, we look at it as an opportunity. Although it may appear to be self-serving for those of us in business marketing, nonetheless it would be an advised strategy for business schools with a small number of marketing faculty to focus on one "area of excellence" such as business marketing rather than allocating limited faculty positions to each of the myriad of marketing sub-disciplines. This more focused strategy offers several advantages. First, in many geographic regions, business marketing rather than consumer product marketing would better serve the requirements and preferences of the local business community. Second, it would enable business-school deans to gain synergy and cohesiveness among the limited faculty they have. With such a strategy, the business marketing faculty could better leverage resources at their school as well as collaborate on research together. As a consequence of an area of excellence in business marketing, the marketing faculty would have a far greater chance of building a noteworthy identity and reputation in both the academic and business communities.

WHAT IS POSSIBLE AT MOST SCHOOLS IN THE SHORT-RUN?

In our discussions with the marketing faculty of the Ivey School, they suggested that interested business marketing scholars take an incremental and long-term approach to implementation. To begin with, scholars can take steps to strengthen the contents of their business marketing elective courses by building them upon the four pillars of organizational buying behavior, relationship marketing, value, and business networks. Scholars can also move forward by utilizing some of the very same business marketing cases that are used at the Ivey School. Toward that end, they have provided the attached listing of business marketing case studies available through the Ivey School's Publications Department (see Exhibit 1). Once they become familiar with the contents and uses of these case studies, business marketers can recommend them to col-

EXHIBIT 1. Business-to-Business Marketing Case Studies. The Richard Ivey School at the University of Western Ontario. Used in Marketing Courses in 2006*

Course	Case	Focus
MBA 1 Marketing Management (Regular and Executive)	British Columbia Box Limited (Revised) (9A99A021)	Purchase process for new manufacturing equipment to develop an understanding of organizational buying behavior. (1998)
	Augat Electronics (9A99A009)	Pricing a new technology which is sold in a B-to-B context; emphasizes economic value to the customer (EVC). (1990)
	Gino SA (9B02A013)	HVAC in China; channel conflict around bypassing a distributor in order to sell direct. (2000)
	Rossiter Tool Company plc (9A97A007)	Manufacturer-distributor relations in the UK; who provides most value to the customer? (no date)
	SS Technologies (B)–Marketing (9A94C006)	Developing an alternative business system/market chain for an innovative product. (1994)
	Provincial Furniture Ltd. (9B00A017)	Competitive B2B bidding in the accounting industry. (2000)
MBA 2 Business-to-Business Marketing	Eastern Bank Ltd. (9B04A030)	Corporate banking in Bangladesh; building client relationships. (2000)
	Royal Bank of Canada–City of Aldersville RFP (9A92A018)	Organizational buying behavior in a financial services setting. (1992)
	Eloqua Corporation (Microsoft Presenter Case)	How a consulting/software firm should market their lead generation/CRM software system. (2004)
	Electrohome (A)(B)(C) (9A95A012-014)	Set of cases which match the Barco Projection Systems case (HBS 9591133). Highlights competitive interaction within the business system. (1989-92)
	Praegitzer Industries Inc. (9A97A007)	Finding where you can provide value in the business system of a rapidly consolidating industry. (1995)
	PMC-Sierra, Inc. (9A99A003)	Hi-tech manufacturer deciding where to put NPD efforts. (1997)
	Prosoft Systems (9B03A001)	Consulting; managing alliances for selling enterprise software. (2001)

EXHIBIT 1 (continued)

Course	Case	Focus
	Zhongda Optical Cable (9B03A008)	Rapid transitions in an engineering services business; fiber optic cable installation in China. (2002)
	Global Healthcare Exchange (9B02A023)	Canadian arm of an automated exchange in the healthcare sector. (2002)
	Plastics R Us (9B02A016)	Manufacturer dealing with distributors in the plastics fabrication industry in Taiwan. (2001)
	Quantec Geoscience (9B05A005)	Selling geophysics service for mining exploration at five times the price of competitors. (2004)
MBA 2 Sales Management	WaveRider Communications Inc.:Selling Wireless Internet Access Equipment (9B01A003)	Implications of a longer sell cycle involved with solutions selling for the selling process and sales management. (2000)
	A.T. Kearney and the "New Defining Entity" (9A98A002)	Opportunities that might become available from the acquisition of ATK by EDS; links sales management to strategy. (1996)
	Global Source Healthcare: Allocating Sales Resources (9B05A021)	GSH, involved in outsourced staffing in the healthcare sector, is at the stage where it needs to grow and needs to decide how to allocate scarce sales resources. (2003)
Selected Other	Logitech: Launching a Digital Pen (9B03A002)	Understanding the importance and role of vertical segments in gaining adoption of a new technology. (2003)
	WaveRider Communications Inc.:The Sparta Deal (9B01A001)	WaveRider has signed a memorandum of agreement with a partner in Spain; focuses on the challenges of managing such a global partnership. (2000)

*Note: The marketing faculty of the Ivey School provided this listing of case studies.

leagues in marketing as well as in other disciplines. As they succeed in these endeavors, business marketers will be in an advantageous position to advocate that the four pillars of business marketing be incorporated into their school's core programs. From here, they may be able to encourage team-teaching and the sharing of business marketing materials.

CONCLUSION

Once again, we congratulate the authors and their colleagues at the Ivey School for an outstanding article and approach to business marketing education. They are clearly innovators committed to the field of business marketing. We urge business-school deans who are intent on building their school's reputation in academia and the business community to consider a focused market strategy based upon an area of excellence in business marketing. In doing so, they can learn and benefit from the experiences and successes of the Ivey School.